

Building Faith Through Trials

Although the world defines a person by their status or accomplishments, life in Gods' economy does not. It makes no difference who you are, or what you have done, everyone will experience varying degrees and levels of pain, agony, suffering, rejection, abandonment, illness and the like. It seems that for us to enter into heaven, it is part and parcel of life. Scripture tells us that through our trials we are growing by, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22, ESV).

None of us enjoy trials, and often can be shaken or rattled by them. We are reminded through the Word of God, "no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this" (1 Thess. 3:3, NKJV). In the midst of our trials, God is with us, giving us the grace needed for Him to do a powerful work in and through our lives.

Can we ever quantify the level of affliction you or I go through or compare it to God's desired outcome? Some experience minor afflictions, others mediocre, while for others it is seismic. Jesus said of Paul, in Acts 9:16 "For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." Just as God did with Paul, so he will do with you and I, we will be transformed into a living moving testament for His glory.

Paul had endured much, and gives us this insight in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain," (ESV). I think for a lot of us, when we want something from God, we want, we want and we want. Then once we get what we want, we do not serve God and we remain a spectator rather

than a participator in His kingdom.

When I was last in Houston, Texas, I prayed for people of all ages with Autism, Asperger's, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Healed of these mental afflictions myself, I am grateful to God, that I am able to pray for others that struggle like I did.

I prayed for one young man who was around 17 years of age. He seemed extremely agitated, so I asked him how he was doing. With an irate tone, he said "I'm frustrated." I could see in the Spirit he was completely enslaved by the work of the enemy and was frustrated because he didn't know how to stop the torment. As I prayed for him I did not see much change at all. However, the next day his parents contacted me to say their son was conversing with his family members without having any episodes (of anger). To top that off, he had been helping to prepare food in the kitchen.

When I was young, no one could heal me or do anything to help me stop the tormenting mental afflictions I had. Only I could know the full extent of the suffering I went through. Everyone loves the power of God, but they don't like to suffer. Yet, the power of God's Spirit is over our life in our affliction (see 2 Timothy 1:8), so let us glorify Him and not our afflictions. Even in suffering, our attitude has to be right, because at the end of the day our attitude will determine our altitude. God has an end goal in sight for us all.

If you're asking, why is this happening to me? Scripture tells us that out of our "suffering, endurance is produced, which produces character," which in turn will produce a man or woman of faith that is righteous before God. "Rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character," (Rom. 5:3, RSV). Psalm 112:6 says "the righteous will never be moved; he (they) will be remembered (by God) forever" (RSV).

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