

LESSON 5

COURAGE THROUGH TRIALS

Scripture Texts: 1 Peter 4:12-19; 2 Timothy 2:1; John 16:33

Christians have a personal responsibility to show forth Christ to others. Man is not the product of society; rather, society is the product of man. Redeemed man has his impact on the social order. For this reason, the Scripture references dealt with in this lesson appeal to the life and conscience of the believer, and urge him to live as a witness to the power of Christ.

We cannot blame our weakness on the power and pressure of society. If we have Christ living in us, we have this assurance: "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This is the saints' answer to all problems of society. Courage is the product of divine life in the heart. Courage is necessary to meet the duties and trials of life. Prayer, trust, and obedience keep our courage strong. When one rightly meets trials, they strengthen him and glorify God. Let us examine the relationship of the believer to everyday trials.



MEMORY VERSE: *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* — Psalm 27:14

Trial Is to Be Expected

First Peter 4:12. **Think it not strange . . .** Trial is to be expected because the spirit of this world is against the Spirit of God. The world is no longer very good as God created it. The prince of this world is set against the children of God, and God allows him to send hindrances and trials, **which . . . try you.** Do not say "Why should this happen to me?" or "It doesn't seem right." Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Sometimes His way of doing this is to enable us to endure the trial with faith, courage, and steadfastness. Do not pass by that opportunity.

For Christ's Sake

First Peter 4:13-14. **Rejoice.** No, not for the pain, but that the Lord counts us worthy to be **partakers of Christ's sufferings.** Rejoice (1) that the test is in the will of God, (2) that we are sharing with Christ in suffering, and (3) that God will be glorified if we meet the test continuing in holy living. We cannot rejoice while quest-ioning why or rebelling at the trial as being unjust. Accept it courageously, and trust in God. Then we can rejoice. See Matthew 5:11-12. This gives strength to one's self and provides a testimony to the world.

When we stand for Christ and are reproached for His sake, we have the assurance that we do not stand alone. The Holy Spirit is in us, and the glory of God far outweighs the glory of men and the glory of this world. This is the ground of our victory, and there can be no other ground.

Some Shameful Suffering

First Peter 4:15-16. **But let none of you suffer as . . . an evildoer.** There is suffering that is not for Christ's sake but for the results from sin. Many we call gross sinners bring suffering upon themselves and others. But some who would never lie, steal, or kill will gossip, meddle, criticize, envy, hold bitter feelings, etc.; then guilt and fear replace one's joy. This

suffering is foreign to the way of God. Nothing short of repentance will take away the guilt of sin.

Suffering is a basic fact of life. No man has ever lived who escaped suffering in one form or another. The important question with regard to suffering is this: for what did we suffer? The unbeliever takes the law into his own hands; he steals or murders to satisfy his desires. He tries to change society, not himself. Neither he nor society is any better; most often they are worse. The saint alters society by changing himself through the grace of God in Christ. **Let him glorify God on this behalf.**

Strengthened by Judgment

First Peter 4:17-19. **Judgment must begin at the house of God.** God is just. He judges first **the house of God** because God's people are to judge the world. Read 1 Corinthians 6:2. They are to bear spiritual fruit. God will shake the earth and heaven to remove imperfect ones. Those who cannot be shaken by judgment of His Word will remain (see Hebrews 12:27). God uses trials to either strengthen or shake us off. Thus the church is kept pure. Which way we go is our decision. **If the righteous scarcely be saved.** If they can stand the shaking ordeal and be sustained by the judgment in the house of God, they will make it through the final judgment. All others have no hope.

Tests will come. If we are obeying God, we can know that the trial is according to His will. Then commit it to Him who is everlasting strength. Trust God. Continue in well doing. Resting in Christ's strength brings cheer, even joy, in the midst of suffering. Paul and Silas sang with backs bleeding and feet fastened in prison stocks. How about Daniel? Moses before Pharaoh? How could many others rejoice at being counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ? Divine joy may be covered briefly by sorrow but not destroyed. The joy of the Lord is inside.

Source of Supply

Second Timothy 2:1. **Be strong in the grace that is in Christ.** Courage drawn from one's own strength is not enough to stand against the wiles of the devil. We need **the grace that is in Christ Jesus**, the unmerited favor of God, containing His strength, joy, and victory. It is poured out for His children. If we abide in Christ, we can ask and receive it.

John 16:33. **These things have I spoken . . . ye might have peace.** Jesus speaks peace. His peace lays the foundation for cheer. **Be of good cheer** through tribulation. He has **overcome the world**, and it was through tribulation. Yes, tribulation is part of our salvation because it is part of our overcoming as we identify with Christ. We must begin right. Leave no sin uncovered. Make a complete commitment to God's will. Yield all. Die to self. Proceed to live daily unto God.

JUST A THOUGHT

Throwing mud at a good man only soils your own hands.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
It is revised and posted here with written permission from
(c) Bible Paths Publications, PO Box 299, Keithville, LA 71047