

JOY IN THE JOURNEY

Got problems? "Some of us learn from the mistakes of others, but the rest of us have to BE the others." We've looked at 1- God proves your faith through trials, so you grow stronger, and 2- God purifies your faith through trials, so you shine like gold. Here are two more ways you can grow through trials.

3- God PROPAGATES your faith through trials. Others are blessed through your perseverance. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:9 that trials make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who delivers and raises up. Verse 3 says, "*blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction.*" God never abandons, but is always there.

Why? "*So that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*" Your experiences multiply faith and help strengthen others. "*As we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted it is for your comfort and salvation, and if we are comforted it is for your comfort which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings.*" Amazing! Could YOU have this attitude? Suffering for the benefit of others? What you go through may be more for someone else than you.

Joseph was the beloved child of Jacob and Rachel. Sold into slavery by jealous brothers, imprisoned in Egypt, he was then raised up to rule alongside the king of Egypt. All to not only prove and purify His faith, but to teach us. And to preserve the lineage of the Messiah through worldwide famine. In Genesis 50:20 Joseph forgives his repentant brothers: "*You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as it is this day.*" His sovereign hand multiplies blessing.

4- God PERFECTS your faith through trials. Perfect means mature, complete, becoming like Christ. Scripture makes it clear. Those who trust God should expect suffering. It makes His blessing perfect. John 15:2 says growth comes with pruning, to produce even more fruit. In John 16:33 Jesus said, "*In Me you will have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.*"

This life in the flesh is temporary and will soon be over. Christ has conquered sin and death. We are free from the penalty and the power of sin. In heaven we will be free from the presence of sin. But now, we are in union with Christ. We are crucified with Him in the flesh. Like Him, dead to sin. Alive to God in Him.

Romans 8 explains this essential truth. In verse 16, we are heirs with Christ, "*provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is going to be revealed to us.*" You measure your trials and distress. You give God grief about it. But it can't even compare to what's in store - your coming inheritance.

Verse 28 promises, "*for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*" ALL things, including trials, tribulations. "*For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.*" His purpose and process: perfected, conformed, changed, transformed. To be more like Christ. Verse 30 says those whom He predestined He also called, justified - and glorified. To God, it's a done deal. That's why James 1:2 says "*count it all joy when you encounter all kinds of trials.*" JOY amidst trials! Because verse 12 says, "*blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life.*" Remain. Receive.

Happiness depends on circumstances. But joy transcends situation. Get reliance off you and on to Jesus. His deep abiding presence. 1 Peter 1:8 says "*you do not now see Him but you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory, as you are obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*" Trust in Jesus as you grow through trials. Be intentional in all of God's good providence.

Even dark providence. God's good process has a good purpose. Turning from sin and self to God - to become more like Jesus. And God provides His comfort and joy in this journey, as you trust and obey.