

Confidence in God in the Midst of Trials

I. ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD (ROM. 8:28)

- A. God promised to overrule all the difficulties in a believer's life by causing them to work for good. Taking hold of this promise by faith will bring confidence to our lives instead of living continually with anxiety. If we knew all that God knows, we would feel differently about our problems.

²⁸We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose... ²⁹to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Rom. 8:28-29)

- B. ***For good:*** God's first priority is our *spiritual growth* (that we be conformed to Jesus), but the good He promised also includes *blessed circumstances* and being a *vessel of blessing* to others. Jesus blessed people's circumstances when He healed bodies, multiplied food, calmed storms, etc.

- C. Joseph's family betrayed him by selling him into slavery that lasted over ten years (Gen. 37-50). God overruled their plans to do evil to Joseph by using it to raise him up to become a vessel of blessing to save many people. Joseph became the most powerful man in Egypt under Pharaoh.

²⁰But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people... (Gen. 50:20)

- D. The Lord promised to strengthen us in every circumstance to do God's will and to provide for all of our needs in His will. We may not get all that we want, but we will get all that we need.

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me... ¹⁹And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:13, 19)

- E. In our trials, we declare the truth to the enemy, "*It is written that all things work together for good, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and my God shall supply all my needs.*"

- F. In Psalm 31, David committed his spirit (v. 5) and his times (v. 15) into God's hand or care. By trusting God to intervene when he was mistreated, and by refusing to retaliate, he brought God into the conflict. This was partly how David engaged in spiritual warfare in personal conflicts.

⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit... ¹⁵My times are in Your hand. (Ps. 31:5, 15)

1. To "commit our spirit" into God's hands (v. 5) is to commit to Him the *outcome* of all that deeply touches our spirit—our reputation, money, possessions, position, impact, etc.

2. To commit "our times" into God's hands (v. 15) is to trust His *timing* in helping us.

- G. When David committed a difficult situation into God's hands, it was a statement of devotion and an expression of spiritual warfare that invoked God's intervention. He was not being passive by putting the situation into God's hands. He was actively bringing God into the situation in a greater measure.

- H. When we commit ourselves into God's hands in times of difficulty, we are making a transaction with God to trust Him to intervene and establish ***His will*** in our lives, in ***His way*** and in ***His timing***.

1. This involves ***transferring our personal rights*** into His hands and thus transferring responsibility to Him.

2. For example, because our money has been committed to Him, if someone steals it, they are stealing from Him. He is responsible to intervene to get the money back in His time and way.

II. WE REJOICE IN TRIBULATION (ROM. 5:3-5): UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

- A. Paul gave insight into how trials cause us to experience more of God’s glory (Rom. 5:3-5). He connected three significant ideas—*perseverance*, *character*, and *hope*—in a way that is not automatically obvious to us. We must see “God’s logic” in how these virtues are connected.
- ³*We also glory [rejoice] in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;*
⁴*and perseverance, character; and character, hope.* ⁵*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit... (Rom. 5:3-5)*
- B. The word *tribulation* includes different types of difficulties referred to as *various trials* (Jas. 1:2). Everyone experiences pressures such as physical or emotional pain, financial lack, various fears, being mistreated, etc. Persecution is the pressure that is mentioned most in the New Testament.
- C. **Knowing:** We only rejoice in trials by knowing “God’s logic” in how they relate to perseverance, character, and hope. Trials cause despair unless we see a purpose in them. We rejoice only when we see the good that is worked in us. It is essential to understand this to maximize the benefit of trials.
1. Transformation is not an automatic result of trials. It occurs as we respond rightly to God. We do this best when we understand the process that is occurring.
 2. The devil tells us that our trials are proof that we do not have God’s favor, that we are a failure who is forgotten by God, disqualified from His blessing, and destined to fail, or that our relationship with God is not genuine and sincere.
 3. Paul’s point was that trials do not contradict God’s love, favor, power, and blessing in our life; rather, they can help prepare us to increase our capacity to experience them more.
 4. We do not rejoice in the tribulations themselves, but in their effects. We rejoice in what they produce in us as we respond to the Spirit.
- D. **Perseverance:** This speaks of our *fortified resolve* or commitment to *realign our heart* continually to be committed to love, obey, believe, and pursue Jesus instead of giving up, giving in to sin and unbelief, or drawing back from pursuing Jesus with all of our heart.
1. Pressure causes us to *ask questions* about the purpose of our life, the condition of our life and relationship to God, and why we should persevere in pursuing God without quitting. It causes us to rehearse the consequences of persevering in God or those of giving up (quitting).
 2. Trials are meant to lead us to realign our heart to resolve to live closer to Him, to live in our identity in God, and to press in for the Spirit’s breakthrough solution to our problems.
 3. Pressure, when responded to rightly, help us to *focus* and think clearly, to be desperate to seek the Spirit’s breakthrough, and to lose the “taste” for things outside of God’s will.
 4. Pressure causes us to work our “faith muscle.” Resistance training builds muscle strength in our body. A muscle is strengthened when it is exercised beyond the norm by using weight that breaks down and builds up the muscle.
- ¹⁷*Our light affliction...is working for us an...eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:17)*
5. A butterfly’s struggle in a cocoon is necessary to develop its wings. To help the butterfly by cutting its cocoon would result in its wings remaining undeveloped.

E. **Character:** This speaks of a long-term change in our attitudes and actions. When we persevere in choosing to pursue, obey, and trust the Lord's leadership, it leads to a change in our character.

³*...tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*
(Rom. 5:3-4)

1. There is a connection between *what we do* in our character and *how much we see* in God and His ways. As we grow in character, our capacity to receive understanding increases.

⁸*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* (Mt. 5:8)

2. Our obedience is not mature (godly character) until it is walked out under pressure.

²*...count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance]. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete [in character], lacking nothing.* (Jas 1:2-4)

3. After Abraham offered Isaac, God said, "Now I know you fear God" (Gen. 22:12). Patience is not merely the ability to wait, but it is how you act while you are waiting.

F. **Hope:** is the confident expectation of experiencing God's glory in this age and in the age to come. Hope comes from seeing more clearly. *Our capacity to see our hope in Christ increases as we grow in character or purity* (Mt. 5:8). Paul's confidence in God increased as he grew in godly character.

³*...tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*
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G. **Hope that does not disappoint:** We will not be disappointed when all the information about our life in God is made known on the last day as we see the outcome of what we hoped for, how much of God's glory we experienced in this life, and how tribulations resulted in good fruit in us.

⁵*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...* (Rom. 5:5)

1. The revelation of God's love poured into our heart by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5) continually assures us that our hope in Christ is real. Whatever we hope for is far too low (1 Cor. 2:9).

⁹*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.* (1 Cor. 2:9)

2. We need not fear being disqualified from receiving God's love—even when we were enemies He loved us. Paul develops the idea of the love of God not disappointing us (Rom. 5:6-10).

¹⁰*If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God...much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* (Rom. 5:10)

H. We can be confident in Jesus' leadership instead of being angry with God, people, or ourselves in our trials. Our response of anger does not help anything nor does it accomplish God's purpose (Jas 1:20).

²⁰*For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* (Jas. 1:20, NAS)

III. RESPONDING IN FAITH

- A. Faith or confidence in God releases more of His blessing into our life and circumstances (Mt. 9:29). Cultivating faith with an attitude of trust has many implications for our life. It is foundational to experiencing more of what Jesus provided for us and for enjoying our relationship with Him.
- ²⁹Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” (Mt. 9:29)***
- B. We grow in faith by learning what available to us in Christ. A trusting attitude of faith will bring peace to our life instead of trying to figure everything out and fixing everything.
- C. We can avoid much unnecessary anguish and anxiety by deciding to let go of the unproductive overthinking about our problems. Some are so preoccupied asking “Why, God?” and “When, God?” that they never develop their faith. Many are consumed with trying to figure out the answer to each dilemma in their life. We can trust that if God does not do it our way, then His way is better.
- D. Faith that trusts the Lord is a decision that we make to walk in faith and enjoy God while He is helping our problems. Our trust is ours to put anywhere we choose. We can put our faith and trust in the Lord, or in ourselves, or in people.
- E. Our emotions follow wherever our mind goes. Our thoughts, words, and emotions are deeply interconnected. What we think and what comes out of our mouth greatly affects our emotional condition.
- F. Many godly people are stuck spiritually because they believe the devil’s lies. These lies become their reality. The only way to know when the devil is lying to you is to be educated in the God’s Word. We must learn the truth about God, the devil, and ourselves.
- G. We must meditate on God’s Word by letting it roll over and over in our mind as we talk to Jesus about it. We know how to meditate because when we worry, we mediate on our problems by letting them roll over and over in our mind talking to ourselves.
- H. We can talk ourselves into anxiety, but just as surely we can talk ourselves out of it and into faith. We talk ourselves into a negative mood by rehearsing our problems separated from God’s promises.
- I. We do not have to bow down to emotions that control and dictate how we live. We must learn what the Word says about who we are in Christ and how God will work in our life.
- J. We can be confident that He is working even when we cannot see or feel His work. Often the Lord will not let us solve all of our problems. He wants us to rely on Him.
- ⁶...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6)***
- K. Life is a process, not an event. If we fail today or if things fall apart, we can begin again. No matter what, it is never too late to start doing and believing the right things. It is never too late for a new beginning in your life. We must let go of painful things, mistakes, failures, and wrong decisions. We do not earn new beginnings, but we step out in faith and believe the Word of God.

IV. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (*e. g., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS*)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?