

“Why We Go Through Trials,” Part 6 - 2 Corinthians 12:16-21– May 14th, 2017

- Today’s teaching will be part six of a series I’ve titled, “Why We Go Through Trials.”
- This particular series has gone longer than usual for what I think would be deemed obvious reasons as we’re dealing with trials.
- Perhaps it goes without saying, but the Lord uses chapters like the one before us today to encourage those who are in a trial.

1. Trials enable us to see what God is showing us (Verses 1-4)

- Paul describes in the third person being caught up to heaven where he heard inexpressible things no one is permitted to tell.

2. Trials protect us from pride and arrogance (Verses 5-7)

- He says to keep him from pride due to this great vision God gave him a thorn in his flesh a messenger of Satan, to torment him.

3. Trials keep us prayerfully dependent upon the Lord (Verses 8-10)

- Paul says God wouldn’t take the thorn from him, because “God’s grace is sufficient for His power is made perfect in weakness.”

4. Trials produce perseverance in us (Verses 11-13)

- Here Paul tells them he persevered in demonstrating among them the marks of a true apostle, in signs, wonders and miracles.

5. Trials make us more like Christ (Verses 14-15)

- He says he doesn’t want anything from them he just wants them though the more abundantly he loves them the less he’s loved.

6. Trials put us in step with the Spirit (Verses 16-18)

- v16 Paul facetiously tells them he’s a crafty man who has caught them by trickery even though he’s not been a burden to them.
- v17 He goes onto ask them if he in anyway has exploited them through any of the men that he had sent to them, namely Titus.
- v18 He says he urged Titus to go and he didn’t exploit them but instead they walked in the same footsteps by the same Spirit.

- In order to better understand what Paul is saying here, we need to view it through the lens of the false accusations against him.
- Specifically, from the “super-apostles,” who were charging exorbitant speaking fees, this because they were in it for the money.
- It’s for this reason that Paul wouldn’t take a dime from them, lest he become just like them, which is what had so angered them.

One commentator said it this way, “Paul’s opponents, the most eminent apostles mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11, were in ministry at least partly for the money. They could not bear the fact that Paul didn’t care about money in the ministry, so they assigned their motives to him. ...Paul proves that the charge he is being crafty is false. He reminds the Corinthian Christians that neither Paul nor any of his associates had ever behaved in a financially inappropriate way before the Corinthians.

- The reason being is Paul Titus et al. were all walking in integrity by virtue of the fact they were walking according to the Spirit.
- I suppose you could say that this is a perfect example of the “how” of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to do the “what” of the Word.
- In other words, when we walk according to the Spirit we’ll be in step with the Holy Spirit, and not walk according to the flesh.

Romans 8:1,5 (NKJV) — 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ...5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

- Here’s where I’m going with this, God will often times allow trials into our lives for the purpose of getting us back in the Spirit.
- Thankfully, He doesn’t use condemnation; rather He uses the conviction of the Holy Spirit to get us back to walking in the Spirit.
- This is a litmus test such that condemnation will drive you away from the Lord, whereas conviction draws you close to the Lord.

7. Trials can also be for the benefit of others (Verse 19)

- v19 He asks if they think they’ve been defending themselves when they’ve been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ.
- Then Paul, calling them “dear friends,” goes on to say that everything they do has been for the strengthening of the Corinthians.
- The question becomes, what’s the “everything” that Paul is referring to-to answer this we need look no further than to the list.

2 Corinthians 11:23–28 (NKJV) — 23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

- What Paul is saying here is that all he’s been through and everything he’s done was for their benefit so as to strengthen them.
- One of the things I’m learning in my own walk with the Lord is that sometimes my trials are also for the benefit of other people.
- What’s interesting is people watch our lives and how we deal with thorny trials, which in turn encourages them in their trials.

8. Trials give us compassion for others (Verses 20-21)

- v20 Paul fears when he comes he’ll find discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.
- v21 He says he fears God will humble him in his grief over many who haven’t repented of their sexual impurity and debauchery.
- You’ll forgive the abrupt close, but Lord willing next week we’ll pick up on this in chapter thirteen where Paul ends his epistle.