

Health Problems

Bill Brinkworth

Paul was a man used greatly by God. With God's helping hand, that evangelist survived shipwrecks, beatings, persecutions, imprisonments, and other ill-treatment. With God's miraculous help, that man was used in healings, revivals, and many miracles. However, as used of God as he was, Paul still had a personal ailment (II Cor. 12:7)

Commentators have strained at attempting to name Paul's "thorn in the flesh." God has chosen not to make it clear to us what it was.

No matter what it was, Paul made it clear that it was an infirmity he faced. Three times Paul pleaded with God to remove the malady from him (II Cor. 12:8). God's answer was "...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness ..." (II Cor. 12:9).

Here was a man who had seen glorious things in the third Heaven (II Cor. 12:2-4) and had been delivered from many horrible things, yet God wanted Paul to experience this physical problem. God could have easily healed his body, but His answer was that God's grace was enough for him to live with the problem and that Paul's infirmity would be a vehi-

"Some cry, 'Why me?' when they go through a trial. My question to them is, 'Why wouldn't it be you? Are you something special that you are the only person in the world that shouldn't have problems, or sicknesses?'"

cle to make him spiritually stronger.

If God would allow one of His great spiritual warriors to face such a battle, we should not be surprised if we face problems. As with most trials, we can do one of two things when going through testing. We can either shake our fists at God and be angry with him, which is not the wise thing to do when we need Him the most, or get close to Him and rely on Him to get us through the struggle.

Paul chose not to be foolish and get angry at God. He decided that if God allowed him to go through the problem, he would have a good attitude about it (II Cor. 12:10) and give Him the glory. In doing so, Paul learned exactly what God wanted him to get out of the situation: that when he was weak, he was the strongest through God's help (vs. 10)!

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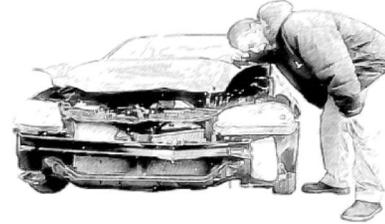
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Reasons for Hard Times

Bill Brinkworth



Everyone has difficulties and tribulations at one time or the other. There is no promise from God that believers are exempt from having hardships. Ordeals still rain on "the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

It does not necessarily mean that a person facing some misery is out of the will of God. Jesus healed a man of blindness in John 9. Jesus' disciples asked Him if the man's blindness was because of some sin he or his parents had committed.

Christ responded that there was another reason for the man's infirmity. It was so God could get the glory in healing the man. God certainly was honored when the man was able to see.

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

John 9:3

There can be many other reasons why a person may be going through hard times. According to God's Word, they can include:

☞ To move a person to where God wants him or to change that person for future use, as in the story of Joseph.

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Difficulties One Can Face

Bill Brinkworth

When we get saved, we are expected to serve the Lord who saved us. We are not to sit and just soak up God's goodness.

We should do as the Lord commands us: to go and tell others the messages from God's Word, spiritually feed ourselves, have a relationship with the Lord, and do whatever else the Lord lays on our hearts. To some, these seem to be simple tasks, but

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- ☞ To strengthen a person, as in the story of Job.
- ☞ To separate a person from things God wants him separated from, as in the story of Noah.
- ☞ To teach a person a lesson he needs to learn, as in the stories of Jonah and David.

Not all trials are God's wrath on a person. Much of the time, life's difficulties are a loving God's intervention in a person's life for their best!

Difficulties One Can ...

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many know those "simple" things can cause us a lot of grief when we try to do them.

The Scripture in Matthew 10 tells the disciples that Jesus had just explained their responsibilities. They were warned that it would not be easy to tell others what they had learned from Christ.

Although it was addressed to the disciples reaching Israel, there is much that they faced that if we try to live and do right, we can also expect to deal with, including persecution and resistance. Here are some of the things that we can expect in our lives if we strive to be good Christians and do what we are told:

- ◆ Some will not receive the

message of the Scriptures (vs. 14). Not everyone will jump for joy when they are told what the Word of God says. We probably were not excited the first time we heard the truths from God's Word either.

- ◆ There will be problems from the "religious." Not everyone who has a "form of godliness" is a Christian. It was a religious group that tried the hardest to silence Christ. They did not want anyone exposing that their "religion" was contrary to what was taught in the Bible (vss. 16-17).
- ◆ The secular government will oppose many efforts to reach the world with the government of God. Many government officials think their rules and laws are what the world needs. They do not understand how a good Christian life can solve man's needs and problems.
- ◆ There may be conflicts in a family when a member gets saved and lives differently than one did before (vs. 21).
- ◆ A Christian may be hated for how he lives (vs. 22). Perhaps it is the godly example that convicts and troubles their consciences. The only way they can silence their troubled convictions is to get rid of the messenger rather than change themselves!

It was difficult for these men to stand and live for Christ. It is not easy today, which is probably why so many do not do

it. Many quit when the going gets tough! One cannot "quit" being a Christian if one is one. He can only stop being a good testimony of a living God.

Different Temptations

Bill Brinkworth

James gives practical advice in his writing in James 1. One of the most sensible and oft-visited situations for all people, including believers, is discussed here. The "good" side of going through difficulties is examined in verses 2-6.

James identifies the difficulties, trials, and enticements all face as "divers temptations." Although most initially shudder at even the thought of going through different problems, James exposes what can be positively gained by going through our individual "valleys." Instead of agreeing on how terrible it is to have problems, James encourages Christians to "... count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;" (vs. 2).

How could anyone be joyful when facing joblessness, heartaches, financial problems, family problems, or the thousands of difficulties we all face in our lifetime? James tells us we can be "joyful" because:

- The trying of our faith during the hard times builds our patience (vs. 3). Since there usually is not much we can

do but wait until the trial passes, we learn to patiently wait and trust in the Lord during those hard times.

- The practical lessons on patience we learn build a good Christian into a "tested" believer. Strong Christians did not wake up one morning and decide to be patient for the rest of their lives. They got that way because they went through hard times, got close to God, and saw that His help was sufficient to deliver and guide them. The next time they faced an unfavorable situation, they remembered all He had done in the past and did not get frazzled. Their learned patience (vs. 4) built their character and trust in the Lord.
- When we go through a "temptation," we go to the Lord in prayer more than we ever had before. In doing so, we get closer to the Lord, see how He supplies wisdom on handling our trial (vs. 5), and have the potential to increase our faith.

Trials and tribulations are not something anyone desires to go through, but after going through many of them and drawing close to God during those times, we can learn that they are not so bad. The valley of "temptation" can be joyous as our God guides us through the treacherous pathways.