

Trials

*"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."
(1 Peter 1:7)*

WHAT are "trials?" Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines "trials" as "exposure to suffering that tests strength, patience, faith, or the like" and "affliction or temptation that exercises and proves the graces or virtues of men."

I. TRIALS ARE INEVITABLE AND PART OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

Don't be deceived thinking that the Christian life is full of "flowery beds of ease." The old hymn says: "Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me." Trials are inevitable (unavoidable) and part of the Christian's life. Jesus said "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

The bible says:

"...We must through MANY tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

"...In the world you WILL have tribulation..." (John 16:33)

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus WILL suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

Notice the phrase: "many tribulations;" "will have tribulation;" "will suffer persecution." Trials are inevitable and part of the Christian's life.

II. THE PROPER REACTION TO TRIALS.

There are two ways to react to trials and suffering in our lives. We either can become bitter towards man and God or we can have the proper reaction to trials by looking at the big picture and looking beyond our trials to see the good purpose God intends them to be. The bible gives us at least five ways to properly react to our trials. They are:

1). "Count it all joy."

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials." (James 1:2)

"Count it all joy? Are you crazy?" you might say. Yes "count it all joy when you fall into various trials" for if you would indeed know the good purpose that God has behind them than you would indeed rejoice.

2). "Do not think it is a strange thing."

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." (1 Peter 4:12)

Do not think this to be something strange that has happened to you but it is part of God's plan and purpose for you.

3). "Rejoice for you are partaking of Christ's sufferings."

"But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified." (1 Peter 4:13-14)

Rejoice when you suffer for Christ's sake for you are partaking of Christ's suffering. Remember Jesus' words: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you"* (Matthew 5:10-12).

4). "Do not despise it."

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for

the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Do not despise trials for they are "for our profit" and for our "holiness." It might be "painful" at first but "afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

5). "You are not alone."

"...Knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." (1 Peter 5:9)

Remember that you are not alone. Trials and suffering are the lot of every true Christian whether great or small.

III. EXAMPLES OF MEN IN THE SCRIPTURE WHO PROPERLY REACTED TO TRIALS.

1). Job.

*"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. **The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.**" In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." (Job 1:20-22)*

*"Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. **Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"** In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:9-10)*

*"Though He slay me, **yet** will I trust Him..." (Job 13:15)*

*"But He knows the way that I take; **When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.**" (Job 23:10)*

2). The Psalmist.

*"**It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.**" (Psalm 119:71)*

IV. THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS.

1). Produces in us godly character.

*"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, **knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.** Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:3-5)*

*"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith **produces patience.** But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4)*

Trials are often the means that God will use to "conform us to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29) and the means to produce in us the fruits of the Spirit - "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

2). Tests our faith.

*"Knowing that the **testing of your faith** produces patience." (James 1:3)*

*"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is **tested by fire,** may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)*

Trials test our faith to see whether it is genuine or not. One example in the bible whose faith was severely tested was Abraham who was asked by God to sacrifice Isaac, his "only son."

3). Helps to keep us from going astray.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word." (Psalm 119:67)

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes." (Psalm 119:71)

Most of the time God will use trials to get our attention when we drift from Him in heart and soul. We are "prone to wander" and trials are usually the means to bring us back on our knees to God our maker.

V. GOD'S COMFORT IN OUR TRIALS.

1). God knows your limitation.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are

able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

God knows your limitation and will not give you more than you can bear.

2). The Lord knows how to deliver you.

"Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." (2 Peter 2:9)

The Lord knows and is able to deliver you.

3). God is able to make all things to work together for your good.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

God is able to make ALL things to work together for your good though it seems impossible.

4). The Lord is compassionate and merciful.

"My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." (James 5:10-11)

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:8-14)

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

5). Christ went through testing also (Matt. 4:1-11) and is able to sympathize with you and help you. He is our High Priest who "ever lives to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). Christ is with you in the fire. Remember Daniel's three friends when they were in the fire and how someone "like the Son of God" was with them (Daniel 3:25).

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do

not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:14-15)

"For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." (Hebrews 2:16-18)

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:25)

6). Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39)

7). Christ's perfect peace will sustain you.

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

8). Come boldly to God in prayer through Christ our High Priest.

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us

therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

9). Commit yourself to God. Like the old hymn says: "God will take care of you."

"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:19)

10). God is able to keep you by His power from falling.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen." (Jude 24-26)

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"He is my future and my hope!"

"He is the light at the end of my tunnel!"

"I haven't given up on my God!"

*"I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that
He is able!"*