

In What do You Trust – Part 9 – Trials and Trust

Introductory Joke: I know some of you wonder about why it has taken me so long to go through this series on trust. To that, I give you this story: A billing clerk for a company proudly told a friend that she had just finished a jigsaw puzzle, "And it only took five months," she beamed. "Five months?" said her friend. "That sounds like an awfully long time to finish a jigsaw puzzle." "Not really, " the clerk explained. "The box says six to twelve years."

1. This morning we are going to look at the challenge of trusting God in the middle of life's trials & troubles.
2. What is a trial?
 - a. For most of us, we would say it is when things don't go our way.
 - i. Most of us would say if our car breaks down that we have a trial or tribulation (flat tire).
 - ii. Or if we are struggling to pay our bills or are battling a chronic illness. .
3. Lest we take too shallow a definition of a trial, I want you to join me as we look at how the bible describes a trial.
 - a. 2 Cor 1:8-11 *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us"*
 - b. v8a: the affliction in Asia:
 - i. *Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits danger from my own people, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked.* (II Corinthians 11:24-27)
 - ii. Affliction/Tribulation: Greek: Thlipsis - a pressing, pressing together, pressure. Its root means to press as with grapes being crushed for wine.
 1. Paul's trouble in Asia was so bad that he felt crushed. He was at the edge of despair. He faced a sentence of death.
 2. **My definition of a trial is state of pain or anguish resulting from difficult circumstances that tests patience, endurance, or belief.**
 3. Are you feeling crushed by life today? Is your endurance or trust in God being tested by your pain?
 - a. I want you to know that there is hope and that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.
 - b. You don't have to go through this alone.
 - c. V8b: unbearable burdens:
 - i. In this passage, the afflictions Paul is talking about are *"burdened (under an excessively heavy weight), beyond our strength so that we despaired (destitute of resources to meet the need and thus renouncing all hope) even of life."*
 1. Paul was experiencing the end of his strength. The burden too great to bear. It was so great that he despaired, that he was ready to die. He knew he did not have the strength to carry on.
 2. Many of us look at the Apostle Paul as a mini-superman, who was used by God to change the known world of his time with the gospel of Christ. But he was human,

he was weak, and he was without anything left in him. He was at the end of his rope.

3. Have you ever felt that way? Have you come to the place where your troubles were so beyond your ability and resources to deal with them that you came to the place of despair?
 - a. I know many of you have, some of you are.
 - b. Life can be overwhelming!
 - c. We all face incredible hurts and pains in life and they are never easy to deal with.
 - d. For some of you, there are pains of childhood tragedy, of poor choices or sin that has plagued you and you would love simply to forget they ever occurred..
 - e. Others of you were living your lives by your own strength, God was out of the picture, and then life came crashing down. You despaired. You called out to God for help. You were at the end of your rope. Only God remained.
- d. Verse 9 tells us the result. **I hope it will be your choice today.**
- e. V9: *we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead”*
 - i. **What is the purpose of a trial? To lead us to trust God and not in ourselves.**
 1. In Paul’s words which are written in hindsight, he declares that the purpose of his overwhelming set of trials was to lead him and his companions to cease all attempts to trust in themselves and instead, to trust in God.
 2. God doesn’t send you trials. But he gives them purpose.
 3. God doesn’t need to send you troubles or trials. Life dishes out plenty enough every day.
 4. Your trials, your pain, your anguish has purpose, even when it seems meaningless and torturous.
 5. When you learn to roll your troubles over onto God, your pain, your anguish, even life and death itself...then you begin to experience who God really is.
 - ii. **Trials show us that God never wastes a hurt.**
 1. This is because God is faithful
 - a. The God who was faithful in the past, can be trusted in our future.
 - b. Paul says that what he learned through the process of all the pain he endured was that God is able to be trusted to deliver us.
 - c. Romans 8:28 *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*
 - i. This often quoted verse is one that declares in the strongest of terms that God is working everything for His ultimate purpose and that He is in control. He is able to be trusted.
 - ii. **If you will align your pain with trust in Him, this wonderful promise will work its way through your life.**
 - iii. When our lives are devoted to rely upon God, we experience that glorious truth that what is out of our control is under His control.
 2. God wants your scars to tell a story to others.
 - a. Every scar tells a story.
 - i. My physical scars. (stories mine, you have them too)
 1. Thumb –
 2. Burnt leg
 - ii. Many of us have emotional scars too.
 - b. Jesus’ scars were still there on His resurrected body!

- i. Why? They identified Him. I believe that for this reason, your glorified body will have some symbol of the scars from this life on it as well.
 - ii. We often think that the way that God can really be honored and glorified is if we are healed or if we simply learn to bury our scars and never allow anyone to see our weakness
 - c. **God uses our scars to tell a story of his love and faithfulness to others.**
 - i. Your Scars are not finish lines of death, they are checkpoints of life.
 - ii. Your Scars are not a sign of weakness; they are signs of His grace.
 - iii. **Trials teach us that God can be trusted!** He is trust-worthy. (just like the chair!)
 - 1. There are four words that Paul tacks on to the end of his statement that the purpose of the trials is *so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead*".
 - 2. Paul is declaring is that God is bigger than our problems. God is SO BIG, He raises the dead!
 - 3. God is stronger than death itself. God Himself is able to be trusted with whatever it is that you are struggling with.
 - 4. GOD: He has power to work on our problems
 - 5. - In the early days of the automobile a man's Model-T Ford stalled in the middle of the road. He couldn't get it started no matter how hard he cranked nor how much he tried to advance the spark or adjust things under the hood. Just then a chauffeured limousine pulled up behind him, and a wiry, energetic man stepped out from the back seat and offered his assistance. After tinkering for a few moments the stranger said, "Now try it!" Immediately the engine leaped to life. The well-dressed individual then identified himself as Henry Ford. "I designed and built these cars," he said, "so I know what to do when something goes wrong." God, as our creator knows how to "fix" us .
 - 6. Bible is our owner's manual.
 - f. *v10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us*
 - i. Deliverance! Your cry, your prayer is heard. Has your trial changed you? Hopefully, it has changed you in such a way that you have rolled your burden onto Him and let go if it. When you do so, deliverance is on the way!
 - ii. Paul's theme in this verse is that of encouragement through suffering.
 - 1. The word comfort means to exhort, to strengthen, and to encourage.
 - 2. Encouragement is not just a kind word of consolation, but the word means to place courage into another person.
 - 3. I hope that you will gain courage today, to place your trust in God who raises the dead and who is able to deliver you!
4. **Trials refine our character.**
 - a. Remember the Greek word for affliction is pressure. It is only through the most powerful pressures and time that simple coal is changed into a transparent diamond. This is what trials do for us:
 - b. Romans 5:2-5 "*...we also exult (boast or glory) in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance (in the NT the man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings- to not flee) 4 and perseverance, proven character(those whose integrity will accept no counterfeit) ; and proven*

character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

- i. God is interested in refining you and I. As long as you run from God when affliction comes along, you will remain the same. You don't learn and you don't change.
 - ii. But when you trust in God, you make a choice to cooperate with His grace and His sovereignty. You let Him use the affliction or trial to transform you.
- c. What do many of us do when things go wrong for us?
- i. We tend to look for someone at fault, for someone to blame.
 - ii. Some even blame God for not being there or for now **preventing** their pain.
 - iii. “Where is God? Why didn't He stop this from happening? What didn't He do something?”
 1. The Bible says, *“For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And even we as Christians also groan to be released from pain and suffering.”* (Romans 8:22)
 2. The Bible is clear that God is not the author of the evil and suffering of this world. These things entered our world through sin, through our disobedience to the will and ways of God.
 3. God created us with free will and with that comes the freedom to choose what is right and what is evil.
 4. And because God loves us, He will not take that freedom from us.
 5. *In the bible there is a story of a young man named Joseph, who is was sold into slavery by his own brothers. He went from slavery to prison in Egypt. Yet God took this broken man and used him to be an advisor to Pharaoh, becoming the 2nd most powerful man in the ancient world of his day. He had only one thing to say to his brothers when they found him years later in Egypt, “What you meant for evil God meant for good.”* That's trust!
 - iv. “Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you”
Aldous Huxley
 1. *1 Peter 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*
- d. *A teacher assigned to visit children in a large city hospital received a call requesting that she visit a particular child. She took the boy's name and room number and was told by the teacher on the other end of the line, "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now. I'd be grateful if you could help him with his homework so he doesn't fall behind the others." It wasn't until the visiting teacher got outside the boy's room that she realized it was located in the hospital's burn unit. No one had prepared her to find a young boy so horribly burned and in great pain. She felt that she couldn't just turn and walk out, so she awkwardly stammered, "I'm the hospital teacher, and your teacher sent me to help you with nouns and adverbs." The next morning a nurse on the burn unit asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" Before she could finish her apologies, the nurse interrupted her: "You don't understand. We've been very worried about him, but ever since you were here yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment--It's as though he's decided to live." The boy later explained that he had completely given up hope until he saw that teacher. It all changed when he came to a simple realization. With joyful tears he expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"*
- i. This is the difference trusting Christ will make for you as well. He has a plan. He will not abandon you. He cares for you!
 - ii. I have no idea where you are today, what pains and hurts you have experienced in your life. But I know this—there is hope for those who hurt. There is hope. It comes from trusting God. Like this boy, you may be despairing of life itself. But there is hope. Don't lose heart.

II Cor. 4:16-18 *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

Won't You trust Him today?

Let's pray.