

## Persevering through trials

Dear Loved of God:

Why are we able to have a joyful attitude when we face trials? Why are we able to keep things together when we face a tough situation? Because...

- God loves us
- We love him
- We know He will not harm us and do what is best for us

About 3 years ago I received one of those “phone calls” in the very early morning hours. A friend called me and told me that his mother had been rushed to the hospital. The doctors told my friend that his mother had only a 10% chance of survival. My friend just wanted someone to tell him that the Lord was with him and that the Lord was with his mother. He wanted to hear that the Lord’s love for him and his family would sustain him through the ordeal.

Why do we have an understanding mind even when things don’t go right in our lives? Because...

- God loves us
- God tells us the truth
- God’s promises never fail us Romans 8:28ff

Why do we have a believing heart? Because...

- Love and faith go together
- When you love someone, you trust him or her

What keeps us in God --- with God ----even when things in our lives are falling apart?

Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

How does a small child get through the weaning process with all of life’s ups and downs?

- Small children know that their mother loves them
- Their mother’s love helps them get through it all
- They are secure in their mother’s love

When we know that God loves us, we will not fall apart when God allows a trial to enter our life. We are secure in God's love no matter what may come. We know what God says in Romans 8.

Why would God even allow us to go through a trial?

- Because he wants us to grow - Romans 5:3-5
- Trials bring growth

The Puritans had a saying: "While all things are quiet and comfortable, we live by our senses, rather than faith. But the worth of a soldier is never known in times of peace."

- Military commanders know that soldiers need the pressure of real battlefield conditions before they are proven effective.
- God allows difficult life situations to refine us and help us grow.
- As we move from one trial to the next our spiritual muscles are exercised and our spiritual endurance is built up.

Some years ago our South Wisconsin District sent out a survey to all of the pastors in the district of our church body. One of the questions in the survey was: "Has your faith grown over the last few years?" As I reflected on that question I thought of some of the twists and turns that my life has taken over the last several years and how the Lord was always there to keep me above water.

James says in verse 12 that those who endure trials are called blessed.

### **Blessed is the person who perseveres...**

We who endure trials or persevere are truly blessed or happy. How can that be?

- We are not "happy" in the midst of the trial.
- But, we are "confident" and rejoice that we are able to endure through the trial.

When we endure or persevere it means "to withstand tenaciously the pressure of a trial until God removes it when he is ready." This is what God's Word reminds us in the midst of a trial...

- I Corinthians 10:13 ---there is a way out
- II Corinthians 12:7-10--- God's grace will see me through
- I Corinthians 15:10 --- God's grace will be my power

God once told the Apostle Paul that he would not remove a trial in his life that Paul described as a “thorn in his flesh.” But the Lord did say to Paul that he would provide Paul with the strength to live through the trial. Paul would be able to handle it and overcome it. II Corinthians 12:7-8

Why would God allow us to go through something that might make us feel weak?

- So his strength may shine through our life
- The Apostle Paul said that when he was “weak” he was “strong” in the Lord
- “The weaker the human instrument the more clearly God’s grace shines forth.”

The Apostle Paul took no pleasure in the pain or trial he endured but he rejoiced in the power of Christ that flowed through him.

- Paul did not focus on the pain or the problem or the pressure
- Paul’s focus was on the victorious outcome that God would lead him through it all
- Matthew 24:13 says that “God secures our perseverance.”
- We never, never give up on God for...

**“Through faith we are shielded by God’s power”** I Peter 1:5

- “God will never stop doing good to us” Jeremiah 32:40
- God’s love will keep us from falling - Jude 21ff

Our faith is proved true when we pass through our trial --- our faith has stood the test! We receive the crown of life.

- In Paul’s day the crown was a wreath that the winner’s would receive at the Greek athletic games
- This wreath would be placed on the head of the winner

Our crown is the complete realization of eternal life which we will experience in full...

- at our own physical death and entrance into heaven
- at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus if we are still alive walking around on this earth

“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” II Timothy 4:8

So, what do we do while we wait for Jesus to return? The unbelieving culture around us says this world is all there is and so you better grab happiness by going after...

- pleasure of any kind
- money
- image
- achievement
- homes, cars and clothes

These cannot bring lasting or real happiness because they are temporary and do not provide eternal benefits. The Bible teaches us to keep our focus on the eternal especially when temptation comes our way.

The Apostle Paul was confident of 4 things that helped him face trials...

1. Confidence in God's Word
2. Confidence in the prayers of fellow believers
3. Confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit in his life Romans 8
4. Confidence in the Promise of Christ "The Lord goes with you." Moses

v13 Every trial that enters a believers life can either...

- strengthen him or weaken him
- be confident in God's care
- hold on to the promise that when trials come into our lives they will never be more than we can handle I Corinthians 10:13

### **How does temptation happen to us?**

How does it begin? Listen to what James says....

- with an evil thought
- it then becomes sin when we dwell on that thought and it becomes a deed

So, who is responsible when we fall into sin?

- it is the other person's fault
- I could not help it
- everybody is doing it
- nobody's perfect
- the devil made me do it
- I was pressured into it

- I did not know it was wrong

Is there another way to look at the consequence of sin in our lives?

- accept our responsibility
- confess our sin I John 1:8-9
- seek God's forgiveness
- seek God's grace to follow him

Desires must be our servants not our masters. v14 They are normal and God-given. They become sin when we cross that line that God has drawn. Temptation promises us something good but in the end it is harmful.

James uses terms here in v14 that hunters and fishermen would use to set traps and lure fish with bait.

- temptation is a trap waiting to snatch its prey
- no temptation appears harmful but exciting

Key: God does not set the trap for us...that would go against his holy will. However, at times God allows Satan to tempt us...Why?

- to refine our faith
- to help us grow in our dependence upon him
- to turn our focus to God for endurance and daily living

God may allow suffering come our way to drive us to Him and compel us to look away from ourselves to Him for strength.

Sin that goes unconfessed and done in unbelief always ends in death. v15-16

What are we to do when we feel tempted? v17

- don't blame God
- take our eyes off the bait and look to the Lord
- remember God wants what is best for you...he doesn't plan to deceive us

We have been "born again". We know the goodness of God v18

- He gives us only good gifts
- His methods of giving are good
- He gives to us constantly...always providing

When trials come may we never question his love for us. Acts 14:22 May we wait on the Lord and never take the devil's bait.

When in the midst of trials and suffering the Apostle Paul said...

**“Remember Jesus Christ”**

- He walked the path we are now walking
- When the going gets tough – pray
- Jesus fully empathizes with what we are enduring
- He knows the problems, pains and struggles we have

He cares and He knows and He loves and He sustains.