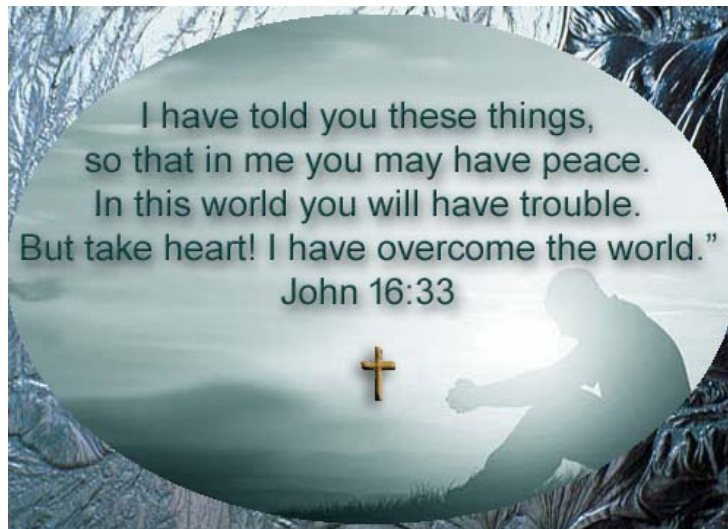


TRIALS

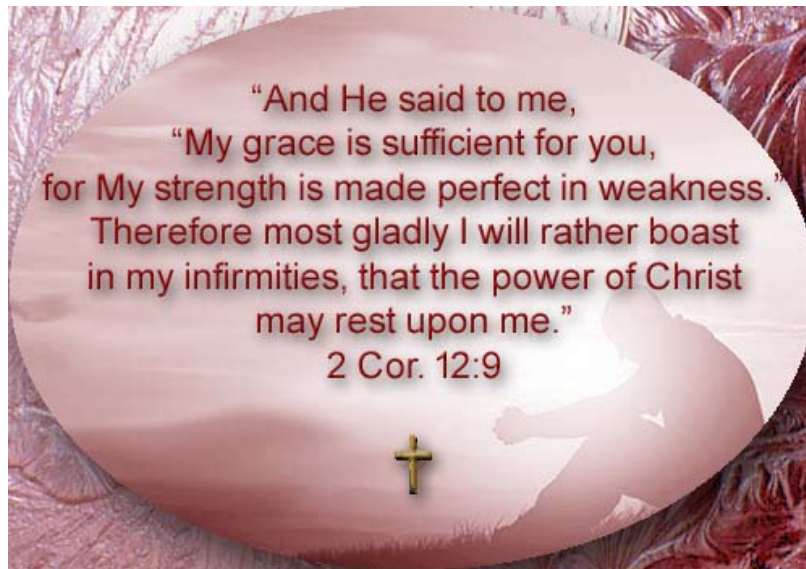


False prophets tell us that if we have faith in God, we will attain prosperity, health, wealth and if we have any desire, God will fulfill them. Jesus did say in John 15:7 "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." The key here is that if we live as He says, we sure won't be seeking the fleshly pleasures of this world that will draw us away from God rather than closer.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." As dedicated Christian believers, should we expect to face trials because of our faith? Obviously we will, because Jesus himself clearly stated it in John 16:33. 1Peter 4:12-13 says this about trials; "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." Then, Acts 14:22 says; "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Is there a purpose for trials? What must we do when facing them? Are there promises from God to deliver us from them? More in the days to come...

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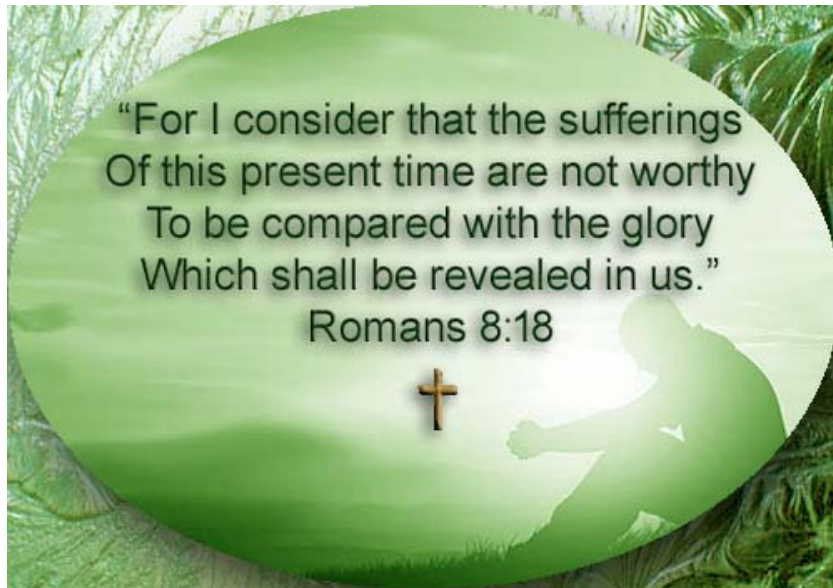


Is there a purpose to trials? Obviously, our Lord taught us that trials have for purpose to produce fruit in our lives and to bring God glory. In Rev. 3:19 Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Paul in Rom. 12:11 said, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." James 1:3 added, "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

When facing trials, our attention is diverted from the things of this world, to bring our focus on God, because we know He is our source for the strength needed to pull us through to victory. Paul in Romans 5:3-4 said, "But we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."

In essence, trials, challenges are all part of life. The reason is simple; we are born in sin, death of the body is its consequence. While we have been born of the Spirit through Christ, our human nature will continue to be subject to life's temptations. That's why trials are ever present to fashion us more each day into the image of our Lord and Savior to the Glory of God.

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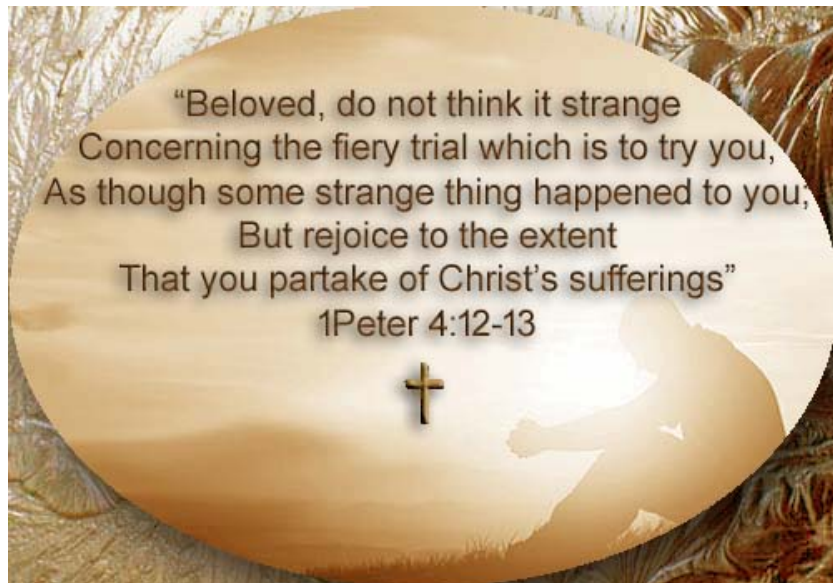


Perseverance in life is perhaps the most difficult attitude to maintain, and is taught by the world as a way to attain success. With God, perseverance means much more, because the fruit of perseverance in God is an eternity of glory in His presence, enjoying His peace, joy, righteousness, and the absence of pain in all its forms. In addition, our perseverance can be used to encourage and comfort others as well.

In 2Cor. 1:3-4 Paul said that God comforts us in all our afflictions so that we will be able to comfort others who are in any affliction as well. Then in Gal. 6:9, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Proverbs 3:5 sort of describes perseverance this way; "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

Perseverance entails we set our minds on the goal, and even through challenges and trials, we persist, push forward with tenacity, and maintain determination and resolve to trust God. Perseverance says that no matter the price, our hearts are set on God rather than the world. In essence, perseverance is accepting to bear trials in exchange for the greatest prize of God's presence for eternity.

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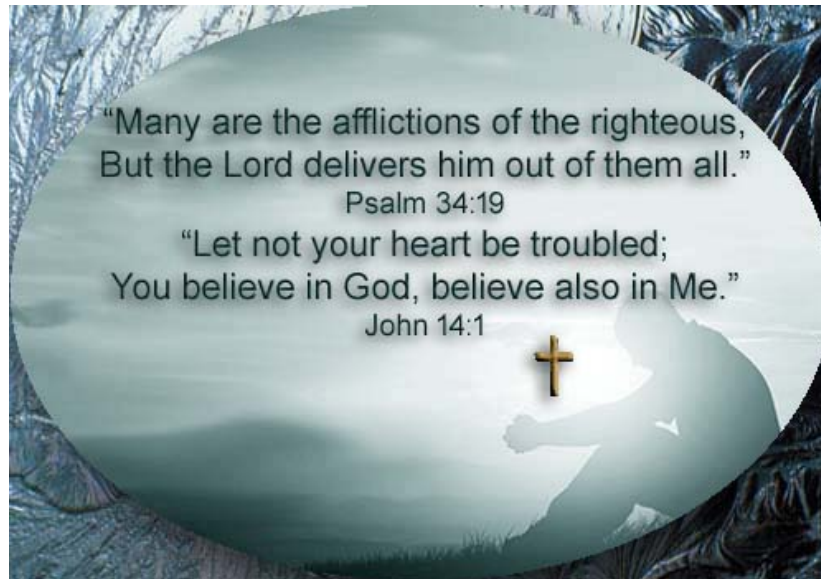


If we were to tell people around us to enjoy the problems that life sends their way, they would surely think we're missing a few screws up there! In all reality, human nature desires pleasure and joy, and would rather be without any problems throughout life. Then, why does God through His Word tell us to rejoice in trials?

There are two important elements to consider here. First, the thought of rejoicing through trials has for purpose to not only test our faith, but as well to strengthen us in the process. Paul in Romans 3:5 added, "But we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance." The other element to consider is the fruit produced after the trial has passed. 1 Peter 4:13-14 adds, "That when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

I clearly remember the greatest trial in my life that took 10 years to go away, and how much I can now give thanks to God for the blessed fruit it has produced in my life. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Mat. 5:10

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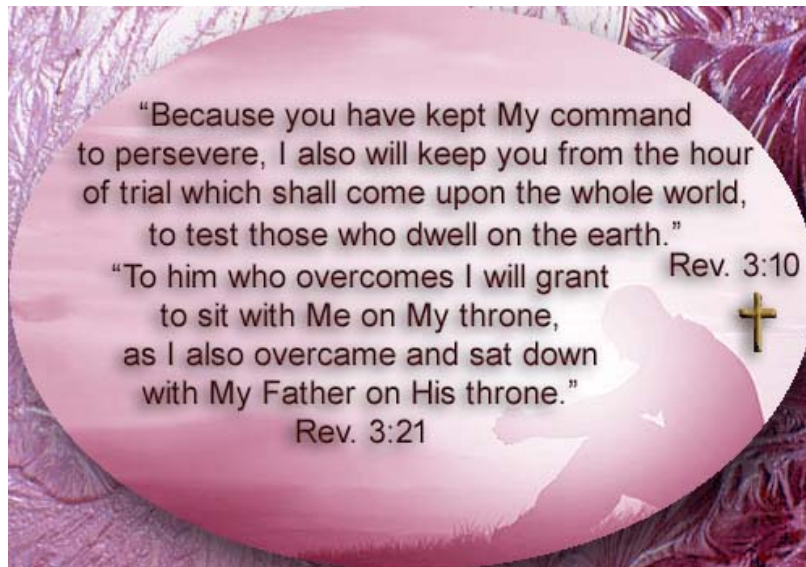
Having established that trials are part of life, that they have for purpose to strengthen our faith, and that we must persevere and even rejoice through them, then where do we find the support and encouragement as we go through them?

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." In other words, trusting God is our solid anchor to hold on, when facing all trials and challenges of life.

But, how can we sustain our trust in the Lord when trials don't seem to go away? Paul in Philippians 4:6-7 said; "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." And in Romans 12:11-12 Paul added, "Be fervent in Spirit, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer."

Is it possible that prayer can increase and sustain our trust in God? Indeed it does because prayer involves having constant communion with God and Christ, and what better encouragement and hope can one count on than to trust our creator, our Savior, our Lord, our very source of life?

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Are there promises that we should hold on to, as we go through life's trials? Obviously, the two featured scriptures from Jesus clearly confirm that God's promises are true. Paul said this; "For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." 2 Cor. 1:20.

Did you grasp this last statement, "To the glory of God through us"? If we stop for an instant on this awesome statement that God actually glorifies Himself through us, we should be encouraged that God loves us to the point of seeking His glory through us. In Psalm 34:17-18, David said this: "*The righteous* cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord *is* near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit."

We can then conclude that if we are totally surrendered to God through Christ, and if we are going through trials, the Lord is with us, He also hears us and will see us through them. David again in Psalm 23:4 said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." That's why we can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philip. 4:13

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