

# *The Essentials* of Prayer

by E. M. Bounds

## Trials & Prayer

EM<sup>5</sup>  
Bounds

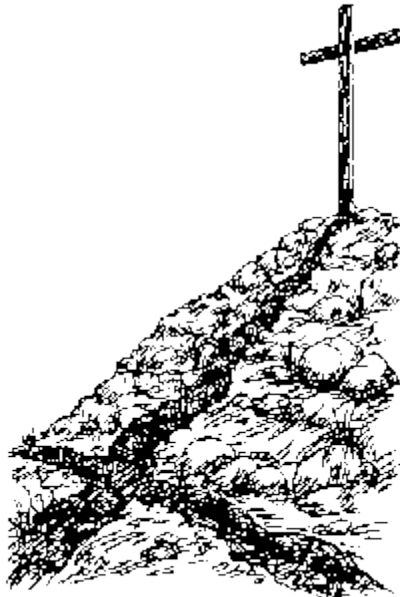
*Essentials* of Prayer

## Rock Hill Baptist Church

Brother David Buffaloe, Pastor

605 Rock Hill Road  
Lexington, Tennessee 38351  
731-845-6104  
bibleteacher.org

*Appendix: "Why Does A  
Loving God Allow  
Suffering?"  
by Brother David*



When Jesus went into the Garden to pray, He took His very best men with Him. The Apostles were supposed to pray for our Savior, to seek God's face for Him in this final hour before the Cross. Though Jesus asked them to pray, they all slept, thus showing us several things: (1) There are times when we will have to face trouble *alone and apart* from any human help. In that time we can still count on our Heavenly Creator to hear and enable us through the bad times. (2) There are many who profess Christ, even many who hold *titles of office* and profess Christ, who seek every solution but God's solution of prayer. The Apostles slept when they should be praying – and many in churches across our land sleep when they should be praying. Prayer services are usually the *least attended service* of any at the Church. The spirit of the sleeper lives on. (2) It was not until

Throughout this study we will look at Dr. E.M. Bounds sixth book on prayer called “The Essentials of Prayer”. All comments that I make will be boxed to separate them from Dr. Bounds' original work. ... Brother David

the Apostles woke up and *prayed in one accord*

that God blessed them in a mighty way. The church grew by 3000 on the Day of Pentecost. Coincidence? I don't think so. If we want to grow as a church we must be consistent in prayer.

## **V. PRAYER AND TROUBLE**

“‘He will.’ It may not be today,  
That God Himself shall wipe our tears away,  
Nor, hope deferred, may it be yet tomorrow  
He’ll take away our cup of earthly sorrow;  
But, precious promise, He has said He will,  
If we but trust Him fully—and be still.  
“We, too, as He, may fall, and die unknown;  
And e’en the place we fell be all unshown,  
But eyes omniscient will mark the spot  
Till empires perish and the world’s forgot.  
Then they who bore the yoke and drank the cup  
In fadeless glory shall the Lord raise up.  
God’s word is ever good; His will is best:—  
The yoke, the heart all broken—and then rest.”

—Claudius L. Chilton

Trouble and prayer are closely related to each other. Prayer is of great value to trouble. Trouble often drives men to God in prayer, while prayer is but the voice of men in trouble. There is great value in prayer in the time of trouble. **Prayer often delivers out of trouble, and still oftener gives strength to bear trouble,** ministers comfort in

trouble, and begets patience in the midst of trouble. Wise is he in the day of trouble who knows his true source of strength and who fails not to pray.

Trouble belongs to the present state of man on earth.

**Job 14:1 (KJV) "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble."**

**Trouble is common to man.** There is no exception in any age or clime or station. Rich and poor alike, the learned and the ignorant, one and all are partakers of this sad and painful inheritance of the fall of man.

**1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV) "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."**

The “day of trouble” dawns on every one at some time in his life. “The evil days come and the years draw nigh” when the heart feels its heavy pressure.

## Sources of Trials and Suffering

"IN CHAPTER ONE, JAMES TELLS US IF WE SUFFER TO COUNT IT ALL JOY. NOW, IN CHAPTER FIVE, HE TELLS SUFFERERS TO PRAY. I CAN DO THAT."



SOME DAYS I REJOICE;  
SOME DAYS I PRAY.

God

Satan or  
Others

Self Inflicted

World and Sin

That is an entirely false view of life and shows supreme ignorance that expects nothing but sunshine and looks only for ease, pleasure and flowers. It is this class who are so sadly disappointed and surprised when trouble breaks into their lives. These are the ones who know not God, who know nothing of His disciplinary dealings with His people and who are prayerless.

What an infinite variety there is in the troubles of life! How diversified the experiences of men in the school of trouble! No two people have the same troubles under like environments. God deals with no two of His children in the same way. And as God varies His treatment of His children, so trouble is varied. God does not repeat Himself. He

does not run in a rut. He has not one pattern for every child. Each trouble is proportioned to each child. Each one is dealt with according to his own peculiar case.

Trouble is God's servant, doing His will unless He is defeated in the execution of that will.

Trouble is under the control of Almighty God, and is one of His most efficient agents in fulfilling His purposes and in perfecting His saints. God's hand is in every trouble which breaks into the lives of men. Not that He directly and arbitrarily orders every unpleasant experience of life. Not that He is personally responsible for every painful and

**Job 1:9-12 (KJV) "Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? {10} Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. {11} But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. {12} And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."**

afflicting thing which comes into the lives of His people. But no trouble is ever turned loose in this world and comes into the life of saint or sinner, but **comes with Divine permission**, and is allowed to exist and do its painful work with God's hand in it or on it, carrying out His gracious designs of redemption. **All things are under Divine control.** **Trouble is neither above God nor beyond His control.** It is not something in life independent of

**Romans 8:28 (KJV) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."**

God. No matter from what source it springs nor whence it arises, God is sufficiently wise and able to lay His hand upon it without assuming responsibility for its origin, and work it into His plans and purposes concerning the highest welfare of His saints. This is the explanation of that gracious statement in Romans, so often quoted, but the depth of whose meaning has rarely been sounded, **"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."**

**Even the evils brought about by the forces of nature are His servants, carrying out His will and fulfilling His designs.** God even claims the

locusts, the **cankerworm**, the caterpillar are His servants, **"My great army,"** used by Him to **correct**

**Joel 2:25 (KJV) "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."**

**Mark 4:39-41 (KJV) "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. {40} And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? {41} And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"**

**His people and discipline them.**

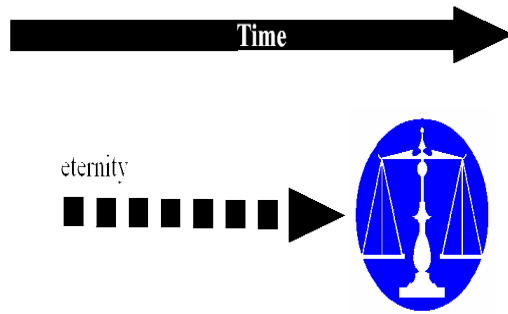
**Trouble belongs to the disciplinary part of the moral government of God.** This is a life of probation, where the human race is on probation. It is a season of trial. Trouble is not penal in its nature. It belongs to what the Scriptures call "chastening."

**Hebrews 12:6 (KJV) "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."**

Speaking accurately, punishment does not belong to this life.

Punishment for sin will take place in the next world. God's dealings with people in this world are of the nature of discipline. They are **corrective processes** in His plans concerning man. It is because of this that prayer comes in when trouble arises. Prayer belongs to the discipline of life.

As **trouble is not sinful in itself, neither is it the evidence of sin.** Good and bad alike experience trouble. As the rain falls alike on the just and unjust, so **drought likewise comes to the righteous and the wicked.** Trouble is no evidence whatever of the Divine displeasure. Scripture instances without number disprove any such idea. Job is a case in point, where God bore explicit testimony to his deep piety, and yet God permitted Satan to afflict him beyond any other man for wise and beneficent purposes. Trouble has no power in



itself to interfere with the relations of a saint to God.

**Romans 8:35 (KJV) "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"**

Three words practically the same in the processes of Divine discipline are found, **temptation, trial and trouble**, and yet there is a difference between them. Temptation is really a solicitation to evil arising from the devil or born in the carnal nature of man. Trial is testing. It is that which proves us, tests us, and makes us stronger and better when we submit to the trial and work together with God in it:

**James 1:2-3 (KJV) "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {3} Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."**

Peter speaks along the same line:

**1 Peter 1:6-7 (KJV) "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:**

**{7} That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"**

The third word is trouble itself, which covers all the painful, sorrowing, and grievous events of life. And yet **temptations and trials might really become troubles**. So that all evil days in life might well be classed under the head of the "time of trouble." And such days of trouble are the lot of all men. Enough to know that **trouble, no matter from what source it comes; becomes in God's hand His own agent to accomplish His gracious work** concerning those who submit patiently to Him, who recognise Him in prayer, and who work together with God.

Let us settle down at once to the idea that trouble arises **not by chance**, and **neither** occurs by what men call accident.

**Job 5:6-7 (KJV) "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; {7} Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."**

Trouble naturally belongs to God's moral

government, and is one of His invaluable agents in governing the world.

When we realise this, we can the better understand much that is recorded in the Scriptures, and can have a clearer conception of God's dealings with His ancient Israel. In God's dealings with them, we find what is called a history of Divine Providence, and providence always embraces trouble. No one can understand the story of Joseph and his old father Jacob unless he takes into the account trouble and its varied offices. God takes account of trouble when He urges His prophet Isaiah on the wise:

**Isaiah 40:1-2 (KJV) "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. {2} Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."**

For the class: show copyright slide, and explore question:  
"Was God in the incident of 9-11?"

There is a distinct note of comfort in the Gospel for the praying saints of the Lord, and He is a wise scribe in Divine things who knows how to

minister this comfort to the broken-hearted and sad ones of earth. Jesus Himself said to His sad disciples,

**John 14:18 (KJV) "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."**

All the foregoing has been said that we may rightly appreciate the relationship of prayer to trouble. **In the time of trouble, where does prayer come in?** The Psalmist tells us: **"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."**

**To whom is the promise? To the Son of God alone:**

**Psalms 50:15-21 (KJV) "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. {16} But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? {17} Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. {18} When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. {19} Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. {20} Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. {21} These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."**

Prayer is the most appropriate thing for a soul to do in the "time of trouble." Prayer recognises God in the day of trouble. **"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."** Prayer sees God's

**1 Samuel 3:9-18 (KJV) "Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. {10} And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. {11} And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. {12} In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. {13} For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. {14} And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. {15} And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. {16} Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. {17} And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. {18} And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good."**

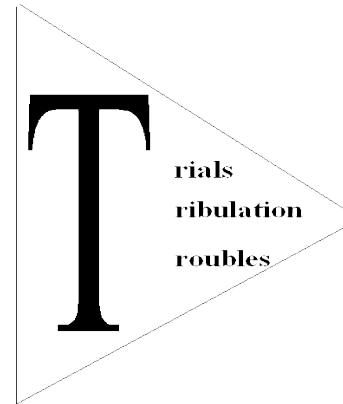
hand in trouble, and prays about it. Nothing more truly shows us our helplessness than when trouble comes. It brings the strong man low, it discloses our weakness, it brings a sense of helplessness. Blessed is he who knows how to turn to God in “the time of trouble.” **If trouble is of the Lord, then the most natural thing to do is to carry the trouble to the Lord,** and seek grace and patience and submission. It is the time to inquire in the trouble, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” How natural and reasonable for the soul, oppressed, broken, and bruised, to bow low at the footstool of mercy and seek the face of God? Where could a soul in trouble more likely find solace than in the closet?

Alas! **trouble does not always drive men to God in prayer.** Sad is the case of him who, when trouble bends his spirit down and grieves his heart, yet knows not whence the trouble comes nor knows how to pray about it. Blessed is the man who is driven by trouble to his knees in prayer!

**“Trials must and will befall;  
But with humble faith to see  
Love inscribed upon them all—  
This is happiness to me.**

**“Trials make the promise sweet,**

**Trials give new life to prayer;  
Bring me to my Saviour’s feet,  
Lay me low, and keep me there.”**

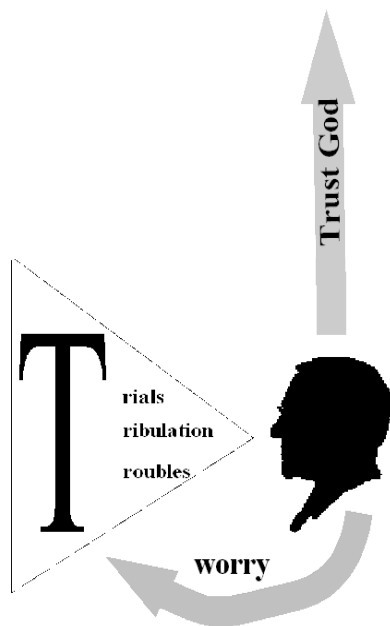


Prayer in the time of trouble brings **comfort, help, hope, and blessings,** which, while not removing the trouble, enable the saint the

better to bear it and to **submit to the will of God.** Prayer opens the eyes to see God’s hand in trouble. Prayer does not interpret God’s providences, but it does justify them and recognise God in them. Prayer enables us to see wise ends in trouble. Prayer in trouble drives us away from unbelief, saves us from doubt, and delivers from all vain and foolish questionings because of our painful experiences. Let us not lose sight of the tribute paid to Job when all his troubles came to the culminating point:

**Job 1:22 (KJV) "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."**

Alas! for vain, ignorant men, without faith in God and knowing nothing of God's disciplinary processes in dealing with men, who charge God foolishly when troubles come, and who are tempted to "curse God." How silly and vain are the complaining, the murmurings and the rebellion of men in the time of trouble! What need to read again the story of the Children of Israel in the wilderness! And **how useless is all our fretting, our worrying over trouble, as if such unhappy doings on our part could change things!**



**Luke 12:25 (KJV) "And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?"**

How much wiser, how much better, how much easier to bear life's troubles when we take everything to God in prayer?

Trouble has wise ends for the praying ones, and

these find it so. Happy is he who, like the Psalmist, finds that his troubles have been blessings in disguise.

**Psalms 119:71 (KJV) "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."**

**Psalms 119:75 (KJV) "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."**

**"O who could bear life's stormy doom,  
Did not Thy wing of love  
Come brightly wafting through the gloom  
Our peace branch from above.  
"Then sorrow, touched by Thee, grows bright,  
With more than rapture's ray;  
As darkness shows us worlds of light  
We never saw by day."**

Of course it may be conceded that **some troubles are really imaginary**. They have no existence other than in the mind. Some are **anticipated** troubles, which never arrive at our door. Others are past troubles, and there is much folly in worrying over them. **Present troubles are the ones requiring attention and demanding prayer.**

**Matthew 6:34 (KJV) "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."**

**What brought our forefathers to this land?**



Some troubles are self-originated. We are their authors. Some of these originate involuntarily with us, some arise from our ignorance, some come from our carelessness. All this can be readily admitted without breaking the force of the statement that they are the subjects of prayer, and should drive us to prayer. What father casts off his child who cries to him when the little one from its own carelessness has stumbled and fallen and hurt itself? **Does not the cry of the child attract the ears of the father even though the child be to blame for the accident?** "Whatever things ye desire" takes in every event of life, even though some events we are responsible for.

Some troubles are human in their origin. They **arise from second causes. They originate with**

**others and we are the sufferers.** This is a world where **often the innocent suffer** the consequences of the acts of others. This is a part of life's incidents. Who has not at some time suffered at the hands of others? But even these are allowed to come in the order of God's providence, are permitted to break into our lives for beneficent ends, and may be prayed over. Why should we not carry our hurts, our wrongs and our privations, caused by the acts of others, to God in prayer? Are such things outside of the realm of prayer? Are they exceptions to the rule of prayer? Not at all. And God can and will lay His hand upon all such events in answer to prayer, and cause them to work for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Nearly all of Paul's troubles arose from wicked and unreasonable men. Read the story as he gives it in **2 Cor. 11:23-33.**

So also some troubles are directly of Satanic origin. Quite **all of Job's troubles were the offspring of the devil's scheme** to break down Job's integrity, to make him charge God foolishly and to curse God. But are these not to be recognised in prayer? Are they to be excluded from God's disciplinary processes? Job did not do

so. Hear him in those familiar words. **“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord”**

O what a comfort to see God in all of life’s events! What a relief to a broken, sorrowing heart to see God’s hand in sorrow! What a source of relief is prayer in unburdening the heart in grief!

**“O Thou who driest the mourner’s tear,  
How dark this world would be,  
If, when deceived and wounded here,  
We could not fly to Thee?”**

**“The friends who in our sunshine live,  
When winter comes are flown,  
And he who has but tears to give,  
Must weep those tears alone.**

**“But Thou wilt heal the broken heart,  
Which, like the plants that throw  
Their fragrance from the wounded part,  
Breathes sweetness out of woe.”**

But when we survey all the sources from which trouble comes, it all resolves itself into two invaluable truths: First, that **our troubles at last are of the Lord. They come with His consent** He is in all of them, and is interested in us when they press and bruise us. And secondly, that our troubles, no matter what the cause, whether of ourselves, or

men or devils, or even God Himself, we are warranted in taking them to God in prayer, in praying over them, and in seeking to get the greatest spiritual benefits out of them.

**Prayer in the time of trouble tends to bring the spirit into perfect subjection to the will of God, to cause the will to be conformed to God’s will, and saves from all murmurings over our lot, and delivers from everything like a rebellious heart or a spirit critical of the Lord.** Prayer sanctifies trouble to our highest good. Prayer so prepares the heart that it softens under the disciplining hand of God. Prayer places us where God can bring to us the greatest good, spiritual and eternal. Prayer allows God to freely work with us and in us in the day of trouble. Prayer removes everything in the way of trouble, bringing to us the sweetest, the highest and greatest good. **Prayer permits God’s servant, trouble, to accomplish its mission in us, with us and for us.**

The end of trouble is always good in the mind of God. If **trouble fails in its mission, it is either because of prayerlessness or unbelief,** or both. Being in harmony with God in the dispensations of His providence, always makes trouble a blessing. The good or evil of trouble is always

determined by the spirit in which it is received. **Trouble proves a blessing or a curse**, just according as it is received and treated by us. It either softens or hardens us. It either draws us to prayer and to God or it drives us from God and from the closet. **Trouble hardened Pharaoh** till finally it had no effect on him, only to make him more desperate and to drive him farther from God. The same sun softens the wax and hardens the clay. The same sun melts the ice and dries out the moisture from the earth.

As is the infinite variety of trouble, so also is there infinite variety in the relations of prayer to other things. How many are the things which are the subject of prayer! It has to do with everything which concerns us, with everybody with whom we have to do, and has to do with all times. But especially does prayer have to do with trouble.

**Psalms 34:6 (KJV) "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."**

O the blessedness, the help, the comfort of prayer in the day of trouble! And how marvelous the promises of God to us in the time of trouble!

**Psalms 91:14 (KJV) "Because he hath set his**

**love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."**

**"If pain afflict, or wrongs oppress,  
If cares distract, or fears dismay;  
If guilt deject, if sin distress,  
In every case, still watch and pray."**

How rich in its sweetness, how far-reaching in the realm of trouble, and how cheering to faith, are the words of promise which God delivers to His believing, praying ones, by the mouth of Isaiah:

**Isaiah 43:1-3 (KJV) "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. {2} When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. {3} For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee."**

# Why Does A Loving God Allow Suffering?

By Pastor David Buffaloe

bibleteacher.org

Every day you see suffering all around the world. Some of the suffering is caused by nature, i.e. by flood, famine, drought, or landslide. People suffer in extremely hot and cold climates. The crime rate is on the rise, and people suffer because other people hurt them by theft, murder, rape, or maligning. People suffer under the excesses (it seems) of the Law. Not to long ago a young man was shot numerous times by the police, yet did nothing to lead to this terrible chain of events.

It's impossible not to see the suffering that goes on around us and ask the question, "Why does a Loving God allow such suffering?". Some have looked at the suffering and assumed that there is no God, for no truly loving God would allow His creation to be so tarnished. Yet is this true?

## Man Created A Sewer

I know we've been through this before, but let's look at it one more time. In the beginning God created the universe and this earth completely without sin - without weeds - without trials. Man was in an idyllic situation, and all he had to do was obey one commandment (touch not that tree) to maintain the status quo. You all know the history of the Fall of Man (Genesis 3), so I'll not go through that again. I do want to emphasize this, though: man created the sewer that we are living in now. In fact man through the lies of humanism continues to add to

this sewer on a daily basis.

Look at the stupidity that humanism brings on mankind. In a story dated March 14, 2000 the Associated Press tells us that the PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has unveiled a new commercial called "Got Beer?". Targeted at college students, the commercial promotes beer drinking over drinking milk because "*PETA is concerned about the cruel treatment of milk cows and their calves on factory farms*". PETA spokesman Bruce Friedrich went on to say that "If you drink milk, you are supporting a product that is horrible for human health, catastrophic for the environment and a living nightmare for the animals concerned". PETA is even giving away beer bottle shaped can openers that say "Drink responsibly. Don't drink milk. Save a cow's life". Humanism once again comes up with an idiotic plan to save the animals while killing off the human species. Never mind that milk has 30 percent of the calcium, 16 percent of the protein, and 25 percent of the vitamin D humans need per day. PETA assumes that cattle deserve more consideration than humans. It is better to tell our college kids to "drink beer" than drink milk. Let them die by auto accident and liver failure - save them cows!

The truth is, much of the pain brought on humanity has been brought on us by ourselves. Man introduced sin into the world, not God, and man introduced sin into nature. Man is still introducing sin into the world through organizations like PETA or PRIDE, saving animals and harming mankind. The problem of pain is often one that we brought on ourselves by one way or the other. We created the atomic bomb, not God. We over

26

farm the land and deplete its resources, not God. We build without regard for natural erosion, then ask "Why me, God?" when our houses are caught in a mudslide. We rebuild in known flood plains, knowing better but not caring. After all, my will is supreme, is it not? God will take care of us - never mind that the Bible tells us "not to tempt the Lord our God" (Matthew 4.7; Luke 4.12).

After years of murdering our children via abortion we are starting to see the effects of our folly. Businesses are suffering for lack of workers. Since abortion was legalized in 1973, more than 37 million legal abortions have been performed (comparable to the population of Canada), 8.1 million of them in the 1970s. In 1996, the latest year for which statistics are available, 1.37 million legal abortions were performed. Pro abortion leaders are happy with the figure because they say this has reduced the crime rate in our country. These aborted children were obviously "no good" in the first place, and were destined to be criminals. It is a fact that, of the 37 million murdered, many might have been criminals. But on the other hand, many might have been great doctors, theologians, politicians, healers of our country. We do know that many of them would have been laborers in the American workforce, now lost forever because of our arrogance.

**Genesis 3:21 "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them."**

When we sinned, our sin had ramifications that effected the innocent. The animals, who were innocent of sin, now were sacrificed for our meat and clothing. The earth

grew thorns and thistles because we chose to walk away from God. We introduced pain into humanity and the environment by our own arrogance, and continue to do so even today.

### **We Created Pain, But God Can Use It**

To blame God for what we have wrought is folly, and unfair. C.S. Lewis wrote:

**"We can rest contentedly in our sins and in our stupidities, and everyone who has watched gluttons shoveling down the most exquisite foods as if they did not know what they were eating, will admit that we can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."**

Though we created pain in the beginning when we created sin, and though we create and add to our pain today by actively sinning, God often speaks to us through that pain. Jesus walked among the Israelites for three years preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, but many rejected His message. The Pharisees and Scribes, for instance, rather than hear His message constantly walked behind Him and threw all manner of objection and derision His way. Jesus warned Israel:

**Matthew 21:42-43 "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the**  
28

**corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."**

That if they kept rejecting the Messiah then God would take the Kingdom of God from this nation and give it to another. Israel kept rejecting, and before they nailed Christ to the Cross said "**His blood be on us, and on our children**" (Matthew 27.25). In 70 AD Israel was sacked by Rome, her records and Temple destroyed, and her people scattered to the four winds. God shouted to Israel in this tornado of pain "That was My Son - you must heed Him". God often calls men to His side and to the Cross of Christ by our pain. We often find Him when, in the midst of pain and helplessness we look up, look outward from ourselves to Jesus and find Him to be the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

### **Why Do We Suffer As Christians?**

The unbeliever suffers because of the Adamic curse, or because of active pursuit of sin, but why do Christians suffer? Certainly we are in fellowship with God, we are His children by faith, and yet we still suffer. Why?

God allows suffering among His children for several reasons:

### **We Have Become Disobedient**

Because we have been disobedient, and suffering is the whip He uses to bring us back in line:

**Hebrews 12:7-9 "If ye endure chastening, (PAIDEIA = Disciplinary punishment given to children to instruct them) God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, (NOTHOS = illegitimate, of uncertain lineage, not Christian or Children of God) and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"**

Often we who are Christians forget who we are. We forget that we are no longer "free agents" but are children of God, and that God is our Father. Being in a family relationship means that we are accountable to the head of the Family, our Lord and Savior, and that we are required to do as He requires. Though a Christian is saved, we are not entirely sinless, and we still have the free will to do as God requests or to disobey. When we disobey, God chastens or "scourges us with the whip".

**Psalms 38:1-5 "O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."**

The chastening hand of God is never designed to torture the believer, but to make us come to the point where we admit it is OUR error, that WE sinned, and that we ASK forgiveness. When King David decided to steal Uriah's wife Bathsheba and murder Uriah, God chastened David by taking away the child of their ill gotten love. The child did not suffer, but went to be with the Lord. But David suffered, oh how he suffered, and repented with bitter tears his awful actions and sins. When we are under the chastening hand of God we come out from under it by being honest with Him, by honestly confessing our sins (1 John 1.9). To often Christians go, "I'm sorry for this sin, Lord BUT ..." then go about rationalizing the sin. "But I was tempted", "But I was hungry", but, but, but. When I was in the military I was taught a lesson that all believers should know. When I made a mistake I went to my commander and didn't rationalize it. I said, "I messed up and have no excuse". The commander would then help me find ways to correct the situation. But if I said, "I messed up, but ..." and tried to shift blame then I was in for it! Do you not know that, as a Christian, God the Holy Spirit resides in you? Do you not know that He knows you sinned, and when you add the "but" you're trying to deceive Someone who watched you do it in the first place? God demands an honest accounting - only then will He remove the discipline and restore you to full fellowship.

### **To Test And Strengthen Our Faith**

**1 Peter 1:7-8 "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus**

**Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"**

**Romans 5:3-5 "And not only so, but we glory (KAUCHAOMAI = to be happy about, so much so that you boast about it) in tribulations (THLIPSIS = Testing under pressure, persecution, trial of fire, suffering) also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."**

God often uses trials and suffering among His Children to drive us to spiritual growth. It has been my experience that most Christians, after the initial rush of being saved, fall into laziness and apathy. Sure, they may go to Church faithfully, but their prayer life is often weak, their Bible study non-existent. That is, until the trials hit. Then, by golly, those who are Christian are repeatedly calling out to God "please, Lord, take this away", and often diligently digging into the Scriptures for comfort and understanding.

Know this, believer, God schedules both mountain tops and valleys in your life. While you are on the mountain top the living is easy, idyllic, peaceful. During the mountain top experience the wise Christian works on the disciplines of faith: he prays, fasts, studies God's Word, preparing for the valley. Because, dear friend, the valley will come! When the valley comes if you have

persevered in the disciplines of faith your focus on Christ will be sharper, you will be stronger, you will be more useful to Christ. If you have not persevered, the valley will drive you to seek out the disciplines - to minimize self and magnify God.

A good example of "mountains and valleys" is the experience that Israel went through. God led Israel out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Israel left Egypt, a superpower in those days, with her head held high and riches in her pocket. You would think that they would be confident with the pillar of God leading them, but when they came to the Red Sea they saw the Egyptians behind them, the great Sea before them, and started railing against Moses:

**Exodus 14:12 "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."**

Don't be surprised by this attitude: most of us whine when the trial first hits us, and Israel was no exception. You know, God did the greatest thing for us at salvation, the greatest thing He could have ever done. We, who are totally unworthy, had the Son of God slaughtered for us so we could be saved. If God did the greatest thing for us at salvation, won't He do the lesser now? If He led us out of Egypt, won't He preserve us in the desert? Israel should have known that God didn't go through so much trouble to save them, only to have them gutted by the Egyptians. And you should know that God didn't save you by the Cross only to abandon you in this life.

Of course, you know that God used Moses to part the sea, and Israel escaped whereas the Egyptian armies were destroyed. Israel marched away, and should have known that God was going to provide. But again they murmured, cursed, complained against God because they didn't have enough food to eat.

**Exodus 16:3-4 "And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no."**

So God rained down bread from Heaven, Manna, and the children ate of it. When you have been without, has God provided your need? Did He give you a pay raise, or overtime on the job, or a gift from someone you know? God gave Israel manna, and told them exactly how much to gather, and when it could be eaten. Guess what? These hardheads gathered too much or too little, tried to hoard it and it turned into worms, and basically made a mess of the whole situation. I have known Christians who have went through financial difficulty and the Church at the direction of God gave them hundreds of dollars. These believers then go out and spend the money frivolously, not for necessity but for pleasure, then cry for more money. When God gives you manna, Christian, use it as

He directs, or bring more suffering on yourself. God provided manna for Israel for forty years, and as long as they obeyed Him in its use it nourished and sustained them for their trip.

**Exodus 17:1-2 "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?"**

Did Israel learn? You see, after each trial is overcome by God the believer is expected to learn from it. Israel had too much water (Red Sea), God parted it, they were saved. They should have learned then, but they still complained about food. God gave manna, instructed them on its use, and still they didn't learn. Now they came to a situation where there was too little water. Of course, God supplied the water:

**Exodus 17:5-7 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of**

**the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?"**

But God renamed the place this happened MERIBAH, which means "bitter complaining". You see, God was becoming vexed with this people, and renaming the place was a warning to them. Believer, God allows trials in your life to help you learn to trust in Him and Him alone. As He brings you through each valley you are expected to learn from that trial, to learn to trust Him more. It is not wise to continue doubting God after He clearly delivers, for eventually He will punish you. You see, we are happy when we think of God as "Love", but often forget that He is "justice" as well.

Israel forgot this - and left Meribah just as ignorant as when they came. God led them victorious through battle, and gave them the Ten Commandments written in stone. So far all of the great tests that God gave Israel had to do with WATER. This was a constant theme, God was using it like a parent will teach a child "Here is the letter 'a'. 'A' is for 'apple'. See the 'a'?". Over and over again He took them through trials involving water. He took them to Marah which had bitter water, then had Moses drop a limb in the water and sweeten it (Exodus 15.22-27). God was patient with the people, until they got to Kadesh. Here they were without water again, and rather than trust God they started bitterly complaining again (Numbers 20.1-13). Moses was told to "speak to the Rock" and water would come out, but instead he struck the Rock and lost his right to enter the Promised Land. Believers, when you don't learn the lessons that God tries to show

36

you through trials, when you don't grow as you should, you eventually become A CURSE TO SOMEONE ELSE. This generation of Israel never learned, and they followed Moses in his curse. They wandered in stupid circles in the desert for forty years until this disobedient generation died out.

Are you wandering in circles? God had a purpose for Israel, else He would not have saved them. God has a purpose for you, else He would not have saved you. Christians only die when their work on earth for God is done, or when they have become so utterly useless from whining and laziness that God can find no purpose for them on earth. If you are in a trial, please remember this:

**Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."**

When you are in love with God, when you are actively in fellowship and a trial comes your way, you should expect that God will fight for you. You are His representative, He is your Ruler, and the problem must be cast on Him. When believers fail to claim the promises of God for themselves they do two things: (1) They offend God. Certainly He is powerful enough to overcome the trial for you, if you trust Him, and (2) they become incapable of coherent thought, mentally lost in sin. The trial then becomes greater in size, to our perception, often greater than it really is.

The Children of Israel had another thing in common with the Christian today. Each time the trial hit, they "looked back" to Egypt, bragged on the way things used to be,

yearned for the old way of life. The Christian who looks back on his old pre-salvation life is the Christian destined to fail in the trial. We are told:

**Philippians 3:13-14 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."**

Forget those old things, and keep "pressing forward". There are some 7000 promises of God in Scripture for the believer, in writing, waiting to be claimed. These promises are all given by a holy and loving God that only has your best interest at heart. Here's a suggestion that I used that was very beneficial: start a journal. When you go through the valleys, log the time and date of the trials and write your prayers to God down. Search the Scriptures, and find a promise that God has given to you concerning this trial. Write that down. Give your worries to God (1 Peter 5.7). Later, when the trial is over, write down how God delivered you. The next time a trial hits, do the same thing. And periodically review your journal, and give God the praise for His deliverance.

**Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."**

You cannot grow in God unless you learn to relax in His promises, relax through the trials. Stand still, and see His

deliverance.

### **Other Reasons For Christian Suffering**

1. To allow us to empathize with other believers:

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4 "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."**

God used this form of suffering in my life. Not too long before I was called into the ministry, God took one of my children home to be with Him. At the time I didn't understand the reason for this. You see, Stephen was only 17 years old, with his whole life before him, and he was a Christian. But after learning to accept this I can now minister to those who suffer the loss of loved ones in my congregation. This was not cruelty, but love, the love of a Father that knows all things. Stephen is in His hands, and will one day meet me on those streets of gold. Till then, I minister in the certain knowledge that God can bring us all through the valleys, no matter how deep they seem.

2. To increase our witness for Christ:

**2 Corinthians 4:8-11 "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus**

**might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."**

**2 Timothy 2:9-10 "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."**

What a witness it is to see a believer under trial and tribulation focused on God! This is what leads the unbeliever to accept Christ - seeing what we have in Him, and seeing us stand as victors through Him. Would you consider this for a moment?

Just suppose the Lord began to make people as sick as they claim to be on Sunday. "I can't come to Church, I'm SO sick". Just suppose the Lord made people as poor as they claim to be when they are asked to help finance His work. Just suppose you had to live on ten times what you give to the Lord every week. Just suppose the Lord struck all who lie about their service like He did with Annanias and Sapphira. Just suppose ...

Now suppose the other side of the coin. Suppose that you commit your way to the Lord. Suppose that, when you come under trial and tribulation you call on God instead of doubting and cursing Him. Suppose that, when you are asked to give of your time or your money you gave as God led, not as you want. Suppose that, in the midst of trial, you looked outward for God instead of inward

pitying yourself. John Bunyan, imprisoned for "preaching without a license", while in prison didn't sit there crying everyday. Instead he wrote "The Pilgrim's Progress", a wonderful work that still blesses Christians today. Fanny Crosby, blinded at birth because of a doctor's mistake, wrote over 300 hymns in praise to the Lord Jesus. When Samuel Brengel approached the founder of the Salvation Army for a job, he was told to "go to the basement and shine men's boots". Rather than get his nose out of joint, he answered "If Jesus washed feet, I can shine boots". Brengel later became one of the leaders of the Salvation Army. Don't forget Peter in prison (Acts 12:3-11, 24), Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7), Paul and Silas' imprisonment (Acts 16:25-30) and the martyrs and sufferers of every Church Era who have stood firm in Jesus under trial while winning others to Christ.

3. To help us focus on God's Word:

**Psalms 119:71 "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."**

Nothing gets your mind off of television and on Jesus' Word like suffering!

4. To diminish ourselves while increasing God in us:

**2 Corinthians 12. 1-7 "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.**

**And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."**

When you get a little to "big for your britches" God often uses pain to refocus you away from pride and toward His majesty. God allowed Paul to see, literally see, into Heaven without first dying. God gave Paul this wonderful vision so he would be strengthened to serve Him, but at the same time God allowed suffering to strike this great Apostle. As humans we all have that little seed of pride inside, waiting to blossom into full grown megalomania. Even the great Apostle was not free from this - so God gave him a constant reminder with that "thorn in the flesh".

5. Because other believers get out of fellowship:

**Romans 14:7 "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."**

**1 Chronicles 21:1 "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."**

Sadly, this is all too often the reason that believers suffer, because other believers get out of line. Years ago the Chaplain Magazine told how the great preacher Charles Spurgeon and his wife were called miserly because they sold all the eggs their chickens laid and wouldn't give any away. Because they made a profit on their butter, milk, and eggs they were said to be "greedy". After C.H. Spurgeon's death his wife revealed that the funds were used to support two needy widows whose husbands had spent their lives serving the Lord. The Spurgeons didn't want to call attention to their giving, so refused to defend themselves.

I cannot count the number of times I have been in Church business meetings when believers have accused one another of "being in service to Satan". One minister was accused of being "led of the devil", and members have hurt one another by using that little flap of flesh inside their (at the time) empty heads. Believers have left Churches, never to return, over the things said. Remember this the next time you backbite your brother: you will be called to give account for this one day (Matthew 12.36). You will also be called to account for how you responded when you were wrongfully accused. I am certain that Reverend Spurgeon was given a crown for his response under unfair and backslidden believers. How will you stand up, in that day?