

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*"Dealing With the*  
**ADVERSITIES**  
*OF Life*

1. **Why Do Adversities Come?**
2. **How Can a Good God Allow Such?**
3. **Finding Peace in the Midst of Adversity**
4. **How to Handle Adversities of Life**
5. **Building Faith in the Midst of Adversity**
6. **Prioritizing My Life**

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2006



## Lesson One

**"Why Do Adversities Come?"**

Picture yourself in a hospital room holding on tight to the hand of your only daughter who is dying of leukemia—it is just a matter of time and her life will be gone from the earth! Here is a five-year-old girl that was so harmless and innocent—but is now dying of this terrible disease. As her life quietly slips away, tears began to flow; and the pent up tension and emotion of months of agony break forth from the breaking heart of a loving parent who cries out in desperation: *"Why, oh why, God did you allow this to happen to our little girl?"* What could someone tell you as to **why such adversity came into your life and the life of your daughter?** What could they say to you that would ease your pain and hurt? Just why do adversities come?

The inspired writer of the book of Judges tells how the Israelites suffered under the hands of the Midianites for seven years. God sent an angel to a man called "Gideon" to let him know that God was aware of their pitiable situation. His greeting to Gideon was: *"The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior."* Gideon's reply was quick, but from the lips of one who felt forsaken by God: *"If the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."* (Judges 6:11-13).

**WHO HAS THE ANSWER?**

Is there an answer for why such suffering comes to mankind? Does someone have the answer as to why adversities come? Can we turn to family and friends for an answer; or, are they in the same "boat" that we are in? Are they not also struggling with the same question that all other humans struggle with? Can they be depended upon to give peace to our restless, questioning soul? Or, can we turn to the gathering of the wisdom of mankind through the ages and find a satisfactory answer? The inspired Apostle Paul stated that the world with its wisdom did not come to know the true and living God; then, why would we have any confidence in their ability to give a satisfactory answer to this perplexing question? (1 Cor. 1:20-21). If there is a satisfactory answer, it must be found in the "Word of God!" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Let's look at some of the possible answers given in the Bible as to why adversities come to all men.

**1. They come because of bad decisions of people!** God has created us with the power of choice; and, obviously, those choices can be good or bad. Bad choices are bad because they bring undesirable consequences. But sometimes, even good choices will bring adversities that we would prefer not to have to deal with.

- a) God states that when man chooses to do wrong (murder, steal, cheat, or lie—there will be undesirable consequences in this existence and in the existence to come (Gal. 6:7-8; Rom. 6:23).
- b) When the early Christians chose to believe in Jesus as the Christ, they were persecuted! (Acts 8:1-3). Their adversities came in spite of a good choice.

Thus, it seems that adversities can come from my own personal choices of good or bad—depending upon the situation. **But adversities can come from the bad choices of others as well.** If a disturbed or evil person decides to shoot school children on a play-ground, their suffering did not come because of something they did wrong. All mankind suffers the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve in making the wrong choice (Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 6:23). As we can easily see, the answer to our question is not a simple one! It is so obvious that even the innocent suffer along with the guilty! Babies can be born with deformities or a terrible disease because of their parent's bad choices.

### **JOB ILLUSTRATES MAN'S STRUGGLE**

When we observe the suffering that comes from a bad choice of ourselves or of others, this helps us to learn to value the good over the bad. If the adversities of life come continually upon us from making good or bad decisions, then what incentive do we have to choose the good over the bad? Why choose to live righteous if we suffer the same fate as those who choose to live unrighteous? There has to be a general rule of life that states: *"Those who choose to live righteous lives will prosper (be blessed); but, those who choose to live unrighteous will not prosper (be blessed)."* If this is not generally true; then, why live righteous? Notice that the prophet Malachi actually records this concept from the minds of the Israelite people: ***"It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape."*** (Mal. 3:13-15). If there is no profit in serving God; then, why serve God!

When the sons of God came before the Lord, Satan also came among them. When God asked Satan what he thought about His servant Job, his reply indicated this same concept—it pays to serve God! ***"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."*** (Job. 1:6-11). Job and his three friends understood this concept! Their statements show this clearly!

**Job 4:7—***"Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?"*

**Job 8:20-22**—*"Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, nor will He support the evildoers....the tent of the wicked will be no longer."*

**Job 11:20**—*"But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and there will be no escape for them; and their hope is to breathe their last."*

**Job 20:4-5**—*"Do you know this from of old, from the establishment of man on earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless momentary?"*

While Job and his three friends obviously believed that it paid to serve God and to live a righteous life, and they also believed that the wicked will be punished for their evil deeds; yet, how do you explain the "unexplainable!" What answer can his friends give him that he hasn't given to others himself? He definitely does not believe that his adversities came upon him because of making bad choices or living ungodly (Job 6:10, 30; 13:23). Job was not satisfied with the simplistic answer that is usually given about adversities (Job 5:24-27). His situation was far more complex in trying to find an answer to. Job knew all the things that his friends have said (Job 12:1-3; 13:1-2), but their words were of no comfort to him (Job 16:1-2; 17:1-2; 19:1-3, 7). So, Job wanted to be able to stand before God (face to face) and ask Him for an answer as to why these calamities had come upon him (16:20-21). It was not that he did not trust in God, but all that was happening was against the basic rules of life that he and all others lived by (13:15). Job was struggling for an answer for himself and also so that he would have some kind of an answer to give to others as well.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Job, his three friends, and generally all mankind know why adversities come to the human race: (1) Bad choices on our part; (2) Bad choices of others; and (3) Sin in general that has and continues to affect all of our lives. This we know by experience and common sense. But this is not the answers we are looking for. What we want to know is: *"Why do adversities come to the innocent and to the righteous and do not come to the ones who deserve it—the wicked?"* *"Why are the wicked allowed to go through life with prosperity and good health, and the righteous often-times do not prosper and have bad health?"* This, we believe, is the real issue! And one possible answer to these questions is that life is a testing place for those who want to serve God. We are being tested to see how we will handle the misfortunes and tragedies of life (like Job was tested). Every experience will make us either better or worse. Adversities can make us strong and noble, or morbid and wretched, depending on how we react to our troubles. And one thing for sure, the Christian has been promised that no matter what happens that: **"All things work together for good"** to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). And we are encouraged to: despise not the discipline of the Almighty (Job 5:17), nor fail to remember that



*Lesson Two***"How Can a Good God Allow Adversities?"**

Pain, heartache, adversities of all kinds, calamities, and suffering are all about us! Many blame God for all of these bad things that can come into the lives of both young or old, rich or poor, Christian or non-Christian. Why are there so many natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.? Why is our world filled with all kinds of diseases and death? But an even more basic question that has continually been asked: **Why does a good God of love for His creatures allow such to happen—especially to those who are His "spiritual children?"** How can suffering be explained or understood? Can we find an answer that will harmonize a God of love with all of the terrible things that He seemingly allows upon this earth? Is it right to blame God for all of these "bad" things? Can a suitable answer be found that will satisfy every one who has asked these questions?

**ALLOW versus BRING ABOUT**

To suggest that God allows bad things to happen is to suggest or infer that He has the power to stop it but does not choose to stop it. The issue here seems to be between whether God allows these things to happen or actually causes them to happen. We know from Scripture that God actually does bring some bad things about.

1. God placed a curse upon the woman (Gen. 3:16).
2. He placed a curse upon the man (Gen. 3:17-19).
3. He placed a curse upon Cain (Gen. 4:9-16).
4. He caused "bad" plagues to come upon Egypt (Exo. 7:1-7).
5. He has struck people and whole cities dead (Lev. 10; Gen. 19:25-29).

Listing of similar Scriptures can be unending. However, in all of such cases, the bad came because of man's disobedience to God. In other words, mankind deserved what they received—they reaped what they had sown (Gal. 6:7-8).

But what about the floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.; does God cause them to happen or does He allow such to happen? If such events come as a results of natural laws; then, in a sense, God causes such to happen because He created the universe with all of its orderliness. And if such calamities come because of man's sinfulness, then in a sense God ordained it to happen as punishment. In the discussion between God and Satan in the first two chapters of Job, we can see both concepts mentioned. It seems that God allowed Job to be tested by Satan by the calamities that were brought on Job and His wife. But Satan attributes the calamities to God (Job 1:10-12), and Job attributes the calamities to God (Job 1:20-22). However, God attributes the calamities to Satan (1:12; 2:4-7). But, if

God allowed Satan to do this to Job, then isn't God to be held responsible for what happened? God had the power to say "NO" to Satan—then, why didn't He? Why did God allow Satan to bring all of these adversities on Job? I am sure that all of us believe God has the power to stop all adversities (deserved or not deserved). Then, why doesn't He? Why does He allow adversities (undeserved in particular) to come upon people who try to live right like Job? This was Job's concern. He knew that the unrighteous deserved what they received in the way of adversities, but it was hard to understand why the righteous have to endure such adversities.

### **WHY ADVERSITIES?**

We know that some adversities come because God has ordained such as physical or spiritual punishment for sin (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7-8). We know also that some come to the innocent because of the sin of others (such as a drunken driver running head-on into a car full of people and kills them all). We know that some come because of my being at the wrong place at the right time (Eccl. 9:11). We know that some comes because God is trying to discipline or chastise us in order to get us to change our way of living (Heb. 12:1-11). And....we also know that adversities may come so that we may grow into maturity (James 1:2-4). But when we have gone through a long list of possible reasons for adversities, we still realize that we do not have all the answers to the questions that keeping coming to our minds. And we still tend to ask: "**Why me?**" "**Why did this have to happen to me?**" "**What have I done to deserve this?**" Job's desire to confront God in order to have an answer to his question, "**Why Me,**" certainly illustrates this. He, nor his three friends, had an answer to his question of why! And it is interesting to notice that God never gave him an answer to his question either! It was as though that God was saying to Job: "**I am God! Just love me and trust me....all will work out okay!**" (Rom. 8:28).

### **THAT GOOD MAY COME !**

Another possible view of why God allows adversities to come would be that in the future good will come from such ordeals. Look at Joseph who was hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, and later placed in an Egyptian dungeon unjustly. Don't you know he consider asking a "time or two".... "**Why me?**" No answer was given to him at the time. But later he understood when he began to see the good that came from his adversities (Gen. 45:4-8). Possibly, when we are able to look back, we too can see the good that can come from enduring such adversities—**many have!** Look at the following Scriptures:

**David:** *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."* (Ps. 119:71).

**Job:** *"He knows the way that I take: when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."* (Job 23:10).

**Paul:** *"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Rom. 8:17)

**James:** *"The trying of your faith works patience."* (James 1:2).

**Peter:** *"But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy."* (1 Peter 4:13)

When the clouds are the darkest and the storms the heaviest, it is then that passages like the above should mean the most to us. We need to look for the good that can come from adversities—especially in the light of eternity. ***"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."*** (2 Cor. 4:17-18). The words of the following song have helped us to express to one another one of the great truths of God—that He cares! (1 Pet. 5:7; Heb. 13:5-6).

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained  
 Too deeply for mirth or song;  
 As the burdens press, and the cares distress,  
 And the way grows weary and long?  
 O yes, He cares, I know He cares,  
 His heart is touched with my grief;  
 When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
 I know my Savior cares. --Graeff

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Now, back to our questions: **"How Can a Good God Allow Adversities?"** We may come up with some possible answer, but still feel dissatisfied with not fully knowing the reasons. But, isn't this what faith, hope, and love is all about! Job saw the value of these three concepts.

1. *"Though He slays me, I will hope in Him."*
2. *"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."*

It is faith that sustains us in adversity, hope that assures us, and love that comforts us (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Without these, it would certainly be hard to deal with some of the adversities that come our way!



## Lesson Three

**"Finding Peace in the Midst of Adversity"**

*"Blessed is the man that perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."* (James 1:12). If James is speaking of a crown of life with reference to heaven—that is wonderful; but, is there no other blessing that comes from enduring trials of life? James also says: *"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."* (1:2-4). Suffering the trials of life can also help us to learn true obedience as Jesus did (Heb. 5:8; Ps. 119:67). So, trials are one way of bringing about patience and true obedience in our lives and thus "maturing" us! But isn't there something else that we need in the midst of adversity that will be a blessing unto us? We believe that there is a great blessing that can come to us while we are enduring the trials of life—that is.....PEACE!

**WHAT IS PEACE?**

The word peace can be used in reference to varied things. There can be peace between two individuals or two nations, etc., when the fighting ceases. There is a freedom from strife and a feeling of security and safety that makes peace possible. It has been used for centuries as a greeting between individuals—by wishing the best for their life, etc. (*"Peace be with you"*). We are wishing health, prosperity, and well-being to each other. There is the concept of peace between human beings, and peace with God, and also peace within the person. We want to look at these briefly.

**I. Peace with other human beings.** Job observed that: *"Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble."* (14:1). It seems that man is being constantly challenged to face all kinds of trials and afflictions (Christian and non-Christian alike). Every life is shaped to some degree or another by how we handle these trials and afflictions. But much of the trials we may face can come from other human beings. Just think...if we could survive by ourselves and didn't need other human beings around us, much of our frustrations, troubles, etc., would be gone. But since that is not the way man is made (Gen. 2:18), we have to learn how to get along with other people around us. Other people can be a blessing or possibly a curse in our lives—depending upon how we deal with such. Christians are urged to:

- a) *"Be kindly affectionate to one another...in honor giving preference to one another."* (Rom. 12:10).
- b) *"Bless those who persecute you..."* (Rom. 12:14).

- c) **"Rejoice...Weep"** with others. (Rom. 12:15)
- d) **"Be of the same mind towards each other...associate with the humble...do not be wise in your own opinion."** (Rom. 12:16)
- e) **"Repay no one evil for evil..."** (Rom. 12:17).      f) **"Do not avenge yourselves..."** (Rom. 12:19).
- g) **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."** (Rom. 12:21).

Why all of these admonitions? It is obvious isn't it! He gives the answer in verse 18: **"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."** Jesus pronounced a blessing on the **"peacemakers"**—**"they shall be called sons of God."** (Matt. 5:10). And, it is obvious, that to live in peace with one another is itself a great blessing! Paul admonished the Ephesians to **endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**" (4:1-3). James adds: **"Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."** (Jas. 3:18).

**2. Peace with God.** Man's problem with God is that he wants to do his thing rather than do what God says for him to do. He "often" thinks that he knows better than God! Of course, man is deceived or self-deceived in believing such! Peace with God requires two basic factors!

a) A Redeemer that can reconcile God and man. Jesus, the Son of God, had to come and pay the penalty of our rebellion against God in order for God to justly forgive us—so that we can be reconciled to God. **"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."** (2 Cor. 5:19). This is the reason why Jesus is called **"the Prince of Peace!"** (Isa. 9:6). And it is also the reason why the Gospel is called **"the Gospel of Peace!"** (Eph. 6:15). It is God's message to man to let him know that reconciliation is possible from God's standpoint. But at the same time, it is a message to let the wicked know that there is no peace for them unless they are reconciled to God (Isa. 48:22; 57:21; Jere. 6:14).

b) A willingness on man's part to be reconciled to God. To have peace requires both parties to be willing and do their part to make for peace. God has done His part and is willing to be reconciled to man. Now, man must want this peace, as well, and do his part to have peace with God. Man's big stumblingblock is his pride! **"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."** (James 4:6). And Jesus said: **"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."** (Matt. 18:3). Humility on man's part is an absolute must if he is to be at peace with God. To think or feel that one is at peace with God when he is unwilling to submit to the will of God is self-deception. Man's reconciliation with God comes through a faith that is submission to God's will (Rom. 5:1; James 2:17-26; Heb.

5:8-9). He dies to the old life of rebellion and becomes an obedient servant of God (Rom. 6:1-4; 17-18). This peace (tranquility of soul) comes from having a right relationship with God.

**3. Peace within us.** It should be obvious that if we are at peace with God and at peace with our fellow-man, then there should be a calm assurance that *"all is well with the world!"* However, there is a *"fly in the soup!"* We can be at peace with our fellow-man only to the extent that he will allow such.....and there are a lot of times when nothing seems to help bring peace. This is the reason that wars have to be fought! This may be the only recourse to bring peace. One of the problems that the early Christians were going to have to face was persecution that would come upon them.

- a) The certainty of it was stated (2 Tim. 3:21).
- b) It was not something that was strange (1 Pet. 4:12).
- c) Even Christ was persecuted (1 Pet. 2:21).
- d) Jesus told the Apostles they would be persecuted and killed (Matt. 24:9).
- e) The Revelation Letter told about *"beheaded souls for the testimony of the Lord."* (6:9).

In view of the above, Christians need to prepare themselves for such. We not only will have to face the common trials and affliction of this life that comes to all men; but, in addition, we may have to face persecution for righteousness' sake. How do we have peace in the midst of all of these things? The answer is given in Phil. 4:6-7: ***"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*** Do you believe this? Have you placed your faith fully in God's promises of:

- a) His love for all mankind (Jn. 3:16);
- b) His concern for His children (1 Pet. 5:6-7);
- c) That all things will work for our "eternal" good (Rom. 8:28);
- d) That we have no reason to fear what men may do to us (Heb. 13:5-6).
- e) He will not allow us to be tempted above what we can handle (1 Cor. 10:13).
- f) That we can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength we need (Phil. 4:13).

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Why does God allow trials, suffering, afflictions, persecutions to come into our lives?

- a) To mature us (James 1:2-4);
- b) To bless us (Matt. 5:10);
- c) To be tested and proven (1 Pet. 1:6-7);
- d) To produce fruits of righteousness (Heb. 12:5-12);

- e) To set an example of following Christ (1 Pet. 2:21-24);
- f) To help us learn contentment in any situation (Phil. 4:11);
- g) To be glorified with Christ (Rom. 8:17-18);
- h) Turns our hearts more towards heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-18)!

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Who does James say will receive a crown of life?
2. Why are trials said to be a test of our faith in God?
3. What is a basic definition of "peace?"
4. What are some attitudes & actions that help to bring peace between humans?
5. Why should we be peacemakers?
6. What is peace called in Eph. 4:3?
7. What are two basic factors that are involved in man making peace with God?
8. What does Paul say in Philippians about having the peace of God?
9. What are some reasons given for trials?

*Lesson Four***"How to Handle Adversities of Life"**

Trials or adversities of life can take many forms—some of which are harder to deal with than others—such as:

- a) Loss of a loved one in death, separation, or divorce.
- b) Personal illness or physical limitations of self or a mate.
- c) Life's transitions or changes: Age, Empty Nest, Mid-life Crisis, Single to Married Life, Moving to a New Location, etc.
- d) All kinds of persecutions from the simple to the extreme that often come to both Christians and non-Christians.
- e) The terrible misfortunes that happen in our physical world—such as various kinds of storms and calamities in nature.

And...because of our weaknesses, we need all the help we can get to endure these trials of life—much less, to deal with the mistakes that we continually make in our lives. The issue here is not "If adversities come," but "When they come," how do we handle such? Part of the battle is already won when we come to this reality! We must come to accept such as a part of being human and a part of a fallen world.

**WAYS TO HANDLE ADVERSITIES**

**1. Study out the question:** *"Why does a good God allow bad things to happen to good people?"* We have tried briefly in Lesson Two to deal with this question. Spend time and patience to find a satisfactory answer that gives you confidence in the God who made us in His image.

**2. Realize a great truth:** *"God has not written us off!"* He loves us, is concerned about us, and wants us to make it to heaven someday! He is willing to forgive us through His Son's sacrifice on the cross for our disobedience to Him. But realize also that He has not promised to remove adversities, but has promised to help us deal with such and assures us that we will profit from such (2 Cor. 12:8-10). Jesus has not misled us by promising financial success, good health, and a "bed of roses" if we will serve Him; but, rather He has made it very clear that we are called to bear our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24-26).

**3. Realize a basic saying:** *"No pain, no gain!"* We need to view adversities in life as opportunities to grow spiritually. This is a very basic way to grow. Afflictions can force us to either grow or go backwards—we make the choice! The more adversities that we face well, the more refined we become as a child of God (1 Peter 1:7) and it shows us the genuineness of our faith. *"The ones who will wear the bright crowns in heaven will be those who have been tried,*

*smelted, and polished in the furnace of tribulations in life." "It is the cross-bearer on earth who will be the crown-wearer in Heaven."*

**4. Be Thankful!** All mankind have very good reasons for being thankful to the God who created us (Matt. 5:45). But in particular, the Christian has far more for which to be thankful—and we need to express such continually. *"In everything give thanks!"* (1 Thess. 5:18). *"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving!"* (Ps. 95:2). On and on, in both Old and New Testaments, we find the same admonition—give thanks to God! And the Psalmists stated: *"Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name..."* (140:13). But we live in a world that is not thankful. *"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."* (Rom. 1:21). The Psalmists speaks of Thanksgiving as a pleasing sacrifice unto God (Ps. 107:21-22; 116:17). When we continually offer thanksgiving to God for His great blessings, it causes the adversities of life to be put in proper proportion.

**5. Pray sincerely and continually to God!** *"Pray without ceasing!"* (1 Thess. 5:17). And...in all of our prayers and supplications we are to express our thanksgiving to God (Phil. 4:6). Prayer helps to keep our relationship and fellowship with God strong so that we can face the many trials of life. And in those prayers we are admonished by God to cast all of our cares upon Him because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). He wants to carry our heavy burdens—so we need to give them to Him to handle. And in so doing, we are showing that we believe that all things will work out for our good (Rom. 8:28).

**6. Fellowship and Worship with the Saints!** (Heb. 10:23-25). We need to be together with people of like faith and purpose, with kindred love for one another, who can provoke one another to love and good works and can help us hold fast to our hope without wavering. We need to be exhorted continually to that our hearts will not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:12-13). These are the ones we can turn to for comfort because they have faced the same trials that I am facing and have successfully faced their adversities of life (2 Cor. 1:1-4). Common experiences are valuable in being able to help others with similar situations.

**7. Be faithful!** It is the faithful unto death that will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). They are the ones who become partakers of Christ because they hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end (Heb. 3:14-15). Quitters never succeed! They are the true failures! The road to heaven is not traveled by the perfect, but by the struggling faithful. They are continually repenting and getting up and striving to walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7-10). The Apostle Peter denied Christ three times with an oath, but later became the "rock-like" person that Jesus renamed him to become (Matt. 16:18). The big difference between Peter and Judas (who betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver) was that Peter did not quit, but Judas did! God wants us to be saved, not lost! We need to

turn to Him for forgiveness and strength day by day so that we can be faithful all the way to the end of life. Jesus reminds us that He has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33); and that we will have tribulations, but we too can overcome the world through Him (Rev. 2:7).

**8. Get out of Self!** A main problem in dealing with adversities correctly is too much concern on self! The Apostle Paul showed clearly that Jesus was able to face the adversities that faced him because of His emptying of Himself and being concerned for others (Phil. 2:1-8). Notice some of the admonitions that he gives to the Philippians:

a) *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."* (v.

3)

b) *"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."*

We need to be sincerely concerned about and for others about us. We need to identify with them—rejoice when they rejoice and weep when they weep! We need to put the welfare of others above ourselves when it is needed. We need be patient with others, accepting of others, compassionate of others, and by all means do more listening than talking with others. (Matt. 25:41-46).

**9. Look for the blessings!** Good can come out of the bad! God has promised! Why not look for it as we endure afflictions! (James 1:2-4). But by all means look for the end results: *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."* (James 1:12).

**10. Rejoice!** How can a person rejoice or be glad when they are undergoing all kinds of adversities or trials? Here are the answers! *"If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."* (1 Pet. 4:16). *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

By all means, let's not give up on God! *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."* (Heb. 10:23). Let's deal with our doubts! Seek, Ask, and Knock to find the right answers to the questions we tend to ask in the midst of adversity. Listen to one of us who has had more than his share of adversities: *"We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for*

*Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. 4:8-11). And then he adds: **Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory....**" (vs. 16-17*

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What are some of the varied forms of adversities that humans face?
2. Why do we need help from God and others to deal with trials?
3. What happens to the person that will not deal properly with doubts?
4. How can we know we are bearing our cross or have died to self?
5. Why is it that growth basically comes from facing the challenges of life?
6. Why is it so important to continually express thanksgiving to God?
7. Why is it so important to fellowship and worship with Christians?
8. Why is praying to God so important?
9. Who are the true failures?
10. Why is unselfishness such an important trait of a Christian?
11. How can a person rejoice in the midst of adversities?
12. Why are we admonished to hold fast the confession of our hope?

## Lesson Five

**"Building Faith  
in the Midst of Adversity"**

Adversities come into the lives of all people to some degree or another. It seems that some people have more than their share. We ask questions of "why," and hope we can find some kind of an answer that we can live with. It is suggested that adversities can bring benefit to our lives! Well, in what way? How do we learn of those benefits? What do we have to do or not do in order to receive these benefits? One of the possible benefits of dealing with adversities is the building or strengthening of our faith in God. That is what we want to look at briefly in this lesson.

**WHAT IS FAITH?**

"Faith" has various usages. It is one of those complex words that we accept and think we understand, but may require more insight to fully understand. The Hebrew writer gives a simple definition of faith and then gives numerous examples to illustrate it. ***"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*** (Heb. 11:1). For instance, we believe that God exist! Upon what basis do we believe this? We cannot ascertain God by our "five senses!" But, by logic and reasoning from evidences we can come to "know by faith" that God exist! Upon this basis the Hebrew writer can say: ***"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*** (11:6). A key concept in this definition is that faith is based on evidence and is not a "leap in the dark!" The following expressions are used to define the use of this word:

1. To accept what is said about a person or thing.
2. To be convinced of something or the reality or character of someone whom we have not seen.
3. To put our trust in or rely on someone or some thing.
4. Unqualified acceptance of God, His Word, His Promises, etc.

The Bible speaks about different "kinds" or "degrees" of faith that we can have or hold to (Rom. 12:6):

1. Great faith and Little faith (Matt. 8:10; 6:30).
2. Faith can be increased (Luke 17:5).
3. Our faith can fail us (Luke 22:32).
4. Be full of faith or Weak in faith (Acts 6:5; Rom. 14:1).
5. Be established in "the faith." (Acts 16:5).
6. Faith can be increased (2 Cor. 10:15).

## BIBLICAL FAITH

We need to qualify that when we speak of "faith" that we are speaking about "Biblical Faith!" It is possible that our faith can be in the wrong thing: *"that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."* (1 Cor. 2:5).

**1. Biblical Faith is belief or trust in the true and living God!** (1 Tim. 1:17; 2:3-7). But, it is important that this faith involve the "right beliefs" about God! Our faith in God is based on what is revealed about His character and purposes. This faith also involves the assurance of the Sonship of Jesus as the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22; 2 Jn. 7-10). This faith in God is expressed by obedience to the Will of God (Tit. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; Jas. 2:17-26, etc.).

**2. Biblical Faith rest on Divine Testimony!** (Rom. 10:17). Man can come to belief in God by observing the evidences around him (Ps. 19:1-3; Rom. 1:18-23). But Biblical Faith is based on divinely inspired revelations of God (Rom. 10:17). Our certainty of His existence, His character, and of what He requires of men in order to be acceptable to Him is based on reliable testimony (1 Cor. 2:7-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Jn. 6:46; 5:36-37; 5:16-21) of Jesus and the Apostles and Prophets who were guiding by the Spirit of God.

**3. Biblical Faith is a gift from God!** There is no way that a man can have Biblical Faith in God without hearing (or reading) the Gospel message sent by God. God not only revealed this message, but commanded that it be preached to every creature (or person) of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Those who come to God now must be taught of God (Jn. 6:44-45). Thus, only those who have heard this message can come to Biblical Faith in God—through Christ!

## BUILDING BIBLICAL FAITH IN GOD IN THE MIDST OF ADVERSITY

It is important that we realize the need of "Biblical Faith;" but, as well, that this faith must become strong in order to face the trials, tribulations, and the adversities of life. We need to see why this is such a challenge to us. The natural expectation of men is that God blesses the righteous and send curses on the unrighteous! Not only do we generally believe this, but God even indicates such over and over in Scripture (Ps. 1:1-6; 5:11-12; Job 4:7; 8:20; 21:1-17; etc.). If the righteous are not blessed—then...why be righteous???? The whole concept of "reward" and "punishment" is built around this general concept! If the righteous were only blessed and the unrighteous only cursed, there would be no

real challenge to our faith in God! So, when adversities come to the righteous (like Job), it brings pressure on our faith (acceptance, trust) in God.

We tend to ask such questions as the following:

1. *"How can I believe in (accept, trust in) a God who allows trials, persecutions, and even violent death to His followers?"*
2. *"How can I hope in Him, cleave to Him, take refuge in Him, or trust in Him when He allows all kinds of adversities to come into my life?"*

Job's wife seems to have lost faith in God when she told her husband: **"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"** (Job 2:9). Job's answer to her shows that he was struggling to hold on to His faith or trust in God. He did not know the answer to the question of "Why me?" And he wanted to meet face to face with God to find out the answer. Even though God never gave him an answer to why, his faith in God was made stronger in spite of all his adversities, but possibly because of them as well! Job learned some things:

1. **That God is God!** He is not a man, nor does He answer to man! (Job 40:1-5).
2. **That man needs to listen to the instructions of God!** His knowledge and wisdom is so far above ours that it makes us look foolish (Job 42:1-6).

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

God wants His creatures to believe in Him, trust Him, obey Him, because He is God! He purposely does not tell us everything "we want and think we ought to know" (Deut. 29:29). Tribulations, temptations, suffering, and persecutions are referred to as "trials of our faith" because they help us to see if we are just serving God for the "loaves and fishes," or is it because we believe He is God and deserves our worship and service (Jn. 6:26; Mal. 3:13-15; Job 21:15). One of the great values of the 11th chapter of Hebrews is the listing of men and women whose faith was put to the test and proven true! The Apostle Peter writes to God's people to encourage them in the midst of their suffering because of doing good or even the fiery trial which would come upon them. He admonished such people to commit their souls to God as a faithful Creator. (1 Pet. 2:19-20; 4:12-19). God wants our faith in Him to become strong and steadfast (Col. 2:6-7 so that we will be faithful to Him (Rev. 2:10) as He is faithful to us (Rev. 19:11).

It is interesting to notice the purpose of Jesus' coming. He came to bring a message of hope to the poor, brokenhearted, captives, blind, and oppressed (Luke 4:18). It is the "poor of this world" that God is able to make "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. 2:5). **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** (Matt. 5:3). Why? Because they are the ones who can trust in God because He is God—not just to see what they can get out of

God! Who can respect a person who makes out that he loves or likes us so that he can get something he wants out of us? What about our relationship to God?

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How is faith defined?
2. Is there differences in people's faith?
3. Can you see a difference between "faith" and "Biblical faith?"
4. Why is it so important to have the right beliefs about God?
5. Upon what does Biblical Faith rest?
6. Do you believe that Biblical Faith is a gift from God; and if so, why?
7. Why are tribulations, adversities, struggles, or persecution said to be a "trial of our faith?"
8. Did Job's wife give up her faith in God? Give reason(s) for your answer.
9. What did Job learn from his adversities and his conversation with God?
10. Why are the poor blessed?

## Lesson Six

**"Prioritizing My Life"**

If you have lived very long, you know to expect adversities! And yet, in spite of knowing this, we are hopeful that such will not come our way! But God tells the Christian that such will come!

- 2 Tim. 3:12—*"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*
- 1 Pet. 4:12—*"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."*
- Matt. 5:12—*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake..."*
- Rev. 6:9—*"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held."*

So, if they will come, don't we need to get prepared for such? And...how can we prepare ourselves for such so that we can be content, steadfast, and faithful to God when they do come (1 Tim. 6:8; Phil. 4:11; Rev. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:6-10, etc.)? We believe that this is where prioritizing my life becomes very important.

**WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?**

The decisions that we make each day are usually determined by what we decide is the most important thing in our lives. If this is true, then we must deal with this issue first because it is basic (foundational)! Jesus challenged His audience during the Sermon on the Mount to come to grips with this question. He saw that they were concerned (worried) about many things. His answer to their problems was: ***"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*** (Matt. 6:33). Is Jesus suggesting that our physical body is not important? Of course not!

- 1) We are to love and care for our body (Eph. 5:28-29).
- 2) We are not to give it over to immorality or abuse or dissipation (1 Cor. 6:15-20; 3:16-17). It is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) We will at times, however, have to buffet our body to keep it in line as the Apostle Paul did (1 Cor. 9:27).

It is also obvious that our body is temporary, mortal, and will go back to dust (1 Cor. 15:42-44; 2 Cor. 5:1-4). We will be given a new body (spiritual body) in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44). So, whatever happens to this body (**that we cannot avoid**) is only for a short time (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Because of this, the Soul (and spirit) becomes the more important! This is the reason why that God's kingdom and His righteousness must be placed first in our lives. ***"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or***

*what will a man give in exchange for his soul."* (Matt. 16:26). Thus, when choices have to be made between enduring adversities or losing our soul, the choice should be an obvious one. Jesus' statement in this regard is so very appropriate: *"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you..."* (John 6:27).

### **PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST!**

If I am convinced that God's kingdom and His righteousness needs to be first in my life; then, what will help me to put my emphasis on that which is considered the most important? May we suggest the following things:

**1. Be determined to build my faith strong enough to deal correctly with adversities.** This, obviously, cannot be done by "wishful thinking!" We must "put our hands to the task" of building strong faith in God. Then, what can I do to accomplish them? May we suggest:

- a) We need to be constantly in the Scriptures so that our minds can be renewed, changed, transformed in such a way that we are ready for whatever comes into our lives (Rom. 12:1-2).
- b) Read and re-read the 119th Psalm. The writer is constantly exalting the Word of God and its great value and necessity for our lives.
- c) Meditate constantly on what I read and hear from the Word of God (Psalm 1). Understand how it applies to my life and what I must do to gain the greatest good from my understanding. It is important that I come to grips with the great issues of life and the many questions that are asked! It is also important that I meditate on the great characteristics and nature of God.
- d) Put my faith into action. Dead faith is worthless. I need to be a doer of the word (James 1:21-25).
- e) Do a lot of confessing of wrongs, petitioning God for a strong faith, and expressing thanks for all He has done (Phil. 4:6-7). What we earnestly pray about, we will put our heart and soul into seeing that it is done to the best of my ability.

**2. Concentrate on Scriptures that deal with the value and possible purposes of adversities.** (Jas. 1:2-4, 12-15; 1 Pet. 2:19-23; 3:14-18; 4:12-19; 5:5-10; 2 Tim. 3:10-12; 4:5-8; Heb. 11; 5:8-9; Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Thess. 2:14-16; 2 Thess. 1:3-6, etc.).

**3. Overcome our fear by trust in God and His promises.** God does not want His children to be ruled by fear, but by love! Perfected, mature love helps us to deal properly with fearful things that can come into our lives. (1 John 4:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:7-12; 2:8-13).

**4. Deepen my assurance of Hope in Christ.** The inspired writer of Romans said it plainly: *"We were saved in this hope"* (Rom. 8:24). When my physical world collapses around me, what becomes extremely important? It is my hope! The Apostle Peter makes a very interesting comment about suffering: *"for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin"* (1 Pet. 4:1-5). Facing the adversities of life can be a continual reminder of what really counts in the day of Judgment! What sin has to offer is short-lived and worthless—especially for the soul. Suffering should help us to see that we should no longer live the rest of our time in fleshly lusts, but rather doing the will of God. See also (Heb. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Gal. 3:3-4).

**5. Be open-minded towards God and deal with self-deception!** Jesus pointed out that the closed-minded, closed-ears, and closed eyes are to our detriment! Why not listen to the one that has all knowledge and wisdom? We need to take the Scriptures personal—*"How does this apply to me?"* We need to stop being self-deceived into believing that we know better than God. And by all means—love the truth! Pay the price for it by diligent efforts to learn it and put it into practice (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Prov. 16:16; 3:5; 23:23).

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Man has a tendency to make his god (or gods) into the image that he wants. If he likes to drink and get drunk, his god allows such. If he wants to be immoral, his god allows this also. Man tends to pick his gods on the basis of his own moral level. When the demands of a moral and holy God no longer fit his chosen life-style, he joins himself to groups who reject such a God. What man needs to do is to accept, believe in, understand, reverence, be in awe of the true and living God of heaven and conform to His will for our lives.

Those who reject the God of the Bible because of the evil, suffering, and adversities of life that He seems to allow—have not stopped long enough to see the true nature of God and the promises that await those who put their trust in Him. *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* (Rom. 8:18). They fail to see God's purpose and reasons for such; as well as, they fail to accept His promise that *"all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* (Rom. 8:28). But possibly the most important thing they miss seeing is that God did not spare even His own Son and allowed Him to become the innocent victim of the worst evil and most intense suffering experienced by anyone in order to provide eternal life to those who would put their trust in Him (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:29-39; 2 Cor. 5:21).

If we will prioritize our lives and put first things first; then, we will be in much better position to handle whatever life brings our way with calm assurance in the God whom we love, reverence, and adore!

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- 1. Does God indicate that all Christians will be persecuted?**
  
- 2. Why is it important to determine what is the most important thing in our life?**
  
- 3. How important is it for us to take good care of our physical bodies?**
  
- 4. If the body is mortal, what about the soul of man?**
  
- 5. How can one build a strong faith in God?**
  
  
  
  
  
- 6. What kind of gods does man want?**
  
  
  
  
  
- 7. Why should we read and study carefully those passages that deal with having to face the adversities of life?**
  
  
  
  
  
- 8. What will help us to overcome our fear of what might happen to us physically?**
  
  
  
  
  
- 9. Why is hope so important for the Christian?**
  
  
  
  
  
- 10. Why is open-mindedness to God important?**



