

**INTRODUCTION**

- The reality of a fallen world is that you have either come through a trial, are going through one, or will go through one soon. We cannot escape the reality of difficulty because we are in a phase of human history in which there are consequences to human sin, including physical, emotional, and spiritual trials.
- Some trials are such that we can find solutions and relief. Other things are beyond our control, and we have to understand how God wants us to respond to them.
- I am going to use the term "trial" to cover a broad spectrum of things. This would include things that cause physical, emotional, or spiritual difficulties. This would include trials in relationships, at work, at home, in the church, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, finding out you have cancer, marriage difficulties, long-term singleness...
- How do we respond to trials biblically? There are certain things we must seek to understand:

**I. WHAT A TRIAL IS NOT**

- 1.) It is not always my fault. (Because sometimes it isn't)
- 2.) It is not always other people's fault. (Because sometimes it is mine).
- 3.) It is not always no one's fault. (Fatalism/Naturalism)

**II. WHAT A TRIAL IS**

- 1.) Ultimately a result of Adam's sin. Whether of "moral" or "natural" evil. Sin has effected our relationship to God, ourselves, one another, and creation. We live always live in a fallen world until Christ returns.
- 2.) Something which God is always sovereign over. While He is not the author of sin nor the immediate cause, He always has a two-fold purpose for it: the glory of God (Rom11:36) and the good of the believer, ultimately to make them like Jesus Christ (Rom8:28-29). God is never passive, but has an active purpose.

**III. HOW TO RESPOND TO A TRIAL****A. REMEMBER THAT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HOW WE RESPOND**

- There is a way to respond to a trial which is sinful. There is a way to respond which is righteous.
- It is never right to excuse a sinful response by saying "I am only human." While it is true we are human, sin is not essential to humanity, as demonstrated by the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. It certainly now effects us, but part of redemption is learning how to respond to difficulties righteously. This isn't easy, but possible (though imperfectly) because of the work of Christ (Phil4:13) and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Gal5:22-23).
- We are responsible for both our internal and external response.
- What comes out is not caused by the trial, but what is revealed from our heart. It is the circumstance which is used to squeeze our heart, and what comes out is our own.
- One of greatest questions is "how am I going to respond if God doesn't remove this from me?"

**B. RECOGNIZE POSSIBLE REASONS FOR A TRIAL**

- 1.) A call to repentance – from some specific sin
- 2.) An exercise of discipline – the consequences of our sin by way of chastisement Heb12:5-11 to teach us to hate it
- 3.) A fostering of hope – for heaven and the world to come 2Cor4:17-5:2
- 4.) A demonstration of consequences – both others and ourselves
- 5.) A call to trust in God – God in the midst of the darkness 2Cor1:9
- 6.) An appreciation of His power – when we are upheld and we realize that it is not of our own strength – 2Cor12:9
- 7.) To purify and strengthen our faith – true faith is intermingled was dross 1Pet1:7
- 8.) To magnify Christ – showing His supreme worth Phil1:20
- 9.) To produce Christ-likeness – Heb5:8
- 10.) To reveal our need – for the body of Christ 1Cor12:26
- 11.) Others

**C. MEDITATE ON KEY ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**

- 1.) God is faithful – 1Cor1:9; 1Cor10:13; 1Pet4:19
- 2.) God is good – Ps73:1; 84:11
- 3.) God is wise – Rom16:27
- 4.) God is sovereign – Ps135:6; Dan4:35

**D. CRY OUT TO THE LORD FOR HELP**

- To accomplish whatever specific purpose He has in it. If there is sin, to reveal it. To be merciful in discipline. To foster hope and appreciation. To make more like Christ. For the Lord to give increased measures of the Holy Spirit.
- **[OVER]**

**IV. AN IMPORTANT CAUTION**

- Beware of making determinations as to why others are going through trials. It is cruel to say that it is always a direct result of some sin of theirs. It is inaccurate to say that if they only had more faith, they would not suffer.