

Trusting God Through Trials, Suffering & Evil

Part 1: How to Turn Trials into Triumphs

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5



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Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- Have you ever actually known anyone who “considered it all joy when he/she encountered various trials”? (James 1:2). Tell us about him?

What did you think about him when you first met him? Did you admire him—or think him weird?

Maybe you can't imagine considering it all joy when you encounter various trials, but have you grown to the point where you're rather consistently able to have God's perspective in some types of trials? Tell us about the process God used to get you there.

In what trials do you currently need God's perspective?

- Read Romans 5:1-5.
Which things discussed in this passage are present realities? Which are future possibilities?
It says tribulation ⇒ perseverance ⇒ proven character ⇒ hope.
Which of those steps make sense to you? Why?
Do any of them not make sense to you? Why not?

We often think of “hope” as little more than “wishful thinking” (“I hope the Heels win the tournament”), but what is the Bible's definition? See Hebrews 10:23 and Titus 1:2.

- What do Romans 5:5 and 9:33 promise?
Explain the link between “undisappointable hope” and God's love (Romans 5:5).
How can you experience that?

Why do you think we expect instant, easy spiritual maturity yet we know that **nothing else of value** in life has come that way? What might it reveal about the value we place on spiritual achievement?

Application-Challenge

- Don't resent trials, welcome them as God's instruments to strengthen faith and develop character.
- Memorize and meditate up Galatians 5:22-23.

Sermon Summary Key Text: James 1:1-8, 12

There is a popular teaching in some Christian circles which views all suffering as being outside of God's will for God's people. They believe that all suffering is related to sin in that person's life; it is deserved. This teaching is both unbiblical and dangerous (Job, for example, suffered because he was godly). Suffering is part of life in a fallen world (1 Peter 4:19). Some of you are overwhelmed by suffering; all of us have been touched by trials. Today we will learn how to turn trials into triumphs! (James 1) Throughout the Bible we find men and women who turned trials into triumphs; instead of being victims, they became victors! No matter what the trials (v. 1-12) or the temptations (v. 13-27), through faith in Christ we can grow through trials and not just go through trials. James 1 gives us four principles, each one tied to a single word. Please underline the following words: in v. 2, underline the word "consider", in v. 3, the word "knowing"; in v. 4 the word "let"; and in v. 5, the word "ask".

Cultivate a positive attitude toward trials (v. 2). How we perceive trials will inevitably influence how they impact us. If we view them as intruders they will rob us of joy and negate the positive contribution that God has designed them to have. God wants to use trials to mold you into the person He wants you to become. And so if we are going to turn trials into triumphs, we need to begin to view trials differently than we commonly do. So don't resent trials as intruders, but welcome them as friends.

Trials are inevitable. V.2 doesn't say "if" you encounter various trials, but rather "when". Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). Some trials come simply because we are human and we live in a fallen world; others come through spiritual battle. It's natural to shun trials, so we need divine perspective. This principle is linked to the key word "knowing". Realize (know) that God uses trials to test our faith and develop our character (v. 3). Trials serve a divine purpose. They are not obstacles, but opportunities.

I used to play football in high school, and come August we started "two-a-days". We had practice at 6 am and again at 6 pm. Those practices were brutal. None of us would have shown up for practice at 6 in the morning to suffer for two hours, unless we were convinced that it served a constructive purpose. When trials come your way God wants you to "know" that He is not picking on you. Your faith is the target, not you personally. Trials aren't meant to destroy your faith, but to refine it (v. 3). God is more interested in developing your faith than he is in promoting your pleasure. God uses trials to reveal the depth and genuineness of our commitment to Him. Trials strip away that which is superficial and tenuous, leaving that which is genuine and enduring. When you face trials, do you tend to turn to God, or do you tend to turn on Him?

The Greek word translated "endurance" (v. 3) refers not to a passive acceptance of circumstances, but rather to a courageous endurance in the face of suffering and difficulty. It describes a person who bravely faces adverse circumstances, without collapse or cowardice, who refuses to give up on God in the midst of troubles, a person who clings to God despite their doubts. Daniel 3:16-18 gives us a fine example of courage born out of spiritual conviction. What impresses me is not the fact that God preserved their lives—after all, God can do anything. What impresses me is their heroic endurance in the midst of trials, even life-threatening trials.

If we are to grow through trials rather than just go through them, we must cooperate with God in this process of character development (v. 4). Don't fight God; humbly submit to him. God's goal is that you might become like his Son Jesus. But we lack wisdom and faith, so in order to avoid being overwhelmed by life's trials, we need to pray (v.5-8). James contrasts faith with double-mindedness. A double-minded person vacillates between God's will (Christlikeness) and his own will (comfort, pleasure, worldly success). Genuine happiness and an abundant life are promised to those who handle trials correctly (v. 12). Learn to look beyond the present pain of trials to the final product they are designed by God to produce. Then you have an eternal perspective, and not just a temporal one. It is love for God which enables us to rest confidently in Him as we undergo trials.





**Our children frequently complain about difficulties.
(I wonder where they got that from?! 😞)**

When they do, what advice do you typically give them?

Compare your typical advice to Pastor Doug's message.

- **At which points are they similar?**
- **At which points are they different?**

Tonight at the dinner table, bring up the subject and tell your children what you learned from this exercise. Close in prayer.

Pastor Doug referenced an “eternal perspective”—but what in the world is that?! And what difference can it make?

Monday—Read Psalm 90 three times through.

- In one sentence, what is Psalm 90 about?
- Circle every reference to God (“Lord”, “you”, “God”, etc.). Draw a square around every reference to people (“our”, “man”, etc.).
- With one color of pen or highlighter, mark the **six** occurrences of the word “day” (v. 4, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 15). With another color mark the **six** occurrences of the word “year” (v. 4, 9, 10 [3x] and 15). [Note: In Hebrew, v. 10 reads: “As for the **days** of our **years**, they contain seventy **years**, or if due to strength, eighty **years**.”]
- Make a list (noting verse references) of everything you observe about God and another list about everything you observe about people.
- Begin memorizing Galatians 5:22-23.

Tuesday—Read Psalm 90 three times through.

- With one color of pen or highlighter, mark every reference to God’s eternity (eg. “all generations” in v. 1; “before the mountains” in v. 2; etc.). With another color mark every reference to man’s transitoriness (eg. “back into dust” in v. 3; “swept them away” and “like grass which sprouts anew” in v. 5; etc.).
- Write a subtitle for v. 1-6, another for v. 7-11, and another for v. 12-17.
- How do v. 7-11 logically flow out of v. 1-6? How are v. 12-17 the appropriate human reaction to v. 1-11?
- Continue memorizing Galatians 5:22-23.

Wednesday—Read Psalm 90:1-11 three times through.

- Listen to Kansas’ classic song, *Dust in the Wind* (available at YouTube). Print off the lyrics, and **compare** and **contrast** them to the truths of Psalm 90. What do you observe? Would it surprise you to learn that it’s author, Kerry Livgren, became a Christian?
- According to Genesis 1-2, did God **intend** for mankind to die? So, **why** do we? Relate v. 7-11 to Genesis 2:16-17 & 3:19.
- Can you recite Galatians 5:22-23 word-perfect yet? If not, nail it down today.

Thursday—Read Psalm 90:12-17 three times through.

- In light of mankind’s plight (v. 1-11), what does Moses pray for in v. 12? Paraphrase and explain his request. How does realizing how transitory you are help you get over foolishness? Would you be willing to pray this for yourself? Why or why not?
- In light of mankind’s plight (v. 1-11), what does Moses pray for in v. 13? Paraphrase and explain his request. How do we need God’s presence and involvement in our difficult lives? How often do you pray this sort of thing for yourself? Why do you think you don’t pray it more often?
- Ask God to build the fruit of the Spirit into your life today.

Friday—Read Psalm 90:12-17 three times through.

- In light of mankind’s plight (v. 1-11), what does Moses pray for in v. 14? Paraphrase and explain his request. How does God’s lovingkindness (ie, “covenant-loyalty”) bring joy into the midst of human sorrow? Will you do it today?
- In light of mankind’s plight (v. 1-11), what does Moses pray for in v. 15? Paraphrase and explain his request. How great are your sorrows? What does it mean to have gladness commensurate to your sorrow? How often do you experience God’s comfort? Is it sufficient? Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. Is this your experience?
- Share Galatians 5:22-23 with a co-worker, neighbor, family member or friend today.

Saturday—Read Psalm 90:12-17 three times through.

- In light of mankind’s plight (v. 1-11), what does Moses pray for in v. 16? Paraphrase and explain his request. How does seeing God’s work and his majesty bring joy in this sad world? How much joy do you have? From where does joy come? (Hint: What does your memory verse say?)
- In light of mankind’s plight (v. 1-11), what does Moses pray for in v. 17? Paraphrase and explain his request. Yes, we are transitory, but our work (like God’s, v. 16) can last forever—if we’ll follow God. How well are you following? How do you need to improve?
- Journal about your experience with the fruit of the Spirit this week.