

Finding Victory Amid Ongoing Warfare

Many good things come to you when you serve God and live by His Spirit: joy, health, purpose, forgiveness and miracles. But the Spirit-led life is filled not only with peaks but also with valleys, and there are many powerful, Spirit-filled Christians who persevered despite having to endure terrible circumstances. Part of walking in the Spirit is the grappling with difficulties we face, the trials and challenges we deal with and overcome.

Some hardships are a result of spiritual warfare that is rampant in this fallen, upside-down world. When the Antichrist comes and terrible things begin to happen, there's not much we can do except rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us. Much of the craziness we see in the world today is due to the fact we are nearing the end of days.

Some challenges are tests from God. The apostle Peter knew adversity could be a good thing. He wrote that we may have to "suffer various trials, in order that the genuine-ness of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:6b-7, MEV).

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Some trials, however, are a result of our own bad decisions or our fallen, sinful nature. If you've let bad habits and addictions control your life, changing your behavior can sure feel like a trial. But these are all hardships of our own making.

When we're facing hardship, it's easy for our emotions to get

the best of us. We can easily find ourselves discouraged, depressed or even in despair. But it doesn't have to be that way. When you're living in the power of the Holy Spirit, you're not facing life on your own, limited to what you can accomplish in your own strength. You can tap into Holy Spirit power to keep pressing forward to victory.



To order Stephen E. Strang's important recent book, "Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World," visit .

I believe trials never last, and overcomers do. That is an important key to living in the Spirit. Consider these spiritual giants whose lives still inspire us though they lived through terrible seasons:

- Eric Liddell, made famous by the Oscar-winning movie "Chariots of Fire," died of brain cancer during World War II in a Japanese prison camp.
- Amy Semple McPherson, who founded the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, had a failed marriage and was embroiled in a well-publicized scandal.
- Oral Roberts, the best-known of the healing evangelists of the 1940s and 1950s, endured unimaginable tragedy when his daughter died in a plane crash and his oldest son committed suicide.

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If these struggles sound familiar, you are not alone. Many Christians sincerely want to live overcoming lives, but they feel helpless and alone because they are disconnected from a life-enhancing community of believers. Others seem to have lost their purpose or become cynical, doubting God can use them to accomplish something lasting and meaningful in this life. Still others hear sermons or read books about God's

power to deliver us and make our lives work, but those breakthroughs seem to happen to someone else. They feel powerless to accomplish the victorious life they know God wants them to have.

People want to know the will of God. They want to know their purpose, but often they are clueless. They feel as the disciples must have felt in the upper room after Jesus' death. They had no idea the power they were about to receive; they only knew they had none at that moment.

There are a lot of bad things that happen to good people. But James 1:2 (NKJV) says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials." Why are we supposed to have this joy, calm delight, as we face hardship? The reason for the testing is to produce patience, which can also mean endurance. The purpose of the trial is to prove you. It tests your character and your character is strengthened by the encounter.

What practical steps can we take to draw closer to the Holy Spirit? The most important is to make a daily habit of spending time in the Word and prayer, which is not only talking to God and telling Him your problems, but also listening. His counsel is supernatural that will comfort, heal, protect, guide and refresh. Each of us needs this divine counsel each day to make right decisions.

We may not understand what's happening when a trial hits our lives, but we need to trust that God will use it to bring something good. Continue walking with the Holy Spirit through prayer, worship and the Word, even when it's hard and the urge to quit is too much. This is what it means to abide in Him.

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