

I. THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR CHOICES

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Galatians 6:7

Labeling every hardship or bad break as an attack can cause us to miss a lesson that the Lord is using to confront any areas in our life that need growth. We live in a fallen world. Although we are not of this world, with the NOTW sticker to prove it, and we should be heavenly minded, we are still subjected to the woes of this life. Naturally, things aren't always going to go our way. There isn't always some spiritual conspiracy behind the scenes.

II. GENUINE SPIRITUAL WARFARE OR NATURAL TRIAL?

1. The Purpose

Trials: God allows trials as part of the sanctification process to stretch and grow us. No matter how uncomfortable they are, the LORD uses trials to redirect us and possibly prepare us for something new.

Spiritual attack: Spiritual attacks are always driven by hostility. The enemy what, seeks to steal kill and destroy. (**John 10:10**) Spiritual attacks are marked by destroying halting or delaying the work of God in your life.

Job is the most well-known example of a spiritual attack. Job lost health wealth and kid(our worst nightmare) in an attempt from the enemy to cause Job to curse God. Paul's Thorn in the side. We aren't really sure exactly what the thorn in his side really was, but what we do know is that Paul recognizes it, whatever it is as the source of his spiritual suffering. He pleads with God to remove it but is only answered with God's grace is sufficient and that His power is made perfect in human weakness. IE when you have made it to the end of your rope, when you can acknowledge that you aren't perfect and you don't have it all together and that nothing is making sense and the future seems so unsure and you can no longer rely on anything, through that vulnerability, is where the grace and power of God can shine the brightest. God shares His glory with no one. When you can drop the pride and remove the grimy self-reliance, God moves. Peter and the sifting of his faith. This one is wild. Jesus tells Peter before the crucifixion that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat. Jesus tells him, “But I prayed for you”. This is an example of an attack that is directed at a person's loyalty courage and faith. We see Peter collapse underneath this spiritual pressure, but his faith is preserved and we know that he is ultimately restored.



Attacks usually rear their nasty little heads right before God leads us into a new level or some kind of ministry. The purpose of trial is to stretch and grow us, the purpose of a spiritual attack (can stretch and grow) is to hinder our faith or the work of God in our lives.

2. The Fruit and Mindset

A **trial** will be used by God to ultimately draw you in closer. The result of a trial produces good fruit. James 1. We all know this one. It's been preached a thousand different ways. "Consider it all joy my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Spiritual attacks bombard the mind with irrational confusion, crippling doubt, anxiety that can be paralyzing. While the result of a trial can bring peace, a spiritual attack brings paranoia, guilt, depression, you withdraw, no longer desire the things of God. A good example is Saul.

3. The Appropriate Response

III. THE DANGERS OF OVER SPIRITUALIZING A TRIAL

1. Overlook Practical Solutions

Everything in life looks like it's a spiritual test. What happens is you neglect taking actionable steps to improve your situation. We pray and pray for the situation to change, like a toxic work environment, toxic boss, coworkers.

Some may be going through financial troubles, and while God absolutely can bless you with a way out, how often may financial troubles be self-inflicted.

We should acknowledge our God given agency (foundational spiritual principle that individuals possess the God-given right, power, and freedom to choose their own actions, beliefs, and paths in life).

2. Neglect Mental and Physical Health

3. Harboring Unnecessary Guilt

What I'm not doing is minimizing legit spiritual warfare some of you may be going through? But we need to be honest with ourselves and take some responsibility and recognize that the source of our trial might just be our own doing.

