

Maturity Through Trials And Temptation

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If you are going to triumph over your trials, you just have the right outlook because your outlook determines the outcome. Your attitude determines your action.

Can We Triumph Over our Trials?

According to James 1:2, we are to consider it “pure joy”. Joy is an attitude that affects our outlook. This is the way to have victory over our trials. The question is can we triumph over our trials?

James says again, “Blessed is the man who persevere under trial, because he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promise to those who love Him” (James 1:12). We can be triumphant! Have you seen a bumper sticker that states “When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade”?

Why trials?

God uses trials and hardships to make us ready for heaven. Paul and Barnabas went about “strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to their faith. ‘We must go through hardships to enter the kingdom of God,’ they said” (Acts 14:22).

The Bible records and illustrates message. The illustration God gave to Jeremiah was of the potter and the clay. Jeremiah said, “Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you my hand, O house of Israel.’ ” (Jeremiah 18:5, 6).

Job said, “But he know the way that I take; when he tested me, I will come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). We are not exempted from testing because we are God’s children. We also go through hardship. Hardship is meant to take out the dross so that we can shine forth as gold.

1 Peter 4:12 says, “Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.” Therefore, our attitude must not be negative; it must be joyful.

To cultivate a joyful attitude, there are 3 things we must consider:-

First, you must not be a hypocrite, and pretend to have joy when you don’t. The flesh will go through pain but the inner man knows what is happening to him. My own father didn’t spare the rod when he had to discipline me although he loved me. He helped me understand by means of the rod that it was love that caused him to discipline. Deep down, I knew he was right, he was my father and he loved me though the experience was a painful one.

Secondly, having a joyful attitude does not mean we are under some kind of hypnosis either. We must be realistic and face up to the trials. Admit it hurts but like Paul the apostle, say, “His grace is sufficient for me.”

Thirdly, when you go through trials, God says you have to look through the eyes of faith. In those moments of trial, you cannot go by sight or your natural wisdom and depend on your ability to understand things. The Bible promises that if you persevere with the right outlook and attitude while being tested, you will receive a crown of life. You must see with the eyes of faith. Faith’s companion is hope. Faith sees the unseen which gives hope. Hope depends on faith to bring to pass.

Faith is not only for getting what you want, but for living the Christians life. A beautiful illustration is Enoch’s testimony. He pleased God so much that he was taken to be with God without experiencing death. You must have to please God (Heb. 1:6). Faith is not by sight or feeling. Faith rests on facts. The facts are what God says in His word.

Here are a few things we need to know that God says.

- a. Faith is always tested (James 1:3). God permits the test to bring out the best in us.
- b. Testing works for us, not against us (1 Pet. 1:7; 2 Corinthians 4:17).
- c. Trials and testings bring maturity in us. (James 1:4, Rom 5:3-4)

When God puts you through hardship, He wants you to mature. That’s the way He deals with the church. He tells the church of the wonderful things He will do for them. The next thing you know, the church goes through some difficult situations. Coming up against those barriers or problems, God wants us to trust and depend on Him and not be shaken in our faith. That’s how we grow and mature in Him.

There is no short cut to maturity. When I was a little boy, I used to see those brown wrapped-up cocoons hanging on the plants in my garden. As a curious boy, I would take one of these cocoons and cut it open to free what I thought was trapped inside. Later on in school, I learnt that I shouldn’t let the caterpillar out before its time. Let nature run its course and when time is fulfilled, the caterpillar will mature and out will come a beautiful butterfly.

Beware of Temptation

Temptation is the provision to cheat yourself out of the purpose of trial that God permits in your life. Therefore, temptation is not of God but from Satan.

Jesus was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2, 13). Notice it was the Holy Spirit who led him into the wilderness but it was the devil that tempted him. When the Holy Spirit allows you to be tested, He will also help you to overcome it.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that if you are tempted once, you will not be tempted again. Jesus went through more than the three times when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. For we read that when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time (Luke 4:13).

There are 3 considerations when you are tempted:-

Firstly, look ahead or beyond. Sin brings temporary pleasure but the end is what is important. The Bible says, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

We often think that sin is a single act. But the Bible teaches that sin is a process. We must recognize the four steps to sinning:-

- a. It begins with a desire. Desire has to do with the emotion. Desire is a God-given ability. We cannot survive without desire. We desire food, love, comfort, etc. But we must not allow our desires to consume us. This is how we fall into sin. Master your desires through Christ.
- b. The second step is deception (James 1:14). Deception has to do with intellect. Sin never rears its ugly head at first sight. The bait is a juicy worm to attract and entice you. When you are deceived, you will agree to do what your desires has influence you to.
- c. The third step is disobedience (James 1:15). Disobedience has to do with the will. While desire conceives a method to get the bait, the will approves the method and the result is sin.
- d. When sin is complete, it bring forth death (James 1:15).

The **second** consideration when you are tempted is this – consider God's goodness. The goodness of God is a great barrier against yielding to temptation. Satan tries to makes us believe that God does not love us for he knows when we doubt God's goodness, we will be attracted to his offer. We must not forget God's goodness.

Thirdly, we must consider our new birth. We have been born again (John 3:6, 7). We are born of the spirit. It is a miracle and the experience of new birth will help us to overcome temptation.

God has so many promises for us to claim and He wants us to mature so that we can handle His blessings. The prodigal son was not mature enough to handle his inheritance. As a result, he wasted all of it.

Don't give in to temptation. Don't believe the lie of the devil that so long as you do the will of God, the end justifies the means.