

“What Trials Produce,” Part 3 - 2 Corinthians 1:7-9 – July 3rd, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled, "What Trials Produce."
- I think what's becoming abundantly clear in this series is the trials God allows into our lives are for His glory and our betterment.
- The work the Lord is doing in us, and the preparations the Lord is making for us are accomplished in and through the fiery trials.

1. Peace with the Lord (Verses 1-2)

- The Apostle Paul begins with a familiar greeting saying grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Comfort from the Lord (Verses 3-4)

- Paul says God is the Father of compassion Who comforts us in trials, so we can comfort others with the comfort we received.

3. Endurance in the Lord (Verses 5-6)

- Paul says their distress was for our comfort and salvation, which produces a patient endurance and a triumphant overcoming.

4. Reliance upon the Lord (Verses 7-9)

- v7 Paul says hope for them is firm because he knows that just as they shared in his sufferings, so also they share in his comfort.
- v8 He tells them not to be uninformed about their trials in Asia, where they were under so much pressure they despaired of life.
- v9 He says it was so beyond them that they thought they would die, but it was so they would rely on God and not themselves.

- I suppose the question is, what happened to Paul that was so intense as to be far beyond his ability to endure despairing of life.
- While we don't know specifically what Paul is referring to, we can surmise that there were many times of tremendous difficulty.
- So much so, that if there were ever a man of God who could speak to the purpose of difficult trials in a Christian's life, it is Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:23–28 (NIV) — 23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

- It's important to understand that Paul is not boasting, or for that matter even complaining, about how difficult his life has been.
- Rather, instead of complaining, he's explaining that God has allowed him to experience such difficulty to accomplish something.
- Namely, that of Paul coming to the end of himself, so as to trust in, and rely upon the Lord, to see him through the fiery trials.

Chuck Smith in "Wisdom for Today," writes, "It is good to come to the end of yourself. That is when you finally reach for God."

I like how one commentator said it, [Those fiery trials] ...caused Paul to rely solely on God. Like Paul, the tendency of most of us is to try to solve our problems with our own strength. Therefore, as He did with Paul, the Lord brings us to the end of ourselves from time to time. He brings us to the point where we feel pressed beyond measure, despairing even of life—in order that we will have no other choice but to call upon Him and find in Him greater strength than we could ever find in our own ability.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the main reasons God allows trials in our lives as Christians, this would be it.
- Specifically, that of bringing us to the end of ourselves so that we'll have no other alternative; but to completely rely on the Lord.
- Often times God has to remove from us anything or anyone that we are relying on instead of Him, in order for us to rely on Him.

- To me, one of the best examples of this is Gideon, whom God called to deliver the Israelites out of the hands of the Midianites.
- I find it interesting that when God appears to him Gideon is hiding out from the Midianites fearing that they would steal his grain.
- It's rather humorous that when the Angel of the Lord appears to him He says, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor."

- Judges 6 records the argument that ensues on the part of Gideon who tries to convince God that He's calling the wrong guy.
- He even goes as far as using what I call the "three strikes and I'm out" argument, concerning him being the weakest of anyone.
- Not only is he the black sheep of his family, his family is the black sheep of the tribe, and his tribe is the black sheep of Israel.

- Gideon even puts out a fleece before the Lord, two times, only to have God confirm that He is in fact calling Gideon to do this.
- Unbeknownst to Gideon this is only the beginning; such that God still removes what ends up being 31,700 men from his army.
- It's not so much that God does this; it's more because of why God does this. Simply put, Gideon had too many men in his army.

Judges 7:1-2 – 1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. 2 And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'"

- It's for this reason I believe the three hundred men who cupped the water to drink were the lame blind and crippled as it were.
- This because they would have had no choice but to completely rely on the Lord to get them through this life and death situation.
- Moreover, even if they wanted to there would be no way for them to ever take the credit for that which only God could've done.