

## TRIALS AND THE CORONAVIRUS – LESSONS YOU NEED TO LEARN

Hope Bible Church / Steven Hogan – April 5, 2020

As Christians, we all know about trials, for every Christian has them on a regular basis, and indeed, they are a big part of our lives, and a necessary part of our lives. Now this coronavirus that's going on in our country is a trial, a big trial that's been affecting millions of people in the world, both believers and unbelievers. My purpose today is to help you understand what God says about trials and their purpose for your life. And if you don't, then you'll be miserable, irritable and grumpy. More than that, you won't properly grow, you won't be a mature, joyful, fruitful, God-glorifying Christian.

Now what is a trial? It's a difficulty, a pressure, a problem, an affliction, a trouble. It can be internal or external in nature. It can be physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, or a combination of these. Trials are hard, difficult, distressing and unpleasant experiences.

- It is, as James 1:9 says, a humble circumstance, that which should make you humble, and help you to see that you're human, and God is God and in charge and can do what He wants.
- Now 1 Peter 1:3-9 is the passage that best explains what God wants us to learn about trials. I am going to go through this, starting at verse 6, which explains the nature of our trials. *"In this you greatly rejoice, even though **now (1)** for a **little while (2)**, if **necessary (3)**, you have been **distressed (4)** by **various (5)** trials."*

1. God says you have trials *"now"* which means you only go thru trials during your life on this earth. Jesus told the disciples, *"In this world you will tribulation"* (John 16:33). Paul said, *"We must go thru many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God."* Acts 14:22 Being saved sure doesn't mean life has no problems, that it's just a bed of roses. All of you can testify to the fact that you have trials during your life on earth. But when you are gone from here and in heaven, all your trials will be over. Amen!

- Revelation 21:4 says, *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

2. God says trials last only *"a little while,"* and 2 Cor 4:17 says they are *"momentary troubles."* Now some trials are very short, they last an hour or two, or a day or two. Or you may have a trial that have lasts for years, or maybe you have one that will last the rest of your life. Regardless, your trials need to be seen in view of eternity, which means they are very short. And to make it thru trials in a godly way, you need to know that life is short, for you are just a *"vapor that appears for a little while"* (James 4:14). And therefore, trials don't last long.

3. God says trials are *"necessary."* God is not careless and unthinking when it comes to your life and the trials you go through. He's all-wise, all-loving and knows exactly what He's doing. Indeed, the trials you go through are personally designed by Him for you, and they are necessary, are some of God's primary tools to help you to spiritually grow up, to be a mature Christian. Later I will share some of the specific reasons God gives you trials.

4. God says we are “*distressed*” by trials or, as other translations say, result in grief or sorrow. You all know that trials are hard, are trying, can be extremely difficult on your body and soul. In 2 Cor. 1:8-9, Paul describes how he and Timothy felt as they were going through a trial - “*We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves.*” Have you ever felt this way? I think you all know that trials can be extremely difficult, and in many cases, the hardest thing you’ll ever go through. Hebrews 12:3

5. God says there are “*various*” trials, which means there are all kinds of trials. There are job trials, family trials, marriage trials, school trials, financial trials, relational trials, church trials, health trials, car trials and hundreds more. And there are personal trials, trials that are unique to you, your life, or your family. Now this coronavirus is definitely unique, unlike any trial we have ever experienced, and designed by God to affect and teach you and Christians all over the world. And in the Bible, we see all kinds of trials: I think of Joseph being sold by his brothers, Job physically suffering, Moses leading the unruly Jews, David being chased by Saul, Jesus being punished for our sins, Paul being in jail, etc. And I would encourage you to study the lives of believers in the Bible and the trials they went through. Heb. 12:3

But why do we have trials? Because your Father knows best, He knows it’s necessary for your life. Let me share with you some specific reasons why you have trials:

1. It is for your faith – “*so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 1:7). Now faith means you are trusting and depending on God and His word. And your faith is precious, more valuable than all the things you own, more valuable than all the money and property in the world.

God gives you trials so that your faith grows, so your faith, like a muscle, gets stronger and stronger. We see this with Abraham, and how his faith grew and grew. Rom. 4:18-20 Now trials are a test of your faith, and in fact, this is a good definition of a trial that it’s a test of your faith. And so, when you have a trial your faith is being tested. (James 1:2-3). And if you keep having faith, then you’re persevering. A person who is persevering has continued faith. He keeps trusting God as he goes through some trial.

2. It is so you grow in your love for God – “*and though you have not seen Him now, you love Him.*” (1 Peter 1:8, James 1:12). As a Christian, you do love God, which is the most important thing you are to do. But the trials you go through in life not only test your faith in God, but also test your love for Him and, in fact, help you to grow in loving Him. Deut. 13:4 says, “*The Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul.*” The person who successfully goes through a trial loves God all the more.

3. It is for the salvation of your soul, for your spiritual growth during your life here on earth – *“obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your soul”* (1 Peter 1:9). Indeed, faith is an essential part of your growth process, but there are many other aspects related to your spiritual growth, the salvation of your soul.

- You need God’s grace. Going thru trials reveals that you’re spiritually weak and need God’s grace. 2 Cor. 12:9 - *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness”*

- You need to obey God. Trials are designed to teach you to obey Him, especially when you are disobedient. Ps. 119:67 - *“Before I was afflicted, I went astray but now I keep your word.”*

You need to be holy. God gives you trials to teach you not to sin, to train you to do what is right, to be holy. Hebrews 12:4-11 - *“He (God) disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.”* 1 Peter 1:15-16 – *“Be holy yourselves in all your behavior, because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”*

- You need to be comforted, and to be comforting others. Our lives aren’t just about ourselves, but are also about others, and the comfort you receive from God when you go through trials is to be shared with others who are going through trials. *“God... who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”* 2 Cor. 1:3-11

It is so you grow in hope. 1 Peter 1:3-4 gives you the big picture of your salvation, that you were born again, that you presently have a living hope, and in the future this hope will be realized, and you will obtain your eternal inheritance.

- As a Christian, you have to have hope, you need to see the light at the end of the tunnel when you’ll have no trials, when you are in heaven and everything will be perfect.

- 1 Peter 1:13 – At this time you are to fix your hope on that time when Jesus is revealed, which is when the church is raptured, for then your salvation will be complete, for you will receive your new glorified body.

It is so we rejoice in the Lord. 1 Peter 1:6 – *“In this you greatly rejoice.”* 1 Peter 1:8 – *“though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe I Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”* Twice in this passage, we read that you are to rejoice and, in fact, it says *“greatly rejoice”* which means rejoicing is very important. You can only truly rejoice when you understand that trials are an important part of your salvation, of your growth process, but also a part of the big picture, from when you were born again, to your life now on earth, to that time when you are in heaven. Only then will you be able to truly and fully rejoice like God wants you to.

Another point on this – as people, we tend to try to find our joy in fleshly and worldly things, but that's circumstantial, and that's not real joy. Yes, you may have some temporary happiness, but you will never have true joy that way, for true joy doesn't come from worldly or fleshly experiences, but only from God. Gal. 5:22

- God then gives trials so you see that true joy doesn't come from your circumstances, but from knowing God. And so even when life is extremely hard, even when you're going thru the hardest of trials, you can still experience God's joy. Acts 16:25 – Paul

It is so Christ lives in you. As a Christian, your life is not about you, but about Jesus Christ living in you. God gives trials so you turn to Him and trust Him. When you do this, then the Holy Spirit works in you, and Christ is revealed in and through your life. *"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves... we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh"* (2 Cor. 4:7, 11). When you encounter a trial, remember that it's not about you, but about Jesus Christ being manifested through your life. Gal. 2:20, Phil. 1:21

Let's conclude. We are talking about trials, and specifically about the coronavirus trial. This coronavirus is a very unique trial affecting all kinds of people, and to different degrees, is affecting each one of you. It is taking place now during your life on earth, it only lasts a little while, but it's necessary for your life, and it's quite distressing. And this trial has been designed by God so that you grow in faith, grow in hope, grow in your love for God, grow in grace, grow in obedience, grow in holiness, and also, so you receive God's comfort, comfort you can then pass on to others.

Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, like the coronavirus (James 1:2). What a blessing it is that God gives trials. Now when you face trials, remember that they are from the hand of God, and are for His glory and purposes, for your good, for your spiritual growth, and for the good of others. Romans 5:1-5