

Trials, Hardship, Difficulties, Persecution & More

What a pain! Everyone wants to "Have a nice day"... but sometimes life just doesn't cooperate!

Trials are a fact of life. We need to accept this fact and learn to how respond to trials properly. There are many good reasons why we shouldn't get discouraged, but should take heart because of what God is doing in our lives.

Trials Happen!

1. Trials are a natural part of life.
 - a. Natural calamities - Ecclesiastes 9:11-12.
 - b. The sins of others - Job 24:2-4, 13-17.
 - c. Our own sins - Job 5:6-7; see also many of the Proverbs.
 - i. Make sure that this is *not* the reason for your trials. Don't add unnecessary difficulties to your life! 1 Peter 4:15.
2. If you are a Christian, those who oppose Christ may add additional trials to your life.
 - a. Don't be surprised by this fact - 1 Peter 4:12.
 - b. Focus your attention on the future - 1 Peter 4:13; Hebrews 12:2-3 (follow Jesus' example).
 - c. Keep on doing what is good - 1 Peter 4:19.
 - d. Remember that *all* people will give account to God for everything they do in this life. Those who oppose you will answer for their actions - 1 Peter 4:5.
 - e. [Note: Our *real* enemy is not the people, but the devil and his forces - Ephesians 6:12. We should pray for the people who bring us trouble, and love them, rather than trying to retaliate with harm - Luke 6:27-28, 31.]

How Should We Respond?

This includes not only our response to the persecution we receive from those who hate Jesus, but also our response to the troubles of life that *everyone* faces.

1. How *not* to respond? A few of the ways are...
 - a. Not with indignant surprise or discouragement; not weary and ready to give-up - 1 Peter 4:12; Hebrews 12:2-3; Galatians 6:9.
 - b. Not ready to abandon the truth - Matthew 13:3, 5-6, 20-21 (from Jesus' parable about the farmer who was planting seed).
 - c. Not with worry about the future - Matthew 6:25-34.
2. How to respond...
 - a. Talk to God and let *him* worry about the problem - James 5:13 (pray); 1 Peter 5:7 (let God "worry" about it, not you); 1 Peter 4:19a (commit the situation to God).
 - b. Continue to do what is good - 1 Peter 4:19b; Galatians 6:9.
 - c. Have a "future focus" - Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1, 10.
3. Having patient endurance:
 - a. We need to have patient endurance - James 5:7-8; Romans 12:12.
 - b. How? Like a soldier, an athlete, a farmer - 2 Timothy 2:3-7.
 - c. Why? In order to bring honor and glory to God - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.
 - d. Why? For the good of others - 2 Timothy 2:10; 2 Corinthians 1:6.

4. Examples we can follow:
 - a. The Old Testament prophets; also Job - James 5:10-11.
 - b. The apostle Paul - 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9; 6:3-10.
 - c. Jesus Christ - throughout his life - [read the gospels].
 - d. People throughout the centuries, who loved God. Some examples: Hebrews 11:32 - 12:3 (see also the rest of chapter 11).

NOTE: Pay close attention to Hebrews 12:2. After presenting us with an entire chapter full of good examples of faith, the author does *not* tell us to focus our attention on these people, but on Jesus. The best of people are imperfect. We may benefit from their example; we may learn from them. But we need to *look beyond them*, to the one who is the source of our salvation.

This world is full of people who focus their attention on *people*. In the church, such people tend to lavish praise on past heroes of the faith - men and women who focused their attention on *God*! Yet *no* person who loves God wants the attention on himself. Even when they use themselves as an example, they have the attitude of the apostle Paul, who said, "Follow my example, *just as I follow Christ's example*" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Good Reasons to Endure It All

1. God uses our trials and suffering to accomplish good in our lives - Romans 8:28(+).
 - a. God will use these things, like discipline, to train us and to bring about good things in our lives - Hebrews 12:7 (see also v. 4 - 13).
 - b. God will use them to refine and purify our faith - 1 Peter 1: 6-7.
 - c. God will use them to strengthen us in many ways, and to build-up a confident hope regarding the future - James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5.
 - d. God will use them to reduce our desire to sin - 1 Peter 4:1-2.
 - e. God will use them to draw us to him! Psalm 119:67, 71-72.
- f. Note that all these promises apply only to those who belong to God. Those who do *not* love God have no such hope.

**** REMEMBER THIS ****

All people have trials. As disciples of Jesus, we may experience some trials and difficulties that the rest of the world does not experience - sometimes even trials that *they* bring upon us. However, we must remember that, in the end, it will be far worse for those who reject God, than for *anyone* who belongs to him. The difficulties and hardships that may be associated with salvation (in this present life) will be *nothing* compared to what those who are ungodly and unrepentant will experience for all eternity.

2. For us, the future is glorious!
 - a. Nothing can separate us from God's love - Romans 8:31-39 (see also the context). [Note that this is true even now. In this respect, the future is already here!]
 - b. God will reward us for all we must endure - James 1:12.
 - c. We will share in Jesus' glory, when he returns - Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:10.

**This should have a significant impact on our views about trials.
It is from *this* perspective, that we can have joy during trials (James 1:2)!**