

Trials and Temptations

Three kinds of Biblical temptation most common to man:

- 1) “trials” sent by God to build a Christian’s faith
- 2) “temptations” presented by the Devil to tempt a Christian to sin
- 3) “trials” sent by the Devil to harm a child of God.

Let us look at the first definition, that is, “trials” that have a beneficial purpose. We can simplify this definition by saying “those trying situations which befall us in life that are for the purpose of building our faith as a child of God.”

The second definition is “temptation” when Satan attempts to entice a child of God to sin. The Devil can use many approaches to “tempt” a child of God, as well as a sinner, to indulge in sin. He even tempted Christ to sin.

The third definition of “trial” is the work of Satan to seek to harm a child of God. Peter wrote these words of warning: I Peter 5:8 *“Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”* The Devil seeks to do all the harm he can to God’s children.

Christ’s temptations

Christ spoke of the temptations that befell him. In Luke 22:28 we read *“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.”* As we study the life of the Lord we know He experienced a broad array of temptations. For example, He experienced trials in the wilderness that were for the purpose of getting Him to do wrong. Read Mt. 4:1-11. In these verses Satan offered the Lord rewards if He would obey Satan. Luke 4:13 says of this wilderness experience *“And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”* The Devil never departs forever, just for a season.

On the other hand, there were times Christ faced “trials” for the purpose of harming Him. Yet, He escaped to prove to mankind He was all-powerful God. We have such a case in John 10:31-39 where the Jews sought to stone Him but He escaped. No doubt this

experience in Christ's life persuaded many that He was truly the Son of God.

The Apostle Paul's trials

Paul, like Christ, experienced many temptations or "trials." Acts 20:19 *"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews."* In Acts 9:23-25 we have the account of Paul preaching in Damascus and having to be let down over the wall in a basket by the disciples at night lest the Jews kill him. This was a trial in which Satan sought to kill God's anointed preacher.

Also, we remember Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" spoken of in II Corinthians 12:7. This thorn pricked him, a form of trial, to remind him not to become exalted in himself. The pricking of the thorn surely hurt but it was for Paul's benefit. Are we as Christians sometimes guilty of whining when hurt comes, forgetting it may God's way of improving us for His glory?

No doubt Paul also experienced the temptation or trial that lures one to sin. We know that he feared becoming a castaway (I Corinthians 9:27) after he had preached so mightily for the Lord. Satan would have loved to trap him in sin and ruin his testimony so that he could destroy him as preacher of the Gospel.

How does Satan offer us temptations to sin?

All temptations to sin come in one of three forms: I John 2:16 *"For all that is in the world, (1) the lust of the **flesh**, and (2) the lust of the **eyes**, and (3) the **pride** of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* Eve, in her temptation, was tempted in all three ways. Her *flesh* desired the fruit believing it was good. Her *eyes* saw the fruit that it was pleasant. Her *pride* made her desire to be as wise as gods by eating the forbidden fruit. (Gen 3:6).

Just as Eve experienced the three avenues of temptation, so did Christ. See Mt 4:1-11. In verse 3 Satan tempted His *flesh* to desire bread when He was hungry. In verse 5 and 6 His *pride* was tempted, for He was commanded to jump and have the angels rush to His rescue. In Verse 8 we see the temptation of His *eyes* for the Devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and promised them to Him if He would fall and worship Satan.

Are trials purposeful?

It is difficult to accept that temptation, that is, trial, sent by God can be for benefit. The flesh resists this notion. Such trials may come as health problems, grief, financial challenges, family problems, or death of a loved one, to name a few. Such things are hurtful. How could they possibly be for a valuable purpose?

How can Romans 8:28 which reads *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* be true? How can sickness, separation, poverty and the like be for our good? The explanation that we have is found in God’s Word in I Peter 1:7 *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of **gold** that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* Yes, trials can be precious. How valuable is gold? It is true that fire burns and hurts, but it is also the element used to purify gold! Trials sent by God into the life of one of His children are for the purpose of making that person a better Christian. They are not sent of God with the intent of harming.

The temptations of Satan designed to lure us into sin can also be good. The perfect example is Job. Satan approached him with one intention and that was to try and turn him against God. If he could turn him against God, he would have made him to sin. Even his wife suggested he curse God and die (Job 2:9). Job was very close to God in his beginning (Job 1:1). There seemed to be no reason to try Job to draw him closer to God. I truly believe his trial was to draw him *away* from God, thus causing Job to sin. Yet, by resisting the urging of Satan to turn on God, Job became a better servant. Yes, temptation to sin can draw us closer to God if we resist the temptation. This is answered in James 1:12 *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”*

Sometimes I feel the Lord has turned the Devil loose on me. Have you ever felt that way? Yet, I realize that if He has, it is for my benefit. The Devil certainly cannot touch one of God’s children without God’s permission.

Our conclusion: trials can better a child of God and mold him into being a greater servant of God.

Are your temptations unique?

Have you heard someone say “why me, Lord?” It seems they are saying “Am I the only one having this problem?” The answer is no, you are never the only one having a certain problem. Any temptation you may have, someone else has experienced it. This is proven in I Corinthians 10:13 which says “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...*” Christ also has suffered all the temptations of man as Heb 4:15 tells us “*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*”

Are there some temptations I cannot overcome?

Whether it be a trial to benefit and build faith or a temptation to sin or Satan picking on you, we have a way of escape. I Corinthians 10:13 “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*” God will not let one of His children be overcome if we put our faith and trust in Him. If we take matters in our own hands, then we will fail.

Take your temptations to the Lord. Lean on Him. Don’t get angry at men or God. Don’t blame God, as did Israel, when in Numbers 21:5 they blamed both Moses and God for the fiery serpents that bit them. Every temptation is a trial and will build your faith if you call on God and lean on Him. He will lead you through your trial.

When will temptations end?

We live in a sinful world. The Devil is the “prince of the power of the air.” Therefore, he has tremendous power and influence on planet earth, which is his home. As long as we remain on the earth, the Devil will tempt us to sin just as he did the Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, God, as our Father, has the privilege to send trials our way. It is not that God is mad at us or is placing vengeance on us, but that He desires to build our faith through trials. No man can stand tall in the “hall of faith” until and unless his faith is first tested. Remember, trials of our faith are more precious than gold. No champion servant of God has become a champion without some battles along the way.