

Trials

What do we mean by “trials”?

Trials are also referred to as testing, purging, or proving. They may include any difficulty of life that presents us with a choice between God’s way and the way of the world or of the flesh. We demonstrate by our choices whether we are really willing to follow and obey God regardless of the cost.

Trials may take the form of the “normal” difficulties of life, or severe hardships, or persecutions, or those times when it seems God is not listening or doesn’t care, or when He has made a promise that doesn’t seem to be happening or even possible (e.g., Abraham’s seed). They can be temptations, although we should recognize that God does not tempt us (Jas. 1:13-14). He allows us to be tempted because of our lusts.

2 Chr. 32:31 – (Hezekiah and the ambassadors of Babylon) “God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” (this may explain some of our dry times when God’s presence is not felt)

Ps. 11:5 - The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth,

Ps. 66:10 – For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

Examples from the Bible: children of Israel in the wilderness (hunger, thirst, wanderings), Daniel in lion’s den, 3 Hebrews in the fire, David and Goliath, Jonathan and his armor-bearer, all those listed in Heb. 11, ...

What are the purposes of our trials?

If there were no real purpose in trials, they wouldn’t BE trials, merely disagreeable circumstances that do nothing to improve our spiritual state. They may be great, decisive, and unavoidable events in our life, or they may be just the accumulation of everyday choices we make as to whether we are really “seeking first the kingdom of God”.

Four major purposes of trials may be seen in **Dt. 8:2-5**.

1. To humble us (v. 2-3) – e.g., Joseph in Egypt Ps. 105:17-19
2. To prove us (v. 2) Like product testing, or refining operations
 - a. to God – He is “trying our hearts” (Prov. 17:3, 1 Thess. 2:4)
 - b. to Satan – Job 1-2
 - c. to selves – our trials should reveal to us whether we are really in the faith, or just talkers (Mk. 4 – the parable of the sowing of seeds). Sometimes we have faults we are unaware of. They are revealed through trial. Why? Not to expose us to ridicule, but so we can deal with our faults and be rid of them.
 - d. to others – our faithfulness in trial causes others to glorify God, and to take courage in their own trials. It can even draw others into the right way. Often the faithful deaths of the martyrs in church history caused others to become Christians.
3. To teach us (v. 3) – Ps. 139:23-24
4. To chasten us (v. 5) –we often distinguish between trials and chastening, because chastening is often the result of having failed some earlier trial. The “new” trial is to see how we respond to God’s correction.

What should be our attitude in trials?

How we respond depends on whether the trial is corrective or not.

1. If the trial is a matter of testing, or proving, or refining, it is something which must be patiently borne in faithful actions. If it is chastening, we should determine the cause, repent of it, and make it right if possible. If we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, in time His chastening hand will be lifted.
2. Not to think it strange – 1 P. 4:12 A life of trials is NORMAL.
3. A mixture of joy and heaviness – heaviness through the severity of “manifold temptations” (1 P. 1:7), but joy in that we can see the perfecting work of God in our lives (Jas. 1:2-4)