

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, May 20, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## HYMNS OF FAITH & BIBLICAL LESSONS

“Tested and Tried We’re Oft Made To Wonder”

*John 17:15-19, Matthew 10:17-23, Luke 22: 31-34, 1 Peter 4:12-19*

*1 Corinthians 3:10-13, James 1:2-4, John 16:33, Romans 5:1-5*

G.K. Chesterton, an English-born journalist and Christian author, once stated, “Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult, and not tried.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What do you think he means by that statement?

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## HYMN STORY OF “FARTHER ALONG”

**William B. Stevens: Missouri Tent Preacher** - Most hymnals for the last half-century have followed the Stamps-Baxter attribution to William B. Stevens (b. 1862-d. after 1940), a Church of God preacher in Schuyler County, Missouri (U.S. Census 1930). If anyone had a motivation to write such a song, it was Stevens; he was a truly Job-like figure who outlived all six of his children, many of them dying in childhood (Findagrave). According to Davidson's biographical sketch of Stevens, he was a prolific songwriter and even published a few songbooks (Davidson, repr. Schuyler Co. Times). In the preface of the compilation, *The Best of W.B. Stevens*, Richard E. Payne states that his wife's grandparents, John D. and Sylvia Hodges Speak, sang in a quartet with Stevens; an additional note by the late Emma Perkins Johnson, a longtime resident of the area, recalled Stevens sometimes serving as songleader for gospel meetings instead of minister.

If Stevens was the songwriter, he received very little benefit from such a popular song. Stevens claimed to have learned of his song's success in a rather unexpected fashion, years after it was written. The story was related by J.R. Barkley in the Moulton, Iowa *Weekly Tribune*, 5 May 1938, “Not long ago [Stevens] was listening to the singing of a fine religious quartet, at the station at Del Rio, Texas, when he heard one of his songs that he had composed years ago. He wrote the Stamps quartet which was singing it and told them of publishing it. The Stamps Brothers own and publish a musical paper at Dallas, Texas. They wrote him and asked him to send them a brief sketch of his life, which he did. Finding that he was without a stated income they mentioned it on the air, and a collection of over \$150.00 was raised and sent to him with more to follow. This song was one of the most popular songs ever sung over the station and was entitled, "Farther Along." He said he was sitting at the organ running his fingers aimlessly over

the keys. His luck had been against him and he was feeling blue, but somehow he struck a chord which came right out of the organ like the "Lost Chord" of Sir Arthur Sullivan. Who knows but what it might have been the same lost chord which Sir Arthur never found. Who knows that music may not be inspired from the spirit world. Any way he did not lose it this time but wrote it down, and put his thoughts into meter in "Farther Along."

The claim of W.B. Stevens seems to be considerably helped by the discovery of the above newspaper article. The authenticity of Barkley's story rests on two strong points: 1) He was personally acquainted with Stevens, and thus had a first-hand account; and, 2) He wrote this in 1938, shortly after the events described. The "Del Rio" radio station would have been the old XERA, a high-wattage "border blaster" based just inside Mexico that reached across the U.S. into Canada from 1935-1939 ([Wikipedia](#)). (This was the predecessor of the more famous rock'n'roll station that featured Wolfman Jack.) The Stamps-Baxter Quartet, capitalizing on its popularity from the KRLD broadcasts, was naturally eager to be heard on this international stage as well (Mason 274). After 1938, when their rendition of "Farther along" had been broadcast to a national audience, the Stamps-Baxter publications began to attribute the song to W.B. Stevens. This matches the story reported by Barkley, and shows the apparent desire of Stamps-Baxter to attribute the song properly (so far as they knew the facts).

**2 Pressing Questions from the song "Farther Along":** Here are some of the questions the song leaves us pondering:

- (1) **Why are we constantly tempted and tried?**
- (2) **Why do the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous suffer?**

**3 Truths About this World we live in:** *(based on John 16:33)*

- (1) **Jesus desires us to experience a "peace" in this world -**
- (2) **Jesus warns us that in this world we will have trials and tribulations -**
- (3) **Jesus reminds us that He has overcome the world and we can take heart in that – Why?**

**3 Truths About the "Evil One":** *(based on John 17:15-19)*

- (1) **It tell us that the "evil one" is a real presence in this life -**
- (2) **It tell us that we need "protection" from the "evil one" in this life -**
- (3) **Implied, it tell us that the "evil one" is out to destroy believers (Christians) –**

## **I. THE REALITY OF OUR TESTS AND TRIALS**

1. **Jesus warned us of the reality of our tests and trials in this life (Matthew 10:17-22, John 16:33)** – As chapter 10 of Matthew open, Jesus is sending out his disciple. The chapter is filled with many words of warning and preparation for what they would encounter at His followers. The chapter is filled with instruction on how to relate and react to a world that would be hostile at times to their message and life. Perhaps, some of Jesus most pointed and griping words appear in verses 17-22, where he speaks to the reality of the tests and trials that His followers would face:

***"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and***

*kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.* -Matthew 10:17-22 (NIV/green)

Elsewhere in John 16:33, Jesus said, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* -John 16:33 (NIV/green)

### **Realities for Believers:**

- (1) **Believers "will be" restricted and restrained** – The phrase *"they will hand you over"* (v.17) is a technical word in the Greek that speaks of handing over a captured and chained prisoner. It speaks of those who would want to restrict or restrain someone they perceive as doing harm. Certainly in this world we can see how believer (Christians) are often restricted and restrained. The gospel message is often today being restricted and restrained
- (2) **Believers "will be" accused and maligned** – The phrase "you will be brought before" in verse 18 speaks of one who is charged with a crime standing before a judge. It is legal language that speak of being arraigned, but in this case it implies being wrongly charged, unjustly accused and maligned before others. Are Christian today ever falsely accused and maligned in this world? Absolutely! Christians, today, are routinely accused and maligned in both television and print media as being narrow-minded, and bigoted because of the stands they often take on a whole host of social issues. When a believer boldly states the Bible truth that Jesus is the only way! he or she is immediately labeled a narrow-minded, bigoted, and prejudiced against other religions. On a more personal note, if you are bold enough to try to witness to a neighbor or friend... maybe even a family member, be ready to be accused or maligned with something along the line of, "You are not better than me! I know the things that you do, and your life is not better than my life." The "evil one" like to stir up the world in order to malign and accuse Christians.
- (3) **Believers "will be" denied and spurned** - Verse 22 says, *"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death."* These speak of close relations... trusted relations that are always supposed to love, support and protect us. The warning for believers here is that often those we trust and depend on the most will turn on us. We may find ourselves spurned by their love and their associations with us denied... perhaps much like Jesus was denied by Peter and spurned by the other disciples on the night he was arrested and taken to a cross. We may face the trial of rejected friendships, and even family kin in some cases for a totally committed faith.
- (4) **Believers "will be" hated** - Jesus said, in verse 22, *"All men will hate you because of me..."* Sounds harsh, but the reality is that, as the world so quickly turned on Jesus it will also turn on believers too. Remember that one day the crowd was shouting "Hosanah! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" and

throwing coats and palm branches on the street in front of Jesus to celebrate His arrival and the next day they were shouting “Crucify! Crucify!”

**Observation:** *The point is that the reality for believers is that being Christian is not always popular and the message we preach even less. The “evil one” will bring about all sorts of trial and test to dissuade you from proclaiming the message of salvation both verbally and practically in the way you walk. If necessary he will bring the “fiery trial” of persecution to silence you!*

2. **Peter experienced the reality of our tests and trials in this life (Luke 22:31-34)** - Perhaps one of the most vivid New Testament examples of what we are talking about, the reality of this testing and trial, can be seen in the life of Peter. In Luke 22, Jesus has just observed the Last Supper with his disciple and he about to be betrayed and taken to the cross, when an interesting conversation takes place between Jesus and the disciple, Peter in Luke 22:31-34:

*“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brother.” But he replied, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.’” –Luke 22:31-34 (NIV/red)*

### **3 Helpful Truths for Believers:**

- (1) **If Satan can sift a Peter, he can sift you... that’s humbling**
- (2) **If Jesus prayed for Peter, he prays for you... that’s strengthening**
- (3) **If Peter can fall and rise again, so can you... that’s encouraging**

## **II. THE REASON FOR OUR TESTS AND TRIALS**

The reality is that happens in the life of a believer is amiss with God. Now, what do I mean by that? I mean, God sees, and know all! You are never out of the care of the God who hold you in the palm of his hand. What Satan may mean for evil, God means for good in the life of believer. Remember Jesus prayer in John 17:15-19, *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”* Despite the tests and trial that come our way, God is “sanctifying” us... that is “setting us apart for His purposes. There is actually a “sanctifying” reason that can emerge in the face of the tests and trials, that the “evil one” may be about to destroy us. Let me give you to good ones:

### **2 Reasons Behind Tests and Trials:**

- (1) **Spiritual growth and maturity in the Christian walk** - *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” – James 1:2-4 (NIV/red)*
- (2) **Renewed hope and a growing relationship with God** - *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” – Romans 5:1-5 (NIV/white)*

### III. THE RESPONSE TO OUR TESTS AND TRIALS

Facing test and trials is never easy. We truly are “oft left to wonder why it should be thus all the day long!” And perhaps no one understood that better than the Apostle Peter. As we discovered earlier, Peter provided one of the most poignant (distressing) New Testament examples the reality of this testing and trial that we as believer often go through as Jesus warned him that “Satan wanted to sift him.” We know that that “sifting” took place in Peter’s denial of Christ. We too face the reality of being called to stand alone at those kind of dark and challenging moment in our life when the trials and struggles descend on us. How can we respond victoriously!

Years later a restored, and spiritually mature Peter... leader of the early church would write these words that might help us in 1 Peter 4:12-19, *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or a thief or another kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.” -1 Peter 4:12-19 (NIV/yellow)*

#### **A Healthy Christian Response to the Tests and Trials of this Life:**

- (1) **Christians should not be caught off guard by tests and trials in this life** – It truly rains on the just and the unjust. Christians are not immune to the difficulties and distresses in this life... as a matter of fact Peter knew that we are guaranteed them.
- (2) **Christians should learn to appreciate (maybe even celebrate) the maturity and growth that can come through tests and trials in this life** - God can actually grow us more through the trials than through the more pleasant moments of this life. We seem to depend and look to Him more in those moments.
- (3) **Christians should strive to stay faithful in the tests and trial of this life, because God has is so faithful to you** – Listen, for a believer, when we look at what God has done on our behalf through Jesus Christ and the promises that are ours now and in the life to come, our trials and struggles in this life.. no matter how heavy they may seem right now... are worth it all! We could never pay Him back for all that He has done for us!