

Trials & Tribulation versus Triumph

Consider it all joyful, my brethren, whenever you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.(JAM1:2-4) The Greek word *peirasmos*, to describe “trials”, refers to that which examines, tests and proves the character or integrity of something. “Testing” is “*dokimion*” which has a similar idea prove by testing as with gold(1PE1:6-7) Suffering is that which proves one’s character and integrity along with both the object and quality of one’s faith. The English word *tribulation*[severe trial or persecution] is derived from the Latin word *tribulum* which was a device used for threshing grain in which grain was furiously beaten and thrashed to separate it from the straw and chaff. Triumph stands for being victorious. We can turn our trials/tribulations into positive experiences if we direct our faith and expectation on the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Why me? Why do people suffer? Everyone has troubles. We face problems, affliction, suffering & hardship. We all have stories of suffering and they come in many different types. It may be the illness, loss of someone close to you, disappointment in your job or work, financial disasters—sorrow, pain and suffering of all kinds. It can be anything that ranges from something as small and or having to face a lion in the lions’ den as with Daniel. We need strength, endurance and patience. Why does God allow trials, worries, anxieties, difficulties? Should we blame God and turn from Him? Are all trials the result of sin committed by the one who suffers? Can good come from suffering? Is it possible faithfully endure our difficulties? What solutions does the Bible offer to help us endure & overcome our problems, afflictions and hardships? Jesus says, “*In this world you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world*”(JOH16:33)

There are several reasons, why people suffer. A) Divine discipline or correction - “*For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son He receives*”(HEB12:6;REV3:19;PSA119:67) As discipline for sin to bring us back to fellowship through genuine confession. We sometimes suffer because of our own foolishness. We reap what we sow(GAL6:7-9) B) Because of the sin of others - Suffering at the hands of people (persecution, violent treatments) is used of God to fill up the measure of their sins. It shows the evil character of those who persecute others and the justice of God’s judgment when it falls.(1PE2:19-23,1 TH2:14-16) C) To resolve angelic conflict between Satan and God. -Job expressly states that Job’s suffering was a temptation from Satan(JOB1:1-2:10)Satan hoped that, because he was suffering, Job would turn away from God. D) To learn obedience to the divine plan - God lovingly and faithfully uses suffering to develop personal righteousness, maturity and our walk with Him.(HEB12:5f;1PE1:6;JAM1:2-4) The Lord uses trials to test our faith in the sense of purifying it, to bring it to the surface, so we are forced to put our faith to work. Suffering helps to remove impurities from our lives such as indifference, self trust, false motives, self-centeredness, wrong values and priorities and human defense and escape mechanisms by which we seek to handle our problems (man-made solutions) that need to be removed like dross in the gold refining process. As a pruning tool to increase fruitfulness.(JOH15:1-7) E) Humbling, to keep pride down, to understand the grace of God. -The Apostle Paul saw his thorn in the flesh as an instrument allowed by God to help him maintain a spirit of humility and dependence on the Lord because of the special revelations he had seen. Suffering is a tool God uses to cause us to exercise faith in the provisions of God’s grace. It is God’s grace in Christ that changes us, manifest the life and character of Christ.(2CO12:7,9;4:8-11;PHI1:19f) F) To develop perseverance and endurance. - Suffering or trials teach us the truth, the truth of learning to “wait on the Lord only”(PSA62:1-8) Suffering a tool that God uses to bring us to Himself so we will respond to Him and His Word. It forces us to turn from trust in our own resources to living by faith in God’s resources. We may suffer persecution because of our faith, i.e., suffering for righteousness sake (2TI3:12) Suffering is not limited to those who are wicked. This was the theory of Job’s friends (JOB4:7-9) G) To demonstrate the power and glory of God - *and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me*” (PSA50:15) God allowed evil because the temporary presence of evil in the universe would result in the greatest glory to His name. Suffering provides opportunity to manifest and magnify the power of God through His servants in order to verify and confirm the messenger and his message. God seeking our good and God seeking His praise are really one and the same pursuit, since our good/joy yields praise to His name. H) To witness for Christ - The divine purpose in trials which involves the gospel.(PHI1:12,21-24) To manifest the character of Christ in the midst of suffering as a testimony to win others to Christ, suffering often opens up doors for ministry. Look at the results of Paul’s response to the trials” *to live is Christ and to die is gain*. The Apostle was undoubtedly continuing to rejoice in the Lord. I) To develop our capacity and sympathy in comforting others who suffers - *For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*(2CO1:3-5) J) To teach us lessons in prayer. - *Lord, when they were in trouble and distress; they poured out a prayerful whisper when Your chastening was upon them.*(ISA26:16) So is this present trouble the hand of the Lord in direct rebuke or the promised testing of our faith or are we being had by Satan? We should know, so we can respond accordingly.

The Lord tests the righteous (PSA11:5)

- 2 -

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered up Isaac a sacrifice.(HEB11:17) Abraham faced a terrifying test of faith. He responded to God's test by obediently offering up his son Isaac.(GEN22:2) Abraham was moved by the sole desire to please God, because he trusted God. Abraham faced the heat with a holy desire to sanctify, or set apart his life for the glory of God. We know that God puts us through testing periods in our lives. In trusting God, Jews call this *kiddush HaShem*, meaning sanctifying God's name. At the binding of Isaac, Abraham surrendered his most prized possession, his son. In doing so, his character was tested and made pure. Abraham learned that Isaac belonged solely to God. God will test us and remove our impurities. During times of testing, do not take your eyes off of Him! Remember that your purity will always remain, after each testing you will shine brighter! Why? because you have been purified by the Refiner's fire.

Have a look at Daniel 3, the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. They went through the worst trial anybody could go through; the fiery furnace. After heating up the furnace 7 times, the three were even bound before thrown into the fire. We know the end of the story and what a "faith" lifter this has been over the ages, and still is. After the Lord rescued them they were honored and promoted by the same king who had ordered for them to be burned. The Name of the Lord was glorified amongst all that were present. Daniel had been serving the Lord for a long time, praying three times per day. Then the "law" demanded no prayers. They dragged him to the lions' den, by all means. Daniel in the Lions' den received deliverance at the right time. He was sustained by his faith in the Lord. Without faith God cannot work. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. The Lord rescued him. Daniel did have a definite purpose in that lions' den. In the deepest point of his life the Lord met Daniel. Here we have Joseph, his brothers threw him in the dried up waterhole, sold him. Joseph ended up in Egypt, while innocent in jail... later promoted to King under Pharaoh, because of his forgiveness there really never was any "just" served against his brothers. Joseph kept the dreams of his youth in his heart. He knew they were of the Lord. Joseph stayed focused on his God. Joseph believed that the Lord was in control, He proved to possess faith by the manner in which he acted. Joseph said to his brethren, *"You thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."* Moses was troubled by the Egyptian army on one side and the Red Sea on the other side with no way out; the people were struck with fear. Moses had to think twice how they were going to survive this one. Then the Lord told him to strike the water, and the power of God cleaved the waters. All were delivered just in time when the Red Sea became dry to cross. Job and Old Testament prophets are our examples of suffering.(JER38:6) Have we suffered as much as Job? Job 1:22 says that, even after his troubles began, *"in all this Job did not sin"* Yet he remained faithful. *You have heard of the endurance of Job, and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*(JAM5:11) Stephen, full of faith and power, spoke to the High Priest and all them in the council and called them stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears. They gnashed their teeth, cast Stephen out the city and stoned him. But before that, deliverance was there when Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit looked into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This was a different kind of Victory, because Stephen suffered for Christ's sake and died as a martyr. Paul suffered great hardship for the Lord and we should share in those sufferings. He endured without falling away.(2TI1:8) *O Lord, remember David and all the hardships he endured.*(PSA132:5) David was a remarkable man. Obedient and patient, he persevered through hardships trusting in God. He relied entirely on God. When he did stumble, he was quick to repent and ask forgiveness and didn't repeat his sins. He took personal responsibility for his actions and didn't try to get out of the consequences. He took the time to learn God's voice and thank God in everything. *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"* (1PE3:18) Jesus endured suffering for our benefit: to help fulfill God's purpose for us. During His ministry Jesus Christ was ridiculed, despised and rejected by the religious leaders of His day. This was a large part of His personal afflictions before His crucifixion. His own people demanded His execution. In the end, even His disciples abandoned Him to suffer His fate alone. He is despised and rejected by men a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"(ISA53:3;JOH1:11) He endured the full range of human suffering. After He had triumphed over death through His resurrection.(LUK24:46) Since He was sinless, He did not suffer for any sins of His own, but for ours. He took the penalty for our sins upon Himself. That is what made His suffering and death absolutely necessary for our salvation. How severely did God test the faithfulness of Christ? *"And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan"* (MAR1:13;HEB5:7) Temptation itself is a form of suffering and trial. Jesus Christ resist and overpower the desires of the flesh, perfectly resisted all temptations to sin. The agony He suffered at Gethsemane is impossible for us to understand. There He prayed three times to the Father *"His sweat became like great drops of blood"* He was obediently bowing to what He knew was the Father's will. Jesus(& saints) are witnesses to what we can do under trying circumstances. All these examples of purpose for suffering show that God will keep His promises to help His people endure faithfully.(HEB12:1-4;1PE2:19-23)

Trials Are Opportunities

- 3 -

Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble(JOB14:1) We see these words when the suffering endured by the one who spoke them. Different people deal with different problems and afflictions and it seems that some suffer more hardships than others do. Troubles concern us, not just because hardship itself is a burden, but also because affliction can lead to spiritual temptations. We may be tempted to feel that our trials justify committing sin. We may become so discouraged that we blame God for our troubles, lose faith in Him or begin to doubt His goodness and mercy. As Job's wife said(JOB2:9). The word trouble means to produce physical disorder, to put into confused motion or to become mentally agitated, terrify, disquiet, unsettle. The Greek word for troubled is *tarraso*, to describe something that is shaken or thrown into confusion. This same word was also used to describe a violent body of water or the uproar of nations. *Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me.*(JOH14:1) Jesus saw that there would be situations and circumstances that could shake their trust in God. He is not saying that they would not go through difficulties. Instead, Jesus was telling the disciples to not allow the difficulties to shake their trust in Him or the Father.

What is suffering? Suffering is a struggle. It's going to be a battle all the way. That's why they are called "trials" and "testings" Suffering is a tool God uses to get our attention and to accomplish His purposes in our lives. It is designed to build our trust in the Almighty God, but suffering requires the right response if it is to be successful in accomplishing God's purposes. *Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*(1PE4:19) Suffering forces us to turn from trust in our own resources to living by faith in God's resources. Simply stated, suffering is anything which hurts or irritates. In the design of God, it is also something to make us think in a way that would never occur without the trial. We have the great opportunity to both please and honor our God by our faith and to simultaneously grow in the likeness of Christ. Suffering is painful. It is never easy. Regardless of what we know and how hard we apply the principles, it is going to hurt.(1PE1:6) "distressed" is *lupeo* meaning "to cause pain, sorrow, grief" Pain is a bodily, physical discomfort. It is common to people and it is real and the desire to have it gone. They identify themselves as having pain. This identity affects how they approach the problem of pain. Pain is felt, interpreted and acted upon as the person always carries a plan; to remove it, feel better and the pursuit of the goal. All illness and misery of this life, including pain result from the curse of sin. (ROM 5:12-21, 2CO4:16-18, EZE18:4,20) The ultimate and primary blame for suffering rests on Satan who tempts people to sin and thereby brought sin into the world. The secondary blame rests upon people, ourselves included, who have given into temptation and committed sin that led to suffering. All people suffer as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. God originally placed Adam and Eve in a state of paradise with no problems of any kind. But He warned them of the consequences of sin. When they sinned anyway, He decreed they would endure pain, suffering, hardship, and eventual death as a punishment for sin.(GEN3:16-19) All people since that time have endured these same problems. In particular, because of Adam, all people die.(1CO15:22;HEB9:27) Remember, if you blame God and reject Him because you are suffering, then you are doing exactly what Satan wants you to do. He has defeated you! The only way to defeat Satan and really overcome hardship is to maintain your faithfulness to God in spite of it. Trials may become mirrors of reproof to reveal hidden areas of sin and weakness. The point is, obedience often costs us something and is hard. It can require sacrifice, courage, discipline and faith in the belief that God is good and has our best interests at heart regardless of how things might appear to us. Regardless of the reason God allows suffering into our lives, rarely does it not reveal areas of need, weaknesses, wrong attitudes. God should not be blamed for the existence of suffering. *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me" For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone*(JAM1:13) Don't rebel against the intentions of the Lord. Don't fight the trials, which life brings. Take them as a challenge, allows the Lord to mold you into His image. He wants you to come through victoriously. Many take trials as bothersome, but they miss an opportunity to see God at work in their lives. Others believe that impossibilities are limiting God, while they forget that the Lord may be preparing them for something very special. Are you willing to allow the Lord to create something lasting in you? Melting you to pure gold! God will test you in order to prove your character. Some of these experiences may be scary, that does not mean you have to fear. Learn to float in Jesus. He has a purpose for your life, but if you don't co-operate you'll never know what His real purpose was, because you would have missed it. We suffer because we live in a fallen world where sin reigns in the hearts of men. If we believe that all suffering results from a person's own sin, and if we see good people suffering, we may be tempted or to think God is not keeping His promises. But we have learned that all people suffer, whether or not they are righteous. Faithful Christians of all ages have suffered. The command to endure suffering is just another part of a Christian's life, like the command to study the Bible, pray, worship, etc. We should expect suffering to come, so our faith will not be shaken when it does. *Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.*(DEU8:5-8)

God Helps with Your Troubles

- 4 -

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.(PSA23:19) Read what the scriptures have to say about overcoming life of Faithful saints(ROM11) Could you divert those trials into triumph? The following questions are designed to help us consider in the day of adversity.(ECC7:14) (1) How am I responding to it? (2) How should I respond to it?(3) Am I learning from it?(4) Does my response demonstrate faith, love for God and for others, Christ-like character, values, commitment, priorities, etc.?(5) How can God use it in my life? Suffering has as its chief purpose the formation of Christ-like character . “We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, proven character;(ROM5:3-4). As a process, it takes time. The results God seeks to accomplish with the trials of life requires time and thus also, endurance. (PHI3:12-14) Suffering provides opportunity for God’s glory, our transformation, testimony and ministry, etc. We need to surrender completely to the Lord, allowing Him to have control in our lives; being obedient to the scriptures; crucifying the flesh; and keeping our will to Him.(1JO2:15) Beloved, if you do not know the sweetness of bearing burdens and the joy of overcoming trials, then perhaps you need to humble yourself before God. *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; who will not allow you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it*(1COR10:13) Choose not to focus on self, on what is around you or on the problem. Choose to look to the solution, the Lord Himself, then you will be able to endure it. Because of His love for His children, He is willing to deliver every circumstance of our lives, including the sins, to work together for our good in Him.(ROM8:28) *My grace is sufficient for you,*(2CO12:9-10)

What can we do when trouble comes our way? What is the solution for a troubled heart? Jesus gives the prescription for troubled hearts in a simple and sure manner. The only solution for a troubled heart is trust in God. When you go through the trials and you claim the scriptures and stand on this : *In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul. But the Lord has been my defense, and my God the rock of my refuge.*(PSA94:19-22) In moments like these God’s Word becomes a Source of Strength, a Resting Place, a Refuge, a Shelter. *not think it strange when we face trials*(1PE4:12-13) Take everything up in prayer (PHI4:6-7) Examine our Christian walks and confess/repent of all known sin (1CO11:31-32) Consider Jesus, know that Christ sympathizes with us in our weaknesses (HEB4:14-16) Come unto Jesus and learn from Him. *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*(MAT11:28) Rest our hope fully/patiently in Christ as the anchor for our souls, and for the promised final justice, healing, and understanding.(ROM8:18) be strengthened “*according to God’s Word*“ (PSA119:28) Acknowledge that when our flesh is weak we can experience even more spiritual strength (2CO12:7-10) Affirm that when the “outward” person is decaying, the “inward” Christian person is being “renewed” day by day.(2CO4:16) Remember that whatever afflictions are faced in this lifetime, they are both “light” and “short” compared to the Christian’s future “eternal weight of glory” (2CO4:17-18) “rejoice” looking forward to the future glory revealed (1PE4:13)

We all have many opportunities to prove our faith in God's promises, for God often determines that we must suffer for a season that we might be made perfect. Oh, how the true measure of our faith is brought out as we struggle through dark nights of sorrows and pain! When we are tried "so as by fire", we learn to look to Him who has promised, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*(ISA43:2) The overcoming of temptations and trials builds great confidence in God. Then, should we not rejoice in them? Every trial, every problem, affords a glorious opportunity to learn of the high calling to which God ever calls His own. *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*(1TH5:18) We should always be thankful for the guiding Hand that leads triumphantly in the confidence of right, even though that Hand at times may lead "*through the valley of the shadow of death*". If we will only trust at all times, we will be able to say, as the Psalmist David said, "*I will fear no evil, for thou art with me*". God will bring you through every battle victoriously and make you more than a conqueror. You need never be troubled nor fear defeat as long as you obey God, who directs and sustains all His tried people."*It is good for me that I have been afflicted*"(PSA119:71) The Bible shows that suffering actually accomplishes good in our lives and we can have eternal life when this life is over if we suffer faithfully (JAM1:12). The Lord wants to hear from us the same as what the 3 Hebrew men said to Nebuchadnezzar when he was about to throw them into the fiery furnace. *But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*(DAN13:18) Let us learn from past stories what God is like and how we can trust Him in any situation, that God is faithful and True. Whatever comes your way be with a thankful heart and with adoration toward your Savior and Lord.