

Trials and Temptations: A Time of Need

During times of need we are met with trials and temptations. The pain of trials, and the thoughts that accompany that pain, challenge our strength and courage and may tempt us to turn away from the Lord. Let us examine God's word for help in those times of need.

2 Samuel 22: 31-37

Verse 31 states, **"As for God, his way is perfect."**

Let's stop right there for a moment. Do you agree with that Scripture? Until this issue is settled there is no reason to go on to another verse. For if you don't agree that his way is perfect then somehow you think that his way is imperfect – that it can be improved upon. Most of us may never say that out loud, although our thoughts and actions may indicate that is exactly what we really believe.

God's way – the way he chooses to do things – the way he rules the universe -- is perfect. Many times I look at what God allows to come into my life and into the lives of others, and I say, "If left up to me, I would write the story a different way."

If we believe that his way is perfect, then we would not be resistant toward his way. We wouldn't second guess him. We certainly would not doubt or worse be rebellious regarding his way.

If we don't choose his way then we look for an alternate way. Instead of taking what's behind door number 1 so to speak – God's way, we choose another door in our time of need. Once we choose that alternate door we reap the consequences of the contents behind that door.

God has a specific way to deal with our time of need -- and it is through him. If we try to go around him we will end up in a disappointing or harmful destination. In our time of need, we could be tempted to go to the door called anger, or the door called depression, or the door of escape, or the door of fear and anxiety. There doesn't seem to be a shortage of doors to choose from – all leading to the broad road. There seems to be a lot of options if we start looking for a different way than God's way – the narrow way. While God's way leads to the abundant life, the alternate ways lead to increased suffering, and often destruction and death. God's way will move us closer to him; the alternate ways will move us farther and farther from God. As a result we move farther from the source of life.

What I have found in my life, and in the lives of others, is that for the Christian there is no other way through our trial except through Christ. We must become like him, taking on his character, in order to move forward and overcome the obstacle before us. We can run, hid or argue with God and the reality before us, but that will only keep us stuck, miserable or worse.

Most of us can quote Romans 8:28 that all things work together for the good for those who love God according to his purpose. Certainly the writer of Romans, the apostle Paul, would say that all things include the good and the bad -- for they are both working to carry out God's purpose. The logical question is what is God's purpose that he is working out through all things good or bad? The answer is in verse 29. Those who love God and have been called according to his purpose are being conformed to the image of Christ. The word "conformed" means formed with or to. In other words, all things, good or bad, are working together to make us more like Christ.

In psychology, we know that there is a grieving process that is very normal when we face a loss or trial. That process includes shock, denial, bargaining, anger and depression. However, at the end of the day it is important for our health and wellbeing that we move on to the next stage of grieving called "acceptance." Acceptance doesn't mean we like the reality we have found ourselves in -- it means that we have made a decision to move on through it. It means we begin to accept reality as it is and begin to put our energy into moving forward in the best way we can with God as our guide.

Not only is God's way perfect, the Scriptures go on to say that, "**The word of the Lord is flawless,**" 2 Samuel 22:31.

Are you able to rest in that reality? In that Scripture is the secret to overcoming the trials and temptations that we face. Rest and not resist, in his way and in his word. His word consists of teaching, commands and promises. To overcome a trial requires that we submit ourselves to his teachings and commands, and that we stand firm on what he has promised us in our trials and temptations.

2 Corinthians 1:4 tells us that God is the Father of all compassion and the God of all comfort. He suffers with us and he is strong for us. Can you trust him to care for you? Can you trust him to be your strength when you are weak? When we face trials and temptations we desperately need to get to the Father. Let us rest in the Father's arms so that the Father may strengthen us with his word.

Look at the promise in the last part of verse 31 of 2 Samuel 22. The Scriptures state that God **“is a shield for all who take refuge in him”** A refuge is a place of shelter and safety. Literally, the term means to take refuge from a storm in a safe harbor. This is who the Father is to us. He is our safe harbor when the storms of life come against us. We run to him and are safe. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to him and are safe,” Proverbs 18:10, (cf. Psalm 61:3).

Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash,” Matthew 7:24-27.

The Father shields those who take refuge in him.

2 Samuel 22:32, **“For who is God besides the Lord?”** Have you truly come to terms with this question and the apparent answer? **“And who is the Rock except our God?”** Is God your rock during the storms of trials and temptations? If not, what is hindering you?

In verse 33, the Scriptures state, **“It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.”** It is God who conforms me to his way -- which is perfect. In that place I have strength to face the storms of life. The Scriptures go on to say, “He makes my feet like a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights,” v34. He makes me an overcomer to stand with him in high places. Verse 35, “He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.” Through his training in righteousness, I am no longer weak, but I am strong through him to face the enemy of my soul. He gives us a “shield of victory” and lifts us up, v36. He broadens the path beneath us so that our ankles do not turn; v37. He takes the treacherous path and makes it so that we can stand firm, sure footed, in the power of God.

Application Question: Are you in a time of need? Are you facing trials and temptations? Let me encourage you to run to the Father and find refuge in him. From that place, obey his teachings and commands. From that place, stand firm on his promises for you. Let him lift you up to new heights as you walk with him on the path of righteousness – his perfect way.