

Dealing With the Trials of Life

This morning's sermon is on the difficult days of Jacob as he described them in Genesis 47.8-9. In past days, I read Jacob's description of his life and felt he was being a little overly dramatic. After all, Jacob had great wealth, a large family, and was the one God blessed through the lineage of Abraham. Upon further consideration, I realized Jacob lived through a number of trials. (A complete list will be given in this morning's sermon, but suffice to say he went through a lot of heartache and grief.) yet God watched after him and his family.

This got me to thinking of the heartache and grief people face today. In the last few weeks, we heard of a Christian killed in a tragic accident on his way to Bible Study. The next week, his wife lost her father to covid. A family lost a love one after a long bout with cancer. There are others who are dealing with depression. It seems as if I have heard of more suicides this year than in all of last year. Social isolation due to COVID has increased tremendously. Deaths are on the rise as people have lost their children, or other family member due to drugs. Then there are those suffering from long term illness themselves. It seems like more and more of my peers are getting older and with age it means health issues are on the rise. A more complete list would include those with eating disorders, those in abusive relationships, and other mental issues.

Perhaps we like Jacob may characterize our days as being full of trouble. We need to remember some things about our trials just as Jacob did.

Instead of looking just at our trials, look to God. In Jacob's life we see God's providence at work in so many ways. Can anyone argue Jacob was not blessed by God? He was chosen by God to be the heir of the blessings mentioned in Genesis 12.1-3. He became wealthy and had a large family. In our time of trials, we tend to focus just on our sorrows but we need to look outwardly at the great blessings we have and will receive in the future.

Prayer is a powerful tool in the Christian's life. Remember Daniel was put into the lion's den because he refused to stop praying to God. How many people would have blamed their predicament on God and stop praying but He delivered Daniel from the mouths of lions. No one can stop you from praying and no one can answer your prayers like God.

In life one will face critics and detractors. Those who speak evil of you, mock you, say hurtful things. Those words hurt but often they are spoken out of envy, malice, and hatred. Don't let those people dictate who you are and how you act. "Finally,

all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8-9).

Our trials are temporary road blocks on the way to eternity. The other night I watched a news report on a young lady who took her life. Her parents were left wondering why she did such a thing. Such a question is common among those left behind. One reason is they don't realize how loved they are and how short-lived trials are. Those suffering from bullying and peer pressure don't understand how brief time in school is compared to the rest of their lives. There are more people who care about you than you know.

Finally, we are all like the caterpillar who goes into the cocoon and struggles to get out. The struggle of breaking out of the cocoon is what gives the butterfly the ability to fly. Without that struggle the butterfly never builds the strength to fly. Our trials and struggles can make us stronger, more able to serve God, to help others, and appreciate our blessings.

Remember the words of James 1:2, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Do not give up, do not give in to despair, resist the devil, and let your trials make you better not bitter. -- Dennis Tucker

- Angry? — [Ephesians 4:26](#)
- Anxious? — [Philippians 4:6-7](#)
- Attacked? — [Psalms 27](#)
- Backslidden? — [Jeremiah 3:22](#)
- Bitter? — [1 Corinthians 13](#)
- Confused? — [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)
- Courage depleted? — [Joshua 1:9](#)
- Depressed? — [Psalms 42 and 43](#)
- Despondent? — [Isaiah 40:27-31](#)
- Directionless? — [Romans 12](#)
- Disappointed? — [Proverbs 23:17-18](#)
- Discontent? — [Philippians 4:10-13, 19](#)
- Discouraged? — [Galatians 6:7-10](#) and [Romans 15:13](#)
- Dismayed? — [Psalms 34](#)
- Doubting? — [Acts 1:1-3](#) and [1 Corinthians 15](#)
- Faithless? — [Hebrews 11](#)

- Fearful? — [Isaiah 41:10](#)
- Frustrated? — [Psalms 37:3-8](#)