

WHEN HARD TIMES COME

James 1:2-4

Introduction: It seems that some people undergo much more hardships than others for we are always seeing or hearing about this one or that one who has experienced or is experiencing a terrible ordeal. We thank the Lord that it is not us and then pray for those who are being inflicted with such difficulties. However, sooner or later each of us will face some very difficult, hard times. How do we handle such times? What do we do? Where, who do we turn to for help? Why do they have to come in the first place?

I. TRIALS, HARD TIMES TEST OUR FAITH

1. Faith is the foundation of our spiritual/religious life.
 - It is that by which we cling to God.
 - Trials test our faith in all that we believe and hope for.
 - Nothing is so needful as to be sure of our faith in God.
2. "Trial" is a word used to test metal.
 - Testing ore by fire burns away impurities.
 - Trial-fire is that which God uses to test our faith that it may become more pure.
 - It is known that deep rooted trees send their roots even deeper after the storm season.
 - God sent trials to Abraham to test his faith, tearing his heart, but after the trial, God knew that Abraham was even stronger.
3. Trials test, purifies and strengthens our faith.
 - When we come through the fiery trials through our trust in God, when we know that except for our trust, we would be broken, we learn more trust and are enabled for the next trial.
 - Where there has been little trial, little has been tested, little in faith exercised, little proven, little experience of what one is able to bear/handle.
 - We never know what we are able to bear, we never really know ourselves till we are tried, till trials call out all our abilities and powers.
 - Strain caused by an unexpected calamity may reveal defect of character or a possibility of faith both might never have been discovered or even dreamed of having.
4. Life has proven that the best learning process comes from experience - trials. Often the most striking views of spiritual things comes with some sharp and abrupt turn in the road, leaving its lesson which lives long after the trial/hardship has passed.

II. TESTING OF FAITH WORKS PATIENCE

1. Patience is a very necessary word in our everyday life.
 - Text.
 - "Patience" means continuous endurance, bearing up under trial, not giving away, continuing to endure in the hope and belief that we are in God's hands, waiting in calmness upon His will.
 - It is a helpful, believing persistency endurance. It is bearing up under our own load, continuing the journey in spite of it, shouldering our burden, not grudgingly, but thankfully.

2. Trials test faith, proving whether it be strong or genuine, but it does even more:
 - A continuous process, one after the other.
 - One trial may test our faith, but it takes more trials to develop endurance.
 - The strongest people (we say) are those who have come through the most difficulties with their faith unshaken, bravely enduring till finally through much testing, tribulation they become perfect and entire.

III. FINALLY ONE MOVES FROM ENDURANCE TO PERFECTION

(...He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved....."'...be ye perfect...')

1. It's not enough to just go on enduring for a time.
 - If you give way after suffering, even after a long time, all gained will be lost.
 - On dark days, the hard tasks, the terrible persistency, the continuance of trials, are really proofs of the faithfulness of God in the working of His great purpose and that is that we should be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.
 - Trials are bitter and hateful, but are not to be judged by themselves. They are a part of a process whereby mature children of God are being made.
2. Perfect and Entire are not the same.
 - Perfect, full grown, mature character and understanding indicates no longer children in attainments, but have all characteristics of full grown Christian men and women.
 - Entire is having all that should belong to us - soundness of our various faculties and powers. Remember that Peter healed a man at the steps of the Temple and that man was made entire sound in every part and limb.
 - God's aim is that we be full grown in spiritual attainment, developed in all our faculties and parts, having everything that belongs to us.
 - We want a well rounded education for our children, not sacrificing one side for another, well so does God want that of His Children.
 - God designs for us a many sided, well rounded training. He will so train us as to cultivate us all round. No part of our higher moral and spiritual nature will be neglected.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are you tired of continued troubles, tired of waiting for God to come to your rescue? Well, remember that trials and difficulties are God's way of bringing you to be perfect, entire, lacking in nothing.
 - How are you handling the trials and difficulties? Have you learned anything? Are you becoming stronger? Or are you sinking in feebleness and despair?
 - There is only one way of turning troubles into good, making them serve the end for which God has designed them.
 - Face them, not flinching, face to face, in Jesus Christ's strength.
 - Accept them as divine instruments of discipline to shape you to God's ideal.
2. With infinite wisdom God lays His hand on us here and there, testing this way and that, in order that we become full grown and entire in every part, lacking in nothing.
3. When trials come, remember that God has allowed them and you are to grown through them.