

**[Day #14]: Cleaning House – Chaff, Dross, and Dust**  
**Read: Hebrews 10:36; James 1:2-4**

*“For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.” – Psalm 66:10*

A church in Auckland, New Zealand, purchased an old building. Once a jewelry factory, the building had sat empty for years, so the group got busy cleaning. By the end of the day they had a large pile of dust and dirt to discard when someone got the brilliant idea of putting it through a furnace. After all, the dust was collected from the floor of a jewelry factory. Amazingly, the furnace did indeed reveal precious materials, and they walked away with \$8,500! The next day they returned with the filthy, matted carpet and this time walked away with \$3,500. And why not the ceiling tiles, too? – \$350.

This story illustrates a truth from the Scriptures. The Bible likens faith to gold, silver, and precious stones. Mined straight from the ground, these precious materials look like humble hunks of rock. It's the work of the fire to consume the common materials, leaving behind something beautiful and precious.

But fiery trials do more than purify; they firm up and consolidate. Those precious, tiny bits in the floor sweepings from the jewelry factory had value, but far more so when brought together. Our fiery trials give faith and virtue a chance to “work out” together, strengthening those “muscles” IF we allow it.

An untried faith is weak, reactive, clumsy, and naive. Honed by the heat and pressures of real life troubles, faith *can* become strong, measured, agile, and confident. The world of sports provides excellent examples to illustrate.

In NFL football, most teams look like sure playoff contenders in July, as teams practice with their own teammates. The real test comes in September, when they don their pads and play for real against a team not afraid to hit and hit hard. It is here that a team's true depth is revealed.

As boxer Mike Tyson astutely noted, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.”

No one enjoys getting punched in the mouth! No one longs for trials and testing to come, but as the Apostle Peter aptly noted, “These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold.” (1 Peter 1:7a NLT)

When our time of testing comes, will we rise to the level of patient endurance?

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7

What impact do you think Peter intended when he wrote these words to believers passing through dark and stormy times of strong persecution?

Look back on a “fiery trial” you have experienced. Could you say that this hard experience ended up purifying and strengthening your faith and trust towards God? Explain.

Peter says we can “rejoice” as we suffer grief in all kinds of trials. How might this form of “rejoicing” be *similar* and also *different* from the rejoicing we experience at, for example, the birth of a child or another happy event?