

Responding to Fiery Trials



A. Introduction

Is the Body of Christ going under a period of fiery trials? (Always) How about you? (Probably)

James 1:2-4 (NKJV), "My brethren, count it all ('pure' NIV) joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience ('endurance'). But let patience ('endurance') have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

1. These words are the very first New Testament Scriptures to be written in the Bible. [James was written ~40-50 AD.] The first words to be spoken to the early Jewish Christians were on the subject of 'trials & tests of faith' in the form of sufferings. Expect it to be part of the normal Christian life. Forget about a Christian life without tests & trials.
2. (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..."*
1 Cor 10:13 (NKJV), *"No temptation ['trials'] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation [trials] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*

3. These should be one of the first verses the new Christians should memorise.

Trial & temptations are interchangeable as the same Greek word "peirasmois" is translated to either 'trial' or 'temptation' depending on the context.

B. What is the difference between trial and temptation?

1. Origin – Temptation comes from 'within'. The devil brings it so that you will fail. Trial comes from 'without'. God allows it so that you will pass.
2. Morality – Temptation involves 'morality' (sin/righteousness & right/wrong). Trial is often morally 'neutral.'
3. Time – Temptation is constantly lurking underneath. Testing can come and go suddenly at a certain time.
4. What is tested – Temptation tests 'weak spots.' Trial tests our 'strength & resilience.' You may be surprised by how much you can bear. Remember Job & Jeremiah, etc?

R.T. Kendall in "Dignifying Trial" Go through your trial with dignity rather than splattering and vomiting all over the place as you progress at a snail's pace along the way. Trials can take various forms: job loss; unhappy employment; failure in business ventures; unforeseen family tragedy; close friends' betrayal; loss of loved ones; sudden accidents; unexpected health challenges; theft; burglary; financial loss, persecution at work, etc.

Why does God put us through such trials? Because trials are the best test of grace in your life, test how strong you are. God is putting you under the microscope so that you can see how strong you are. Worshipping God on the day you get a raise is easy. What if the fortune is reversed? That is the time you are tested just how strong you are. Trials not only test your strength, but also strengthen and purify your love and faith in God. It is a way of accelerating your spiritual growth.

C. What is the ingredient necessary to dignify your trial?

1. Try not to be the cause of your own trial. "...when you fall into various trials..." You are not the main cause of the rift between you and your neighbour. [...lead us not into temptation.] Then you know that the trial is from God to test your strength, not so much your accomplishment – prayer, fasting, witnesses, but how you can 'dignify the trial' by trusting God in it.
2. When you fall into a trial, the first thing to know is that God is not angry with you. He is not trying to get even with you. *But He is treating you as sons with dignity.* God has the very best plan hidden from you. Although this is not so much fun at the time of testing, those are the times when the angels are watching us and how we respond because these are the very gates of tomorrow's graces of God.

“For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful;’ nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:10-11)

3. Count it a great joy – The normal response to the trial is to complain - 99% natural response. The normal response to the trial is, *“Lord, why did this happen to me?” “Why did you allow this to happen to me at this time?” “Why me?”*

To dignify the trial means to treat it with dignity and not with contempt. ‘Count it a great joy’ just like God ‘counted/imputed’ [righteousness to Abraham]. When you face a trial, ‘impute to the trial, joy.’ ‘But it is not joyful.’ ‘Yes, but Christ justified the ungodly by imputing His righteousness.’ So when we are in trial and it is hard, we impute to it, joy by faith. Why? It is because one day we will thank God for it.

God works in such a way that the worst things that have happened to us will turn out to be the best things that have happened to us (Rom 8:28). We can start thanking God that our worst trials will turn out to be our finest hour. See David’s finest hour! *“Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: ‘I have no delight in you,’ here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.” (1 Sam 15:25-26)* David acknowledged God’s hand behind Absalom and threw himself to God’s mercy instead of relying on the ark of God.

4. When we are going through trials, angels are watching us, and God is watching us. When you dignify the trial, God looks at you and says, “Good.” But if you are full of complaints and do not see God’s hand in it, God looks at you and says, “Hmm, this time not too good.” We get a grade in heaven from the trial we go through (which is tailormade for our development) Pass or Fail. If you pass the test, you go on to the next stage of spiritual life. If you fail the test, you may have the privilege of repeating the same test (until you pass). E.g. ‘Paul’s driving tests.’
5. *“Let patience (endurance) have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”* What does it mean? Don’t try to prematurely end the trial. Every trial has a set expiry date in it. If God started it, God will end it. We feel as though our trial will go on forever, but God always ends it in His time. Why? God knows how much we can bear. He is never too late. He is never too early. He is always just on time. We can be confident that God knows our limits. He will not allow us to be broken under its weight by being tested beyond our strength, but He will always make the way of escape so that we can bear it.
6. You may not feel like you are up to the test, but God knows you and you may be surprised by how much weight you can lift. Job had no idea why he was being tested [cosmic debate between God & Satan about man’s capacity to love God]. *Job went through so much. But God knew what Job could endure. Job had to pray for his friends. You may have to pray for (bless) those who have been used as instruments of trials as the last step in your trial.*

“My son, do not despise (make light) the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged (faint) when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” (Heb 12:5-6)

7. Understand the purpose of your trial: *“For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful;’ nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:10-11)*

If we give an altar call for two special anointings - one line for the laying on of hands to instantly impart all the blessings that God has for you, and the other line for you to accept the trials God has for you, one line will be much longer than the other. God can move through either way. But David after having been anointed by Samuel had to go through trials to mature.

What does having the peaceable fruit of righteousness and holiness look like? Perhaps it sounds like a heart confession, *“Lord, why are you so good to me?”*

Amen.

D. Questions:

1. What is the difference between trial and temptation? How do you know the difference?
2. Are you going through a time of trial? What have you learned that you can apply in your situation?