

TRIALS



Refiners Fire

Sarah-Rebecca

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you, to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God.

1 Peter 4:12-16

Who of us hasn't complained secretly in our heart, (or perhaps even at the top of our lungs),

*"Why is my life constantly disrupted?
Why do I have to go through all this?
Why can't I have a little peace and quiet?"*

As if these trials we're going through were some kind of abnormal thing, intruding on our divine peace, spoiling our joy in the Lord.

Have you ever known anyone who is seriously following Jesus whose life wasn't disrupted? Who had no trials?

If you think you met such a person it was only because that person's trials were hidden from your view. Behind their outwardly tranquil circumstances, and outwardly comfortable life, that follower of Jesus was going through trials too.

The abnormal Christian life, the life that will never survive this world, is the life without trials, where things are always smooth. No hassles, no dangers, never any money problems, no enemies; satisfaction and fulfillment on every front.

In this world of flesh and blood an un-disrupted, untroubled, satiated life, is a life of certain death. Such a life ends up in Laodicea where believers are so proud of their prosperity and so comfortable in their lukewarmness that they have no idea how dead they are.

For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich; and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

Revelation 3:17-18

- Gold refined by fire ... gold made pure by being brought through the heat and the flame of trial.
- The white garments are given to those who have come through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- Salve to anoint your eyes that you may see...

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

What is this salve that opens our blind eyes to reality - to see things as they are - but the trials that shake us out of enchanted slumber?

One thing all believers have in common along with the presence of Jesus in our lives; love, joy, peace in the Holy Spirit - is trial of one kind or another. Something that puts our lives under stress, causes pain, baffles us, makes us weak. It is by these very trials that the Spirit of God;

- develops us into the likeness of Jesus,
- forms us into sons and daughters of the living God.

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

Without these trials we would never emerge from our spiritual infancy and we would be flattened by the first storm that hits.

Some of us are experiencing the trial of persecution...

People are giving us a hard time because we're walking a road strange to them.

If they are giving us a hard time because we're so obnoxious, because we're self-righteous, hypocritical, lazy, thoughtless of others in our great piety, that's not persecution. But there is genuine persecution going on in the lives of some among us....

..... and this persecution is a trial, a refining fire.

There is the trial of monotony...

Do you think Jesus' trials began only after He started to preach? What about those thirty years of monotony in the drab, tedious, narrow minded town of Nazareth? ... a detestable place according to Nathanael...

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

It's not all high adventure. It's serving God among people that are petty, amid routines that are dry as dust, on and on, day-after-day, year-after-year, in the same boring place.

...But this very monotony is a refining fire.

There is the trial of loss...

- a loved one,
 - a friend turns his back and walks out of your life, divorce tears up a home,
 - a mate or a parent takes off, and it's like part of your very soul is gone.
- This too is a refining fire.



Close to the Broken-hearted
Sarah-Rebecca

There is the trial of danger...

Paul talks about the perils he experienced.

Perils of water,
perils of robbers,
perils by Jews,
perils by Gentiles,
perils in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea,
among false brethren.

We too are exposed to dangers of violence to our person, our property.

....These very dangers are refining fires.

There is the thorn in the flesh

... some physical or mental malady that buffets us and we ask the Lord to take it away and He tells us that His grace is sufficient.

..... And we begin to accept this thorn in the flesh as a refining fire.

There is the trial of weakness...

Some tendency, some twist inside us like a broken wheel on the cart in the supermarket that causes it to keep crashing into the merchandise. Some fear, some perverse desire, some sick compulsion. Of many of these things we can expect to be healed.

... But from some there comes a refining flame that keeps driving us to our one source of strength.

There is the trial of loneliness...

...where we seem to be isolated by an invisible wall that no one can get through - not even our loved ones.

*"Which of us has known his brother?
Which of us has looked into his father's heart?
Which of us is not forever prison pent?
Which of us is not forever a stranger and alone?"*

Thomas Wolfe may have exaggerated in these words, but there are moments in most of our lives when that certainly seems to be true. And by those flames of loneliness our lives are refined some more.

So the trials come and the flames lick our lives. What do they produce?



Keep Burning

Sarah-Rebecca

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

1. If we let them, our trials produce endurance.

The only way a runner builds up endurance is to run, and the only way a fighter learns how to take punches is to take punches, and the only way a child of God develops the power to endure is by passing on through trials.

Some of us look back on insults which almost drove us to suicide in the past ... now we laugh them off and praise God. Setbacks that once seemed like the end of the world are all now part of a day's work. Disappointments that once would depress us for days ... now we shrug them off and keep going.

2. If we let them, trials produce character, moral strength.

The power to walk through temptation and not fall apart. There are those whose moral strength puts us to shame because while we were living in the hothouse, they were plowing through storms and hard times. The solid dependable mind of Christ is formed in us only by enduring trials.

3. *If we let them, trials produce hope.*

Our eyes begin to see the goal instead of forever, chasing the little goodies by the side of the road.

When you're hanging on to God in a trial,

- your vision of the Kingdom sharpens,
- your desire for the Kingdom increases.

John didn't have his Revelation vision during the good times in Ephesus. He had it when he was exiled on the barren isle of Patmos. Stephen saw Jesus more clearly as he was being pelted with the stones that killed him than at any other time in his life.



Out of the Mire
Sarah-Rebecca

Our destiny, now that we've entered the Kingdom is not confined to this earth. Our very home is in the universe beyond --- it all belongs to us as sons and daughters of God. But when do we catch a glimpse of our Father's universe?' Only when it's dark.

4. *If we let them, trials cause the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit:*



Show me the Way
Sarah-Rebecca

The love of God will flow into anybody who opens their heart. But for the love of God to flow out of us with any consistency we need the flames of trial.

There was once a man who had ten children. He loved them in his own way but was always distant, hard, critical of them. Then one of his sons became mentally ill, and suddenly for the first time in his life the father forgot his own concerns, dropped everything, spent piles of money, drove miles and miles, stayed up whole nights, became a broken man. And the kindness that began flowing toward that stricken son soon was flowing toward all his children. He began to love.

5. *If we let them, trials bring us into fellowship with Jesus as never before.*

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering...

I Peter 4:12-13

When you share in Christ's suffering you fellowship with Christ Himself. You experience unspeakable peace, your inmost heart walks and talks with the Son of God.

6. *If we let them, trials bring the Spirit of Glory and of God to rest upon us.*

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

I Peter 4:14

When the trial is connected with the name of Christ, when we begin to suffer with Him outside the camp, the Spirit that was on Him, received Him in death; raised Him the third day, rests on us!

7. *If we let them, trials make us complete in God.*

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

When we're complete in God they can take everything away from us that can be taken away - even life itself - and we're still complete in God. We can pass into the next world with His praises on our lips.

There are many places in Christendom where they proclaim a gospel free from trials.

"Follow Jesus and your problems are over."

"Follow Jesus and you'll go first class all the way."

Multitudes are flocking to those places. And who of us hasn't sometimes thought how nice it would be to lie down on those rose petals and float to heaven? But God knows what we need. As surely as we need the baptism of the Holy Spirit we need by baptism of fire --- trials.

We don't have to go looking for them, they come by themselves. All we need to do is receive them in the name of the Lord, trusting that these trials may accomplish their purpose in our lives.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but under that name let him glorify God.

I Peter 4:12-16



Songs of Deliverance
Sarah-Rebecca

Prayer- Prayer-Lord, thank you for refining us, for using these trials to draw us to you, to make us more like you, to make us need you and cling to you. Instead of allowing suffering to whittle away our faith, may suffering increase our faith. Instead of being overcome by trials, may we let them produce endurance, moral strength and hope. May we let them cause your love to flow from us. And yes, Lord may the trials we face make us complete in you and in this may we find joy. MM

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Featured art: From the Heart series created by Sarah-Rebecca (Sai). The art featured here are close ups pulled from scripture cards that Sai has created that illustrate the beautiful love of God. the-heart-series.tumblr.com/



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