

## WHY TRIALS AND TESTS?

Greetings to all of you receiving this written sermon. Initially I gave this sermon June 5, 2004 on a telephone hookup to brethren in Montgomery, Alabama and to those who had called in on our church service telephone line and I am now putting it in this article. [This article is being sent to people in sixteen countries on four continents plus being posted on our web page.] This message is so important to God's people wherever they may be scattered that I have decided to incorporate it into this article on **WHY GOD ALLOWS TRIALS AND TESTS?**

### THE SERMON: WHY TRIALS AND TESTS?

Greetings to all of you scattered throughout the earth who are seeking the will of God and the purpose for the trials we all face in this life.

Before giving a sermon I always ask myself candidly: "What does God want me to address in this message? What is needed by God's people?"

For over 50 years I have heard ministers deliver sermons on subjects that tended to make those ministers look *good* and *learned* when seemingly little thought was given for the NEEDS of God's people. This is not meant as criticism but only an observation. Sad to say many of those ministers are no longer around and some seem to be leading their followers in their own personal agenda or an agenda they feel the people will accept and support financially. I personally believe deep in my soul that a true minister must first and foremost consider the needs of the people and should be busy trying to assess those needs through the help of God and the Holy Spirit and then address those needs and then allow each person to decide whether or not he or she will seek God's will as recorded in the Bible.

The Apostle Paul set the standard for delivering a sermon as set forth in I Corinthians 14. In verse 19, Paul states, "I would rather speak five **intelligible words to instruct** than ten thousand words that one does not understand or with no real and lasting meaning."

God has today led me to a subject we all need to consider and understand **daily**. This subject is none other than the **trials and tribulations** we encounter. Why is

there human suffering? Do you personally know the answer? Really? Truly? Are you sure? Let's see!

In dealing with this topic I will begin with quotes from a book titled, "*If God Is So Good, Why Do I Hurt So Bad?*" by David Beibel. In the Preface Mr. Beibel explains the purpose for this book. He states: "This book is for *people in pain* especially from *unresolved hurts*, perhaps from years past.

David B. Beibel (the author) wrote: "Jonathan, You Left Too Soon", describing the personal pilgrimage that arose from the illness and death of the Beibel's first son. This book is his search in trying to reconcile the *tragic events* that occur in our lives.

Now quoting this book: "Many who hurt have been nursing the wounds for so long they can't remember what it's like to be anything other than sad. Others denied the pain and submerged the anger so long ago that they are unaware how the resulting depression, even bitterness, have subtly impacted their ability to love [or to live successfully].

"You wish to have a heart to heart talk with somebody, but even when you pour out your feelings to God, you wonder if the words get past the ceiling.

"I've struggled with how to say what needs to be said, concerned that some may think the telling sounds profane, earthly, iconoclastic. But **pain is profane**, and isn't it time to stop commiserating it with pious platitudes as a mortician tries to hide **the profanity of death.**" [Sickness, pain and death are truly profane]

We are going to begin reading from Chapter 8 Titled: "Jesus Wants Me Whole – Alive **from the Inside Out.**"

"Friends tell each other the truth, and the truth is, 'friends, **we can't let go.**' There is only one reality that we would accept. There is only reality that would relieve the pain: **to have things just the way they were before.**

"It's why your neighbor visits her husband's grave every day and why she can't seem to go any place in town without telling about what she and George did there [living in the past].

"Maybe it's the reason you don't go to church anymore, or if you do, there seems to be a block between you and your former friends, the pastor, or *even between you and God*. Why can't things be the way they were? Why did it have to turn out this way? If only you had known more, or done things differently. If you had just taken a different road that day. If you had just been more alert to the symptoms.

Maybe a different diet would have helped. If only you'd had enough faith. [Endless unresolved questions or quandries.]

"It's so terribly hard to accept what's happened. I long for things to be the same, don't you? Wouldn't you give almost anything for just one more year, one more month, one more day of having things the way they were?"

"And that is how we feel, in spite of the fact that we know in the deepest part of ourselves, this is one fundamental University truth: **NOTHING STAYS THE SAME**. Everything changes. Everyone changes. You, yourself, have changed.

"The fact is this: The reality we long to regain exists only in our imaginations [because of change]. Every effort and all the energy invested is wasted [*because we can't go back and change the past*]. Like poor Humpty Dumpty, all the king's horses and all the king's men could never put our lives together again. And even if they could, our **highly selective memories** of the way we were would provide inaccurate blueprints for the reconstruction, and the pieces would never fit anyway. "But, oh, how we try, each in our own way. Sometimes the pursuit of that illusion leads down shadowy, scary **pathways of depression**, even institutionalization, as the demand to have what cannot be of and by ourselves becomes the central focus in a fantasy world [as we refuse to face reality].

"But, you protest, **'if I were only God . . .'**

"Ah, there's the real core of the problem. From Adam to this very day, the desire to be gods has kept us captive to **wellness** versus **wholeness**. Wellness is health and wealth, long life and happiness, **by our own definition**.

"If I were God, I would never have done it that way. The way I would do it might go like this: The righteous would prosper and the wicked would suffer. There would be no birth defects or genetic diseases. In fact, there would be no diseases at all, especially diseases like cancer, or Alzheimer's, or AIDS. There would be no injustice, famine, or pestilence. Everyone would have enough, and the innocent – especially innocent children – would never suffer, and certainly, they would never die. [Actually judging God].

"But if upon further consideration I decided upon a less radical return to Eden – allowing some of these atrocities to exist in **the world of my creation** – I might preserve the first equation and allow them (diseases and plagues) to plague only the ungodly. For everyone else, there would be an escape – the out of faith. Inhabitants of **my world** would be able to avoid its pain by believing and practicing righteousness [lifting self up by your own bootstraps in the form of **self-righteousness**].

"Sound familiar? The 'gospel' of *health* and *wealth* bombards the airwaves night and day (and especially on Sunday TV), leading its disciples into a very subtle servitude – slavery to the little tin "gods" who masquerade as **masters of faith**. 'If you will only have enough faith, or the right kind of faith; if you will only claim the promises and link yourself to the power . . . our power . . .' [a pseudo faith or, in most cases, these false ministers want you to send them money or buy their books and tapes].

"If only you were God . . . this approach ultimately fails when the rubber meets the road [of reality] and **GOD'S WAYS DIVERGE FROM OURS**. Theme-park theology collapses when **bad things happen to good people**, but the roller coaster keeps running for the sad disciples, who are now in a worse state than before. Not only have they failed to receive what they desired, but their 'teachers' have left them the almost inevitable deduction that the reason for that failure must lie in **their own weak or nonexistent faith**, or perhaps in **some unconfessed sin** [self blame and self recriminations and because you found you could NOT become "good enough" by your own power and strength].

"While their adherents languish in pain, these pretenders strut and fret about their perspective stages, pontificating and pronouncing **what God must do** – when the truth of the matter is that God must do nothing, except remain faithful to Himself and His word [and His purpose]. In reality, their pronouncements represent just what they would do **if they were God**.

"Jesus wants you **whole** whether or not you are **well**. **WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE WELL IS HIS CONCERN, TOO, BUT ONLY AS A TEMPORARY ISSUE**. Wholeness has value for this life as well as for the life to come [God's purpose is to ultimately bring us to a state of wholeness in body, spirit and mind].

"The fact that wellness is temporary (or you can call it temporal) is obvious when you take a God's-eye view and see **that all flesh is grass – here today and gone tomorrow**. What we call 'life' is like a mist in the night or a candle that burns awhile in the darkness and then fades away. [Famous and rich people die the same as all others and are soon forgotten despite all their fame and wealth.]

"The gospel of health and wealth, when all the hype is stripped away, is simply an **extension of humanistic thought, values and goals**, a twentieth-century search for the fountain of youth. Eradicate pain and suffering, extend life [at any cost] postpone death, control the environment – control everything – **TAKE THE PLACE OF GOD**. And at its heart, like the secular humanism, it fails to recognize its own father, this 'gospel' [gospel normally means **good news**] – which is no good news at all – certainly cannot embrace the **VALUE OF PAIN AND**

**SUFFERING IN GOD'S GRAND REDEMPTIVE PLAN.** When we focus solely on wellness, we simply cannot see the whole picture. [David said, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn Thy ways" (Psalm 119:71).]

"Personal growth toward wholeness is possible, thank God, but the wellness it requires is rational, not situational. To have a present and increasing love relationship with God, self, and others is a simple yet profound condition. The result is reconciliation and peace, a whole-person impact – body, soul and spirit.

"Like their Creator, they are a special unit in diversity. They are one person, certainly, but also body, soul and spirit. Just one unwhole component and the entire harmony is broken. Spiritual Band-Aids may bring temporary relief, but fragmentary repair jobs produce fragmented people.

"What we're all looking for – wholeness – is a small taste of redemption, which is really our effort to capture perfect wholeness. All religions touch on this theme somewhere: reconciliation, serenity, peace – man seeking God, even man seeking to become God.

"But all man seeking and striving for that redemption [on his own] must end in frustration, because the key lies not in seeking **but in being sought** – God seeking man, longing to provide through faith in Jesus Christ what all of us desperately lack without Him. And it is through accepting **AS A GIFT WHAT WE CANNOT ACHIEVE ON OUR OWN** that the primal reconciliation begins. Its result is life – **FROM THE INSIDE OUT** – bringing more than wellness, even more than wholeness but the possibility of **HOLINESS**. [We must remember what God inspired Paul to relate to us in Ephesians 1:18 that ***THE SAINTS ARE GOD'S GLORIOUS INHERITANCE THROUGH WHAT CHRIST IN DOING IN, THROUGH AND FOR US!***] As we just read in the preceding paragraph, it is ***GOD SEEKING US*** as members of His spiritual family. The ***TRUE GOSPEL THAT JESUS, PETER, PAUL AND ALL THE OTHERS PREACHED IS THE SALVATION OF HUMANS AS SONS OF GOD IN THE VERY FAMILY OF GOD***. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 2:2 "I resolved to know nothing among you EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED." Then he spends his time writing and telling us clearly that through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice **WE CAN BECOME LITERAL SONS OF GOD IN THE VERY FAMILY OF GOD! *THAT IS THE GOSPEL IN A NUT SHELL!*** [Now back to the book]

"Let me suggest this – there is a third factor that transcends both and ties the two together – **HOLINESS**, the Old English word for health (*holth*) implies both – wholeness (togetherness) and wellness. God clearly is more concerned with wholeness (integrity would be my term). When the layers [of human frailties and human understanding] are peeled away do we find anyone home?"

Do we really understand what we have just read?

Do we really understand why trials and tribulations are a necessary part of this human life?

In order to understand the reason for trials and tests we must fully understand WHO and WHAT we are and WHO God is and WHY He brought us in to existence. We need to understand what our **potential** destiny really is! I say "potential" for a specific purpose. We have not reached that destiny yet! But we are at a point where a reality check is in order. Christ clearly stated that the road to salvation is narrow and difficult (Matthew 7:13-14). Please study those words carefully and understand their meaning. I'm not trying to discourage anyone. But these are the clear words of Jesus Christ. He stated that only **a few** would make it into the Kingdom of God. He explained this further in other passages in the Bible such as the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:18-23). Study this passage for yourself very carefully. Determine which category fits you and your personal life.

Let's briefly summarize what Christ brought out here. There are four categories listed.

**1). "Seed sown along the path."**

This represents those people who just don't get it (vs. 19).

**2). "Seed fell on rocky places."**

These people hear the word and quickly grab it but with no spiritual roots they soon perish. I know of people today who without realizing it, are looking for an exit. Their roots are drying up and may die. It pains me to see this. I have spoken to some and they proclaim loudly, "Oh, no, I'm okay!" But they are not okay and deep down they know this but *cannot admit it to themselves*. I preached a sermon like this about years ago, when the church was disintegrating, and pointed out that we each have the personal responsibility of getting our own feet on solid ground [on Christ] and not on a church **organization**. I used Romans, chapters 7 and 8, to show what God says on the subject. That we must constantly **repent** and **grow** and **change**. What I said was right out of the Bible itself. Yet, the pastor's wife came to me and said: "Bill, you're implying that these people are sinning - - that they're making mistakes - yet these are **good** people!" She was implying that they didn't sin, that they had no need to repent, change or grow. I tactfully reminded her that God says: "All sin and all fall short!"

But now let's get back to the Parable of the Sower. Remember we just covered #2 – that of falling on rocky soil. This section shows that the troubles and trials experienced forced these people out because they had no root – they were not truly grounded in Christ (vs. 21).

### 3). "Seed fell among thorns."

But the cares and worries of this life choked these people out spiritually. What about You? Do you feel choked - Spiritually? How are you handling the cares and worries of your life?

### 4). "Seed fell on good soil."

These people both hear and understand the word of God. They dug their roots in deep. They accept God's purpose for them and accept any and all trials as a chance to grow spiritually (see James 1:2-4). As a result, they produce much fruit **for God** - not for themselves. They learn to accept trials as a necessary part of their calling (1 Peter 1:5-7).

Why then troubles and trials? The answer is most simple. *God has set it this way.* "It is through much tribulation that we enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). But why? Why is it this way? Don't we remember and realize how great our calling is? How great the reward is that God holds out to us? We are to become:

- 1). A literal son of God. )
- 2). An heir of God. )
- 3). A joint-heir with Jesus Christ. ) (See Romans 8:16-17)
- 4). A member of the very family of God. )
- 5). Immortal ) (See 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 & 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- 6). On a plane higher than the angels. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3 & 1 Peter 1:12)
- 7). Kings and priests in the Kingdom of God [given great responsibility].  
(See Revelation 20:5 and also 5:8-10)
- 8). Challenge with rewards and responsibilities that totally defy human description. (See Ephesians 1:17-23; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Isaiah 64:4; Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:7-12)

Here then is the 64-thousand dollar question! To whom will God give these rewards? We each should ask ourselves the question: "If I were God would I give myself these rewards? Based on my life and my attitudes?"

Now let's go back to Matthew 13:16-17: "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

Can't we see the importance and the value and the deep meaning of the points we have covered in this sermon?

Can't we see the value of our calling and the depth of this knowledge? Why aren't we greatly encouraged rather than discouraged and despondent?

John 6:44 clearly states that only those whom God the Father calls can understand these truths. If you understand these points then you are blessed more than the rest of mankind.

Do you understand these truths? Have you been called? If so then John 6:44 describes you, your salvation and mine.

Yet our salvation cost Jesus Christ His life. That's how great our salvation is to God. As Roman 8:32 says, God spared not His own son so as to redeem us to Himself. As Genesis 1 clearly shows, we are created in the very image and likeness of God so that we can have our physical composition changed enabling us to become the literal sons of God.

Let me go back briefly to the book I quoted earlier [*If God Is So Good, Why Do I Hurt So Bad?*] for an important point. The quote I used earlier reads: "But all man's seeking and striving for that redemption must end in frustration, because the key lies not in the seeking but, **IN BEING SOUGHT – GOD SEEKING MAN, LONGING TO PROVIDE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WHAT ALL OF US SO DESPERATELY LACK WITHOUT HIM.**"

The point is quite simple. God is **RECREATING HIMSELF** in and through us. This process of recreating Himself is truly THE GOSPEL PREACHED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE Bible from Genesis through Revelation. That has been His purpose from the foundation of this earth. He made humans in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27) so that we could ultimately be changed into spirit beings as we find in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 as cited above. As God inspired Paul to write in Romans 8, beginning with verse 19, "The creation waits in earnest expectation for the sons of God [us] to be revealed. **For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one [Almighty God] who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom [liberty] of the children of God.** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so but we ourselves [those called and chosen by God], who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, **for the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope [predestined plan] we were saved"** (vs. 20-24).

Then, as Paul continues to explain in verses 26 and 27, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness - - We CANNOT do this in our own power and strength! We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He [God] who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." As verses 29-32 state: "For those God foreknew He also predestined to be

conformed to the likeness of His son, that He might be the firstborn **among many brothers**. As Ephesians 1:18 shows, God wants the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened so we can KNOW THE HOPE to which we have been called - - that is the *riches of HIS GLORIOUS INHERITANCE IN US AS HIS SAINTS*. Please notice that God Himself is gaining an INHERITANCE OF MANY SONS COMING INTO GLORY BY AND THROUGH THE REDEEMING WORK OF Jesus the Christ. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? **IF GOD IS FOR US WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?** He who did not spare His own son, but gave Him up for all of us – **HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO, ALONG WITH HIM [CHRIST], GRACIOUSLY GIVE US ALL THINGS?"**

Take the time to carefully and prayerfully read verses 31-39 and drink in of the message given here. As verse 38 states, we are to be convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, **NOR ANY POWER, NEITHER HEIGHT NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

### **ARE YOU DISCOURAGED?**

When we find ourselves discouraged and allow despair to conquer us then we are repudiating that great sacrifice that Christ made so we can be redeemed.

We need to carefully study the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews. In this chapter we find that true servants of God [some of whom were just ordinary Christians] died **horrible deaths** while serving God. They were faithful in their service to God and despite this faithfulness God still allowed them to die. And many died horrendous deaths. As we find in verse 36, "Some faced jeers and flogging, while others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed into; they were put to death by the sword. . . They were persecuted and mistreated – the world was not worthy of them. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what God had promised. *God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*"

But, as verse 34 shows, "Whose weakness was turned to strength." God uses the weakness of human flesh to show His own power and strength.

When you find yourself discouraged then take the time to carefully study Hebrews 11 [and also review this article].

Hopefully this will help you actually and realistically see your own future and the glory of that future regardless of how you might be tried or even perish during this present physical life.

If God allows you to see and truly envision the glorious future God holds out to you then you will also be able to envision and realize that this glorious future comes only through trials and tribulations and how you confront and overcome these trials as you allow God to develop the very nature and character of Jesus Christ in each of us.

Let us not forget that other human beings throughout the earth experience trials the same as we do. The big difference is they don't understand why because God is not dealing with them at this time. Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes for you see and your ears for they hear" (Please study carefully Matthew 13:11-17).

Trials and tribulations are God's way of measuring the character He is trying to develop within each one of us.

Keep in mind that He does not force us to develop character. He merely gives us the opportunity to enter His family provided we are willing to develop His character.

The true reality is that we are all going to die someday. The question is will we die serving God in the way He has set or will we merely die. Are we determined to do His will even if it leads to our physical death by whatever means?

Since we are all going to die at one time or another are we living so that we come out the other side glorified and immortalized?

Brethren, if your struggles are getting you down then you should regularly review what God is holding out for you.

If you find yourself weak then seek strength from God – your human strength is just not going to make it.

If you need to talk to a minister then do not hesitate to seek that counsel from someone you **know** God is using. Check out the actual fruits of those ministers before you trust them.

Don't let the cares of your life defeat you. You have too much to lose. Please, brethren, don't falter. Face your salvation squarely. There is only one way out of this life alive – facing and overcoming the obstacles through the help of Almighty God. It is taking that narrow difficult path that leads to life eternal. God has set the goals before us. He has pledged the rewards. And He has pledged to provide all the tools that we need to achieve this goal. But we must walk that walk. ***We must***

*learn how to trust God despite the circumstances.* In all this we can be more than conquerors through Christ. But only through Christ. When we rely on ourselves we fail! When we rely on God we succeed! Brethren, search your souls. Put your trust in Christ. Then run the race to victory. May God be with you in this struggle! May you never become weary in well doing (Galatians 6:4-9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:13). Also please study James 1:2-8 very carefully and apply it to yourself.

Sincerely, your servant in Christ,  
Bill Glover

CONCLUSION: Even though Mr. Beibel (quoted in this article) had insight into certain aspects of trials, he lacked basic Bible understanding concerning the dead. Most people claiming to be "Christians" have a false idea about what happens at death. The Bible teaches clearly that the dead KNOW NOT ANYTHING (Ezekiel 9:5) and that they are resting in their graves until the resurrection (Acts 24:14-15). True followers of Christ will be resurrected and changed to immortality at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth (1 Corinthians 15:50-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). But THE REST OF THE DEAD are not resurrected until the end of the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:5). Those who serve God faithfully will be in the FIRST RESURRECTION mentioned in verse 6. What a comfort these words from God bring to us if we only believe!