

Faith Works To Endure Trials

“Consider It All Joy, My Brethren, When You Encounter Various Trials” (James 1:2)

Introduction

They have perhaps the greatest power to change our lives, yet we do not want them. We try our best to avoid them. When they start, we want them to stop as soon as possible. We get sad. We get depressed. We get lonely. We make plans for our future specifically to avoid them. We feel bad for other people when it happens to them. We even pray regularly that they not happen to us or to those we love.

If they come from God... they sure are hard! If they come from God...what is their purpose? If they come from God...how can they help me?

How To Recognize Them

- All Shapes and Sizes
 - If a group of militant atheists were to come into your room and tie you up and threaten you with death unless you renounce your faith, I think you would realize that you were in a trial. The problem is that our trials don't usually come in such an affront to our beliefs. Often they are typical day-to-day struggles with circumstances, relationships, ill health, or some area of lacking or inability in our own lives.
 - 1 Peter 1:6 "...even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials..."
 - James 1:2 "...when you encounter various trials..."
 - Trials can be long, short, emotional, physical, mental, or circumstantial, and come with varying degrees of difficulty. Our trials come in all shapes and sizes and do not always come in a spiritual "wrapper."
 - If you find yourself in some difficult or constraining circumstance that is a source of struggle for you, consider yourself in a trial; it is therefore not random (it is allowed by God) and can work for good in your spiritual growth.
- They have the appearance of being obstacles
 - Many trials seem, on the surface, to be obstacles that prevent us from living a godly life.
 - Trials are not actually obstacles (though they often feel that way), but are the fuel for getting to our goals.
 - It is critical to see that, while these trials might provide momentary set-backs to our visible progress in the faith, they are ultimately providing the fuel we need to get to our destination. They build into our lives passion, perseverance, and deeper character change. Often God answers our prayer for greater holiness, not by providing better and easier circumstances, but by providing trials.
- Design and Intent
 - 1 Peter 1:6-9 Indicates there is design and intent behind the trial.
 - God has looked at your life and decided that it was, in fact, necessary for you to go through a trial for the sake of spiritual growth. Often Christians fail to persevere in trials, because they begin to believe that they are simply random happenstance, and therefore have no point or benefit.

- Remember Paul: Imprisoned, Shipwrecked, Beaten to a pulp, Left for dead. Think about possible reactions to his trials:
 - "I'm never getting on another boat again"
 - "Prison!?!? I didn't do anything wrong!" I'm never going back!
 - "After beating and leaving town... 'I'll Get you!!'"
 - Paul never was bitter or vengeful or full of hate. He dusted himself off after every trial a stronger and more dedicated servant.
 - Right now, if you were to go into a hospital and listen in to conversations taking place between friends and family with sick loved ones, you might hear phrases like, "You'll see, it will all work out" or "Every cloud has a silver lining." These people need hope and search for meaning in their trial. Loved ones reflexively try to provide it by explaining that their pain has purpose.
 - However, without God, these can be nothing more than shallow platitudes, because there really is no guarantee that their pain will have a positive purpose. However, the Christian always has hope because there is nothing random, unplanned, or unforeseen in any of the trials that come into their lives. For the Christian, all our pain and trials can have redemptive purposes.
 - How can I get to a place in my spiritual life that I can praise God in the midst of a trial? By recognizing the benefit of trials.

The Benefit Of Trials

- Grow Grow Grow
 - Just like pouring gas on a fire causes exponential growth, so trials cause us to grow more quickly (spiritually) than otherwise possible.
 - The trial at that moment, however, seems to be impeding and an obstacle to so many things. But, the tradeoff is that it is carrying you forward in your growth faster and more effectively than you can imagine.
 - The process of growing spiritually or being refined (1 Peter 1:7) is not easy.
 - How is gold refined and purified?? It is heated to 1,947° F temperature. The gold is hidden within all the other elements. It is intermixed with other things that are worthless. These other things devalue the gold that is within them. But, once the gold is separated from the impurities then what is left? Something valuable. Something worth the work that it took to separate it. Something worth the work to purify it. Something worth the heat. Something worth the pain. God wants you to be that purified. He wants you to be that valuable. He wants to help you become like Him. He wants you to gain the reward that awaits everyone who endures the trials of life and come out on the other side stronger, more faithful, and holier.
 - When do you recognize this growth? This benefit? The growth comes when you overcome the trial. Most every time you don't realize it until after the trial, sometimes a long time after the trial, maybe even it is never recognized!
 - But, what if we can recognize the trials for what they are WHILE they are happening? How much more endurable would they be? Could we even get to the point where we could get a measure of joy from them?
- Demonstrates God's love, not His anger
 - In the midst of trials many of the same questions are asked...

- Have I done something wrong to deserve this?
- Is God angry with me?
- The real question. The personal question is, "Do I choose to blame God or praise God?"
- The truth, as best that I can see it, is that trials may befall those who are faithful as well as those who need discipline
 - Job was faithful and he experienced trial after trial.
 - Hebrew writer declares that the Lord disciplines those that He loves

If in the midst of a trial I know there is sin in my life then I should repent and endure the trial knowing that God is helping me to grow.

If in the midst of a trial I have not sinned then I should endure the trial knowing that God is helping me to grow

- Trials ultimately are a sign of God's approval of us rather than disapproval.
- Christians should not lose heart thinking God is angry with them, when in fact, the opposite is true.
- Joy Joy Joy
 - Can we now see that it is possible to see trials in a new light? Remember James says to, "Consider it all joy..." (James 1:2)
 - Of course they are not enjoyable (Hebrews 12:11). But, afterwards, the fruit of righteousness.
 - You are not expected to put on a happy face through trials. You are not a weak Christian because you don't feel happy and good through the difficult time.
 - As we progress through the trial experiencing the myriad of emotions that go along with it, we know that God loves us. God wants what is best for us. God wants us to grow. God wants us to be holy just as He is holy.

Conclusion

The exhortation in Scriptures is to **endure trials and to persevere**. During these times, we have a great opportunity to grow and increase our faith. However, we need to **recognize** them. Look for these times in your lives so that when they come, you will receive the blessings from them that God intends.