

Standing on Two Square Feet April 10, 2011

Psalms 24:3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, And has not sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Our ascending the hill of the Lord, or our standing in His holy place, fully depends upon how we stand here...on the two square feet that has been given to us upon which to stand.

That is what we will consider today — the two square feet upon which each of us stands! Not that our feet are square, mind you! But I want to consider today *the two square feet of ground* upon which each of us stands every minute of every day. And with this, I would like us to be ever cognoscente of the fact that this two square feet of area upon which we have stood, and owned, and for which we are responsible during our entire Christian life, will figuratively speaking, be the same two feet of area upon which we will stand at the JSOC. Mine is mine; and yours is yours. I am responsible for mine; you are responsible for yours. And so, I would like to ask each person sitting here; each person hearing or reading this message off the website to look only to yourself. Please do not be tempted to think:

- “Oh I am glad she is saying these things...she must be learning something! FINALLY!” Or,
- “Oh! I hope so-and-so is hearing this! They really need it!” Or
- “I wonder if I should call so-an-so and just...ask them...if they happen to have had heard the message about THEIR TWO SQUARE FEET!”

Please don't do that! Please look only to yourselves today. Look down at the two square feet underneath you and realize that *in the end*, THIS is what *you* are responsible for — nothing more and nothing less. Let us learn that to our own master we will stand or fall. Paul refers to this:

Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls...

And standing or falling at the judgment seat is determined by standing or falling now. There are a number of exhortations in Scripture with the purpose of our being concerned for our own “standing”, before we are ever to be concerned about someone else's standing.

Luke 6:41 “And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye...”

So today, we want to check the log that may be in our own eye, and not worry about the spec that may be in someone else's eye. TODAY WE WILL LOOK ONLY TO OURSELVES and not

another. This message is really for ME! But you are not to know that — because this message is really for you (and I am not to know that!)

I Corinthians 16:13 Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

We are to stand! In order to stand on the two square feet beneath us, our stance must be firm, otherwise we could topple easily. Also, we are to know what we are to stand firm in! We are to *stand firm IN THE FAITH*. Most of us know that according to Scripture the phrase “the faith” has to do with things beyond our initial salvation, things beyond the death of Jesus. “The faith” has to do with our walking circumspectly in this present age with a view to our participation in the Kingdom in the coming age.

According to this verse, Paul expresses that standing firm in the faith would require our *being on the alert*. About what would we need to be on the alert? Actually the phrase is used several times in the New Testament. Jesus used the phrase in answer to the question from His disciples concerning the end of the age, saying that they should be on the alert because they do not know the day or the hour in which the Lord is coming. And the warning to be on the alert seems to be always connected with a view to the coming judgment and kingdom.

Paul used the phrase “be on the alert” when he spoke to the elders of Ephesus, having called them to Miletus to exhort and admonish them, warning them of the savage wolves which would rise up. Also in his letter to the church at Ephesus, after dealing with the fact that our warfare is not against flesh and blood (i.e. other people), but against *spiritual forces of darkness* and our need to put on the whole armor of God, he ended with the warning to be on the alert.

And finally we’ll remember the words of Peter in his first letter. In reading this, note the context of our needing to be alert. Notice how the passage begins:

I Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

All in all, we are admonished to *be on the alert* for specified reasons:

- The soon return of the Lord
- Savage wolves
- The prowling, roaring lion

And all of this with the judgment seat and the coming kingdom in view. We presently stand at the end of the 6th day, on the precipice of the 7th day! So we need to be on the alert! And can’t we see how this alertness about things concerning the future has all to do with the way in which we stand on our own two square feet of ground here and now?

Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. 11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at

hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

We need to *be on the alert* because of the activity that is going on all around us in these last days. Daily we are faced with temptations. Temptations orchestrated by either one or all of our three great enemies:

- The world
- The flesh
- The devil

These enemies will rarely act independently of one another. Most often, they will join forces, so to speak, for the purpose of bringing about our fall (our fall from standing, mind you), and that through daily temptations. These temptations, however, are allowed by God for our testing for the purpose of our faith being brought to maturity. Therefore, we are to **be on the alert**, noticing each and every temptation that comes our way, so that we can STAND firm in the faith.

But how do we stand firm in our faith? In order to do this, we need a good grasp of faith. And let's not forget that FAITH is a gift.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...

Perhaps it would be good for a moment for each of us to remember back to the time that you first believed. Will you think about that moment, or that period of time? How gracious of God to allow us to come to Him through the sacrifice of HIS SON'S VERY DEATH! What a gift to us! And what a cost to Him! Unimaginable, really! Both the gift, as well as the cost!

But the giving of His Son and the giving of the gift of faith was all for ONE purpose...*to give us the foundation upon which we can build our faith.* This is truly the gift that keeps on giving, as we go from faith to faith, and the GROW from faith to faith.

May I ask you a question? (Remember, we are to only think of ourselves here! Don't think of anyone else!) Why did *you* begin coming to Cornerstone? Why do you listen to the messages on the church's website, or read the books that are available concerning the kingdom, or go to Bible Studies wherein we learn more about the magnificent scope of God's plan for us?

Wasn't it for the purpose of *growing in your faith*? If faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God, didn't you begin this journey of understanding the word of the kingdom for that purpose — growing in your faith? And don't you want to continue to grow in your faith, striving to come to spiritual maturity — *for the sole purpose of hearing "well done"*? You know, no one will hear the words, "Well done," if it has not been well done upon this ever-present two square feet. And here, as we are in the 11th hour, we need to be all the more diligent to STAND, because at any point now, *the test that we are presently in may be the final one before we stand*

before the Lord at the judgment seat! We don't know the day or the hour. Think about that for a moment!

And so we might want to ask ourselves some questions — *personal* questions, please, so don't look around. Ask yourself:

- Have I grown in your faith?
- Do I *know* more, *understand* more, *believe* more now than I did 6 years ago? Than two years ago?
- Is that truly my goal...to *grow in the faith*; to *come to the maturity of the faith*?

And finally:

- How am I going to come to maturity?
- How does coming to maturity happen?
- How will I grow more and more into spiritual maturity?

The Bible specifically tells us what brings our faith to maturity, doesn't it? It is through trials and temptations, really. Isn't THAT how spiritual maturity is brought to pass? The faith in which we have grown in recent years, through correctly having been taught and correctly having studied the Word, must now be in process of being brought to maturity, *if* we want the GOAL of our faith to come to pass. This process will certainly be the trials and temptations that we face every day!

This next passage is very familiar to all of us but please look at it again perhaps in a fresh way this morning:

I Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, [in the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last times...the salvation of our souls] even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

In this same letter, Peter later says:

I Peter 4

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

Who here wants to be DISTRESSED? Who here wants to be TESTED BY FIRE? Really, who here wants to HAVE THEIR FAITH TESTED? It hurts to go through these things! But shouldn't we want that? Because look at what Peter says the result will be... *proven faith will*

result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ! And aren't TRIALS the only way that our faith can be brought to its proper goal – the salvation of our souls?

So wouldn't we embrace that? And shouldn't we expect it? And if that is the only way that our faith can be brought to its end goal, i.e., this salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last times, then let us not only welcome these trials ourselves, but let us also be careful about how we *help* someone else through their trials, encouraging them to strive through their trials in the way that they may also receive the end of their faith. This is why James tells us that we are to consider these things with JOY!

Where would we expect these trials and temptations to come from? According to the Scriptures, it be through temptations, And where are the temptations going to come from except from all around us. These temptations are not going to come from afar! Temptations are going to come from close-up and personal! And the mastermind of all temptation, Satan himself, is going to use the world and the flesh to tempt us. Satan is going to use my flesh to tempt me, and/or he may use your flesh to tempt me, as well. Right? And of course the same is true for you! He will use your flesh to tempt you, and/or he may use my flesh to tempt you. We really don't like to think about that, but it's true. We all have flesh that we have to deal with daily. And sometimes we will have to deal with each other's flesh, as well. Herein is our testing. Someone else's sin may become a temptation for you to sin, too. Or even someone else's righteousness may become a temptation for you to sin. (People walking in the flesh don't really like someone walking in the Spirit. And when any of this happens, Satan will use the *ways of the world* to further the temptation, because the *ways of the world* seem oh-so-right! Right? But we must remember that:

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

This exact proverb is given again in another Proverb:

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

I John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

So, in order to stay alert (because we do not know the day or the hour in which the Lord is going to come back), we really have to be careful what we do when we encounter various temptations. The good thing is that we can get specific guidance from the Scripture about this. Again, it is in a very familiar passage. But please try to look at this passage afresh today:

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

The words *trials* and *testing* in this passage are two different words in the Greek, and the implication of these two words would be different as well. The word *trials* has the connotation of temptations (and is translated as such in the KJV); and the word *testing* has to do with a

proofing (not ‘proving’), or *testing for one’s trustworthiness*. But in order to understand how this all works together, let’s look at the word *encounter*.

The word, *encounter* (NASB) means “to fall upon something *that is all around us*,” or to “come upon something.” To say that we “fall” into trials/temptations here (as the KJV has it), we might get the wrong impression. Falling into (or encountering) temptation is obviously not the same as falling into sin. That would never be something that we are to consider with JOY. Encountering trial/temptation is not the sin. (In fact, it is also good to know that struggling with a temptation is not a sin!) But we must also see that the testing of our faith is not the temptation. It is temptation tests our faith. The test is not the temptation. While the temptation does offer an opportunity to sin, the trial/temptation offers us something else as well. It offers the opportunity to allow our faith to come to maturity. And THAT is why we are to consider trials/temptations with joy. With each trial; with each temptation we have a choice to make: to stand or fall. And usually our *standing* will be more difficult than our *falling*, because falling will come naturally.

So here is the picture: We *encounter* (come into contact with) trials/temptations all the time because trials/temptations are always all around us. These things surround us all the time and in every place. We encounter trials/temptations *because*

- 1) We *all* live in this corrupt world; and
- 2) We *each* have an old nature still within us; and
- 3) We *all* have another enemy as well who prowls around like a roaring lion!

As a result of these things, we are *always* surrounded with various trials/temptations. We know that our three enemies — the world, the flesh and the devil — are always ready to entice us to sin. Satan desires to bring about our FALL through these various temptations. But God has another plan for these various temptations that naturally surround us in this present age. God allows the temptations for the purpose of our testing, for the purpose of our strengthening our faith so that we can stand more firmly.

Even in the OT, God made it very clear why He allowed the Children of Israel to be tested:

Ex 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction...”

Ex 20:20 And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.”

De 8:16 “In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end...”

It is for these reasons that we are to consider it with joy when we encounter various temptations. Because in these tests, God wants to do good for us in the end...but He can only do that if we endure the temptation, and not fall into sin! And so we can begin to understand more fully why we are to consider trials and even temptations with joy...because it gives us opportunity to

“proof” our faith, to strengthen our faith! We have opportunity to endure; to obey; to make the choice again to walk in the spirit not the flesh! And this strengthens us and will ultimately bring us to more glory.

Here is another thing that we can know: Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote in **I Corinthians 10:13** **No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.**

In the midst of the trial, in the midst of the testing of our faith (our faith being something that we have chosen to believe simply because God has said it), we can certainly trust that God is not going to allow more temptation in our lives than what He equips us to endure! And along with the temptation (that which surrounds us everywhere, all the time), HE provides a way of escape!

How would the world seek to cause us to fall from our own steadfastness. And what would God provide that would allow a way of escape so that we are not tempted beyond what we are able to endure? Well, the world would say that we have the right to act in a variety of ways, depending upon the circumstance. For example: If you have been unjustly treated, what would be the natural way to feel, or to act, or to respond? I can tell you from experience that “natural way” to act or feel or respond, comes quite...naturally! We want to sulk, or feel sorry for ourselves, or strike out, or defend! These responses would prevent us from enduring, and may cause us to sin. But it feels like we have the right to do that, right? The world around us would certainly encourage that! But is that God’s way to handle it?

The escape that God provides is not escaping the temptation! The escape that God provides is the strength God gives us in *our faith* to withstand the temptation and not sin. He will provide the way of escape, that we may be able to endure it.

Remember the verse in I Peter that we looked at a moment ago...*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time?* There is a story in the OT that might be a good one to bring to the forefront at this point. It has to do with King David. The complete story is found in II Samuel chapters 13-19, but we will just look at one small facet of the story today, because herein we find an example of the type of humility that is *necessary for spiritual maturity*. David’s humility before the Lord in this is exemplary for us.

Absalom, the son of David, was seeking to make himself the king of Israel. He had already proven himself to be a bad sort of character, through killing his brother. And now he aspired to make himself king, through conspiracy. In this conspiracy, Absalom had been able to gather to himself many followers who were willing to go into battle *against David*, for the purpose of Absalom becoming their king. Even Ahithophel [akh-ee-tho’-fel], David’s own personal and trusted counselor, had joined Absalom in the coo. But this is *not* the part of the story to which I would like to bring attention, although that is the context of the event wherein David’s humility can be seen.

In the midst of all the turmoil concerning David’s son, Absalom, King David and his men were on the run, in defense of themselves. And while these events were taking place (with David’s

heart obviously breaking for his son's rebellion and the co-conspiring of his trusted counselor), a man named Shimei came to where David and his men were camping. Shimei was from the house of Saul, and evidently carried a grudge against David, apparently not understanding that it had been GOD, Who had placed David on the throne, in the stead of Saul. And in his misunderstanding of the way of God, Shimei felt that Absalom's coo was God's way of paying David back. So we will pick up the small, but interesting portion of the story here:

II Samuel 16:5 When King David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out cursing continually as he came. 6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and at his left. 7 And thus Shimei said when he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow! 8 The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you are taken in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!"

What picture do we see here? Here is David who had *been anointed by God* to be the king over Israel. No question about that! His own son has challenged him to the throne, and through conspiracy, had been able to have very, very many people to follow him, even David's own personal and trusted counselor. And in the midst of all that turmoil and obvious heartache to David, along comes a man from Saul's house to berate him with false accusations, one after another, throwing stones at him, cursing him and calling him a worthless fellow! And this is done in front of all of David's mighty men and people who were at his right hand and left.

What would David do? Perhaps we should muse at what WE would do in a situation like that? What *would* you do? What would I do? Honestly, I know what my flesh would want to do...probably the same as what your flesh would want to do, as that would be the 'natural' thing to do. And wouldn't the world just say that *that is what we should do?! That we have every right to do that!* (Often times the right thing to do is the more difficult thing to do, because the right thing to do is not the natural (fleshly) thing to do...it is the super-natural (spiritual) thing to do!)

Then a character named Abishai (abishay) steps up to David and says what most likely others were wanting to say!

9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah [zer-oo-yah] said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now, and cut off his head."

(Now before we go further with this story, let's just take an aside for a moment and view a previous event in David's life. This event happened years prior. It was *after* God had anointed David as king, but *before* God had crowned David — Saul was still the king. And here too, Abishai — the brother of Joab, was at David's side. Abishai and Joab were two of David's most loyal and trusted mighty men. They had been at David's side in several momentous occasions and through many battles. This side story that I would like us to glimpse was during a time when Saul was pursuing David's life. At one point

David and Abishai came to Saul's camp and quietly crept into the place where Saul and his guards lay sleeping. Let's pick up the story there:

I Samuel 26:8 Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time." 9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD'S anointed and be without guilt?" 10 David also said, "As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go." 12 So David took the spear and the jug of water from beside Saul's head, and they went away, but no one saw or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

Do you think we can see this as a test for David? Look at the last part of the last verse: *"...no one saw or knew it neither Saul nor his guards sleeping with him, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them."*

Surely, it seems to be a test for David. But how did David respond? Did he act in the natural, or the super-natural? Didn't he walk in obedience to God, or in the lust of his own flesh? Even though it *appeared* as though the Lord had given Saul into his hand, David knew what God had said about not touching His anointed one. It was a test for David! And he passed the test! And, let's not miss this either — we can see that it was a test for Abishai, as well. We don't see Abishai arguing with David about how "right" it would be to kill Saul, right then and there. Abishai is the one who wondered aloud if the Lord had set all this up for the very purpose of killing Saul. But, under the authority of his king, the one God had placed over him, Abishai complied and did exactly as David had commanded. No questions asked. Yes, it was a test for Abishai as well. And he also passed the test!)

With all of this as an aside, let's go back to the story with Shimei years later. We'll read again what Abishai says to David about this man cursing his king and see what David says this time:

9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah [zer-oo-yah] said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now, and cut off his head."

10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David,' then who shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him. 12 Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day."

13 So David and his men went on the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside parallel with him and as he went he cursed, and cast stones and threw dust at him.

Honestly, I find this an amazing example of maturity in the Lord, and utter humility! And can't we also see a good amount of TRUST in David's heart towards the Lord? (Actually, I have never thought about that until preparing for this message but I wonder if TRUST is not a major — if not the major — component of humility. Perhaps it is so.) David trusted the Lord so much that he did not care about what anyone else thought! He didn't care how this man, Shimei, from Saul's house, berated him with false accusations, or his throwing stones at him, or his cursing him and calling him a worthless fellow! David didn't care that all of this was done in front of all of his mighty men and all the people who were at his right hand and left. *He simply wanted to know if what this man was saying WAS INDEED from the Lord, or not.* And almost without another thought about it, he gave it over into the Lord's hand, believing that the Lord will have His way in the end, and perhaps, if the Lord had cursed him through the mouth of this man, perhaps through his humiliation — in his humility — the Lord might look upon his afflictions and return good to him instead of the cursing that he had just experienced! Now THAT is the way to view things! That is the way to receive blessings from the Lord, isn't it? Was David acting according to his natural inclination? Or can we see David, strong in his faith, acting according to the spirit? And don't miss this either — all his mighty men, and all the people with David followed his lead in this. They humbled themselves as well, and not one of them stepped out in the flesh and brought harm to the one making the false accusations.

Here is the thing. We must leave situations that tempt us in the Lord's hand, and not try to manipulate them ourselves. The whole context of the story in 2 Samuel chapters 15-19 is an interesting one. The Lord will have His way! And at the end of *this* story, the Lord had His way. And *it was good for the ones who had humbled themselves.* It would be good for us to STAND with the Lord rather than to fall into the ways of the world, seeking to defend ourselves as our natural inclination would be. And in that humility, not caring about what other thought.

Yes, we are going to be tempted through the flesh, the world and the devil. The orchestrator of all of this is the father of lies. He will want you and me to question what God has said in His Word. He would want you and me to act in the flesh. And it would all seem so natural...so normal! He would want you and me to seek the approval of men, not the approval of the Lord. But where how will you stand on your two square feet of earth? Where now will I stand on mine?

In James chapter one, James goes on to explain what the two possible outcomes for our trials/temptations would be.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

This end, of course, would be Satan's motivation in bringing a temptation into your life. His end goal is your death! James warns us then:

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

And then explains the other side of the matter:

17 Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. 19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Yes, each of us *may* be in the final test of our lives, prior to meeting the Lord in the air. And shouldn't we view it as mercy from the Lord, as we have opportunity to pass the test and gain glory, having died to the flesh as Jesus was our example when He died in the flesh?

I Peter 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

It was David who wrote **Psalm 26:11 But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; Redeem me, and be gracious to me. 12 My foot stands on a level place; In the congregations I shall bless the LORD.**

And Paul exhorts — **Philippians 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 in no way alarmed by your opponents--which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.**

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ...13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore...

Pr 14:35 The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.