



Trials

Trials
+
Tribulation
=
Strength
+
Determination

Peace in Difficulties

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 4:6-7

This quote is attributed to C. S. Lewis, “Life with God is not immunity from difficulties, but peace in difficulties.” We don’t have to live as a Christian very long to understand the truth of this statement. We like to think about many of the precious promises of God, but sometimes we overlook one that was penned by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to Timothy, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). That is not one we are quick to claim.

The truth is that God has promised us his presence and his peace even amid trials, persecutions and difficulties in life. One

of the great truths about Jesus our Lord is that he understands our circumstances. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 1:10). We are not alone in our difficulties; Jesus has been there, and he knows our struggles. He knows how to comfort the afflicted.

We are encouraged by Paul to pray to God with thanksgiving. When we can count our blessings, even when we are challenged by various trials in life, we will discover the obstacles before us are not as daunting and scary. Give thanks to God in all your circumstances knowing that in every circumstance God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28).

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a complex, fascinating, and unique design in each.

Also, like snowflakes, our forms will eventually change. James taught us that: “... For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). In our early years we feel permanently attached to the earth. As time flows on, we begin to realize that we’re flowing with it. A change is coming.

The magnitude of that change is greater than appears to faithless eyes. Here’s how Paul described that change in 1 Corinthians 15:51,53: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ... For the corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Corruption is not a pleasant idea when speaking of our bodies. After burial decomposition begins. Over decades and centuries, it’s hard to find a trace of the body that once lived on earth. But, as the Bible declares, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). The resurrection of dead bodies will one day be realized!

But even more significant is the change we can experience now. Again, hear what Scripture says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2

Corinthians 5:17). Just because we are a snowflake today doesn’t mean that’s what we have to be tomorrow!

Timothy D Hall
“LightGrams”
February 13, 2014

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

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In these verses the Apostle Paul names the proper spiritual PPE we are to wear in our battle with Satan. Much like the trade I work in, electricity, we can't see it, but we can see the effects of it. I must wear the proper PPE, or Personal Protective Equipment to protect myself from electrocution. Paul tells us we battle against evil spiritual hosts that we can't see, but we can see the effects of him. We must insulate ourselves for protection from the devil; we do that by applying the things the Apostle Paul has listed for us to protect ourselves when we battle Satan. We can't do it without God's help.

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“A Snowflake Today, Tomorrow A ...”

Snowflakes fill the air as I look out my window. Already on the ground are perhaps billions (trillions?) of their brethren. I know, from having seen microscopic images of them, that each snowflake is a marvel. They say that no two are alike. Awesome!

Due to the abundance of snow, few people are out and about. Schools have shut down and some work places have canceled shifts. Many are glad to have the "vacation", but after a while people begin to develop cabin fever. "Is this snow never going to end?" some might ask.

Snow is a funny substance. Today it can stack up, causing highways and sidewalks to become hazardous. Tomorrow it might morph into a different

form entirely. If temperatures warm, snowflakes will change into water. Under still warmer circumstances, the water becomes a vapor. But in whatever form, the H₂O molecule will always be around. You can't destroy matter, we're told.

Like snowflakes, no two are identical, not even twins.

What a fitting illustration for people! Like snowflakes, no two are identical, not even twins. If you argue that twins share the same DNA, I'll respond by pointing out they don't share the same experiences and viewpoints. Put people under a microscope and you'll discover

Trials

“In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” Job 1:22

How often do you face trials, tribulations, or temptations? If you are like most of us, often; Right? Life is not always easy. There are numerous reasons why we face trials in this life but let's look at just a handful.

For one, as humans we are promised by God to have struggles due to the spiritual fall that took place at the beginning of time when Adam and Eve sinned; we have to labor, toil, and deal with hardships that were promised all of us due to the consequences of the original sin. Then, there are trials we face because we are Christian. As a matter of fact, Christians are guaranteed struggles according to scripture; for example, we are promised by God that we will be tested with all kinds of trials. Here are handful of scripture verses that point to our trials as Christians:

1 Peter 1:6-7, "In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor

when Jesus Christ is revealed."

1 Peter 4:12, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”

1 Peter 4:17-18, “For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; 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?”

Christians are guaranteed struggles according to scripture

1 Corinthians 3:13, “...each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.” John 15:1-2, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

James 1:12, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the

test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

Luke 3:16, “John answered them all, saying, ‘I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.’” We know that fire represents being refined.

So, again, we can see that there is a guarantee of trials in this life for Christians from all the scriptures we just cited.

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why do I have to deal with these trials? Why me?”

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why do I have to deal with these trials? Why me?” If you have not in the past asked yourself this question while going through trials, you have done much better than me because I have asked myself, “Why me?” or “Why this hardship?”

However, did you notice some of the positives or the benefits that were mingled into the verses above? For example, we as Christians can “rejoice” over our hardships. We can have a good attitude despite our hardships. 1 Peter 1:6 says to “rejoice”.

I'm pretty sure you are probably like me when I say that I don't always want to rejoice over hardships of various kinds. But, if we focus on the fact that God will praise us for overcoming, and focus on the fact that our suffering will result in glory and honor in heaven, then it is much easier because there are benefits for all of us who belong to the Lord.

Trials prove our faith in Him. So, trials bring benefits in this area as well; this is one reason why we struggle. God wants us to grow in our trust of Him despite the situation; He wants us to mature; He wants us to be more useful in glorifying Him; He wants us to persevere in our faith for the purpose of salvation; He wants us to be more blessed on earth with wisdom and blessed in Heaven with reward; He wants to prove our faith even though He already knows how we will respond to our trials - this is all for our benefit and also so that other spiritual beings can see faith in action.

We learn during our trials; they can push us to look to God for answers in His word. His word pushes us to grow spiritually; for example, Romans 12:2 puts it this way, “...be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” God says to be renewed in our minds. What better way to do

Resist the Devil

James 4:7, “...therefore submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Submit—is to allow yourself to be totally governed by someone or something. It means to be all in; when we're totally supportive of a family member we put a sign in the yard stating we're behind our kid or grandkid's effort. If we're all in submitting ourselves to God we must go a step further in allowing God to control everything about us: to do this we must be in constant prayer with Him to determine our next move, our thoughts, our travels, our friends, our eyes, ears and mouth, and our hearts belong to God.

Resist—to resist is the opposite of submit, if we resist the devil by submitting to God then we are spiritually full and there is no room in our lives for Satan.

Flee—the devil isn't going to patiently wait twiddling his thumbs for us to turn our back on God and allow him back into our life, he will flee from us, sadly to find another soul.

Ephesians 6:10-18, “*Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the holy places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*”

that we will all face trials of many kinds in this life. But, as scripture says, we as Christians can rejoice in these because God is making us into a spiritual masterpiece that will not disappoint us on the day we are rewarded. Judgement day for Christians is reward day if we overcome our trials through faith in Christ; it is something to look forward to.

Yes, on judgement day we will answer for the sins for which stubbornly did not repent. So, now is a great time to repent of those and leave them way behind you. Our sins, the ones we have repented of and have not done willfully, are removed as far as the East is from the West according to a favorite psalm of mine (Psalm 103). This is why scripture asks, "Who can bring a charge or accusation against God's elect?" (Romans 8:33) We who are saved through Christ are God's elect. No one can hold our old sins that we have repented of against us.

We are anchored in Christ and can't be moved. There is nothing we face that can keep us from our hope of salvation through Christ Jesus, not our struggles, not our own mistakes, not the trials we receive from others around us, etc. Romans 8:39 proclaims, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all

creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Therefore, being so powerful through our Lord, we rejoice in suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope as Romans 5:3-4 says.

There is nothing we face that can keep us from our hope of salvation

Psalm 66:10-12: "For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins. You made men ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water, Yet You brought us out into a place of abundance."

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that than by looking to God and His word, to the higher power instead of to ourselves. I personally don't have the answers; God does. It is part of our spiritual growth to look to Him; He has the answers and has revealed many of them to us in His word. Trials encourage us to be renewed in our minds by looking to Him, so He allows us to suffer some for growth.

God wants us to grow in character and hope; He does this by allowing trials.

God wants us to grow in character and hope; He does this by allowing trials. Romans 5:3-4 says, "...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope."

We hope for salvation as scripture repeats several times; we don't have salvation in its complete form yet, we simply hope for it now and are growing into it. We can be assured in our hope that God can keep us, but we are not yet in heaven, are we? So, growth is important to keep me from falling away and to keep the devil at bay. Growth is important in my hope for salvation. God does not want us to fall away and He wants us to be the best that we can be.

I am not saying that we earn our salvation. We do not earn our salvation; however, God requires that we try to live by His word. He has set a standard to live by with warning that we should not be deceived into thinking we can willfully practice certain evil behavior and still enter the kingdom of heaven. This does not mean we earn our salvation or that we are always on the edge of falling away; it just means that we are not going to take advantage of His grace; it means we are not free to willfully follow after the evil desires of the flesh or follow after the devil. We have been freed from the bondage of sin to walk freely in the Spirit of the word and not after the desire of the sinful nature or the world. So, because we are free from sin, God allows us to have trials to refine us into something greater.

God says He is pruning us according to John 15:1-2 which we cited above. Jesus uses the natural order of fruit bearing vines to describe our spiritual need for pruning; pluck off that one sprout on certain vines and two or three may grow in its place. It may not be pleasant for us to go through these trials or pruning episodes, but it is for our own benefit, and the benefit of others, and the benefit of God if we persevere and produce more fruit and prove our faith. Revelation 3:18 is another scripture that explains why we go

through trials: "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich..." Our trials are making us spiritually wealthy. Everything here is going to pass away, but we will take from here what we have spiritually; then, we will be blessed by God for our hardships as a reward. Allowing yourself to go through trials for the sake of Jesus will pay dividends in the end; it will pay greatly.

James chapter one is a great chapter that talks about us dealing with trials and why. It points to the benefits that come from trials. James 1:2-5 states, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." And skipping down to verse 12, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

God encourages us to consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds because it can produce perseverance which leads to a crown of life. Do you look

up to people you know who have gone through various testing and have been able to persevere through them? They seem to ace their tests or trials. I do; I admire them. This is one reason so many heart-felt movies are inspired by people who have struggles and overcome them; they are making A's on their tests of life through perseverance. Those of us who persevere spiritually glorify God and in return will be honored with a

God encourages us to consider it pure joy when we face trials

crown of life. You and I are real characters in this story of life here on earth. How will your novel of life read? Who will you inspire?

I have witnessed many brothers and sisters who have overcome many obstacles and it is inspiring. Don't think that your actions are not impacting the church or others you know. Your choices whether for good or evil matter; people notice; a little leaven leavens the whole lump as scripture says. You are influencing someone. People and the hosts of heaven are watching. Let's allow God to write great chapters of faith in our life story with the pen of perseverance, so that we may gain wisdom, not lacking anything spiritually as scripture says.

Also, we struggle because we are under spiritual attack from our enemies in the spiritual realm; we are under attack from the devil, and we are under attack from those who belong to the devil. 1 Peter 5:8-10 admonishes us, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal

What we are going through with trials is not totally unique

glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

Like the story of Job from the Old Testament, we receive trials and temptations in order to destroy us and in order to prove to God that we really are not faithful. He even tried tempting Jesus to prove He would not be faithful and to prevent Jesus from persevering for our sins. course, the devil failed. As we know, the devil does not want us to succeed in perseverance either. The devil wants us to belong to him.

Life is full of the same stories of trials and temptations repeatedly in various ways and for various people. What we are going through with trials is not totally unique. 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." So, despite the devil's persistence, we can be assured God will help us through our temptations and trials from the devil.

It would not be good of me to leave out the fact that we bring trials upon ourselves with our own evil desires and mistakes. James 1:13 says, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." While God does allow us to be tempted and undergo trials for our own good, he does not tempt us with evil. The evil desires we have are not created by God. They are either our own due to our sinful nature or they have been put into our minds by evil forces.

In concluding, I will say again