

Faith in Trials

I want to do a little change of pace today. From time to time people ask me for encouragement in their stressful times. I want to take off my history hat and share with you some thoughts if/when we are faced with grief, sorrow, or trials of any kind.

Have you ever had difficulty in trusting God when you receive disappointing news? Maybe you lose a loved one to a disease. Maybe you endure issues of rejection through divorce. Maybe you are given a serious diagnosis with a fatal prognosis.

Page | 1

I have to confess that I was angry at God through the stages of my late wife's brain tumor. When she died. I did not think what she went through was "fair." In fact, I very vividly remember yelling at God about it in my prayer time one evening. Then I sort of heard a "voice" (or maybe just an impression) that said, "Remember Job." That stopped me in my tracks. As I remembered Job I remembered that what happened to him didn't seem fair, yet God was involved in his trials. At the end of the story, Job is blessed more than at the beginning but he worked through his issues as he remained faithful to God (though he was not perfect).

In my process, I learned that grief is actually a helper to our lives. I grieved the loss of my wife and that grief led me to a closer relationship with God. God never has answered me as to why my sixty-one year old wife died of a glioblastoma tumor and likely He never will. What I have learned is that these hard times lead us to Him, or closer to Him. Today, if you are feeling grief, let that grief bring you closer to Him.

The Bible never tells us that we will have an easy life when we follow Jesus. In fact, it tells us just the opposite. In **John 16:33** Jesus said:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Notice that He makes a couple of promises to us. First, we will have tribulation and second, He will give us peace in those times.

The word for "tribulation" means "pressure" or, we would say, "stress." We all are feeling numerous stresses in this day and time and the stress seems to be getting worse rather than better. Add to the cultural stresses our personal fears, griefs, and disappointments and we have what feels like enormous tribulation or pressure.

The fear of death, either for ourselves or a loved one, is one of our greatest causes of anxiety. When we think of the possibility of death, we realize that God did not intend for us to die, however we do die. We might say, "It's not fair! It's stressful and frightening!" This is true, yet it is now appointed for us to die (**Hebrews 9:27**) and there is nothing we can do to stop it. The Bible says the normal person will live to between seventy and eighty years in **Psalm 90:10 (ESV)**:

**The years of our life are seventy,
or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span is but toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.**

So, don't forget God in your time of trial. There is a story about young Corrie Ten Boom and her father. During World War II they hid Jews in their home during the Nazi regime in Holland. On one occasion Corrie was upset thinking about her dad dying. To comfort her he talked about a train ride. He asked Corrie, "When do I give you your ticket for the train?" Corrie replied, "When it is time to board." He then went on

Faith in Trials

to console her and told her that God would give her the “ticket” of peace she needed when she needed it and not before.

I really think that is the way God deals with us. We worry about many things that lie before us. Most of those things we cannot control, but God does not abandon us. He walks with us through our troubles and fears and gives us our “ticket” when we need it.

Page | 2

About a year and a half ago I had to have surgery. Just between you and me, I am terrified of medical things. I don't even like to get my teeth cleaned. One of God's jokes was that I married a nurse who had no compassion for my fears. Yet, I got through the procedure in spite of my fears because God walked with me and gave me my “ticket.”

In times of grief, stress, or fear, I would encourage you to read the Bible more than you ever have. I would especially encourage you to put **Psalm 23** deep in your heart. In difficult times we feel the need for God to be our shepherd. Then, even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we can fear no evil.

Never forget the promise that God is always with you. He said it like this:

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5, ESV, emphasis added, PMG, f, Deuteronomy 31:8).

Jesus went to the cross and God was there. Paul suffered all kinds of trials and God was there. **2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (ESV)** tells of some of what Paul endured:

²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

This was not our typical lesson but there is a contemporary application. America is going through perhaps the darkest, most stressful time in our history. I wish there was an easy answer for us in these times. We have a choice as to how we will deal with it. We can be bitter or better. We can trust Him even when we don't understand everything, and even when we are afraid. God-N-America is our solution.

Keep The Light of Trust Burning!