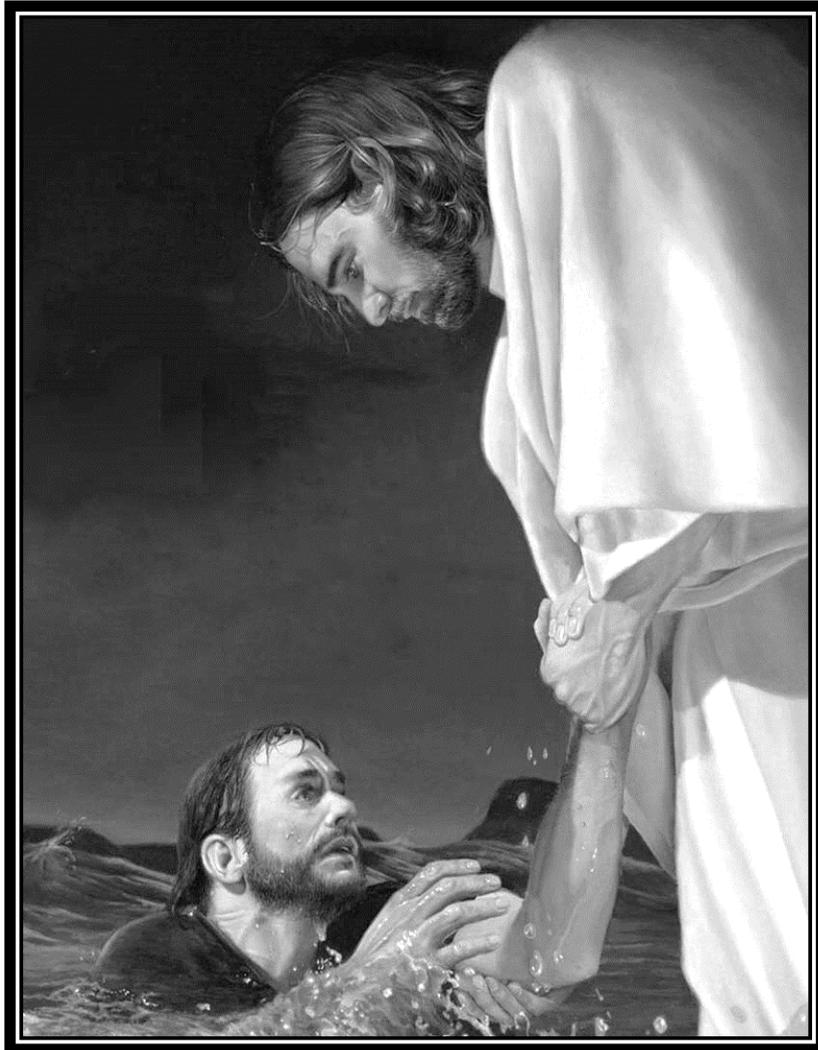


Temptations, Trials and Deliverance

Purpose of suffering



Raj Kumar. Ch



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Are you sorely tempted? Are you in despair? Are you ready to give up?
You need to read on... This incredible message is meant, just for you....

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I. The Origin of suffering

*It was in mid-July when Heart breaking and horrific scenes overstepped all human norms and limits. "Heads separated from the bodies... Charred corpses... body parts scattered... sand colored in red and the smell of blood devastates everywhere. The heavy black smoke floats in the sky of Gaza, flames rising from the rubbles of the destroyed houses, though, rockets and missiles whistling is still in the air. Tragic real scenes of displaced children, the pain of casualties who the hospitals could not accommodate, no tombs to bury corpses, survivors looking for their families inside the rubbles and others sorrowful for the loss of their siblings, families, loved ones and even souvenirs! These are the scenes of death, blood, destruction, devastation, pain, suffering, sorrow and in parallel some scenes of joy for those who survived this massacre."*¹

Truly, a shocking description of an awful human tragedy! Our stomachs churn within us, as we probe for answers regarding the mystery of violence, suffering and death. In our sincere search, we discover that ever since the fall of man, sickness, suffering and death have been the lot of mankind. No one is immune to the dreadful consequences of disease, destruction, abuse, atrocities, rebellion, crime, violence, and decease. In spite of our best efforts, it is tragically true that the sighing and groaning of humanity has only multiplied with time in increasing rapidity.

Way back in Old Testament time, Prophet Jeremiah laments in anguish and sums it up with these aching words: *"For these [things] I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed... Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city... when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom... The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, [and] no man breaketh [it] unto them"* (Lamentations 1:16; 2:11, 12; 4:4).

What a pitiable and miserable state of those helpless victims !!!

Sadly, this is the dreadful condition of the sin-sick world we live in. Our hearts break and heads spin, seeing innocent lives struggle for survival, amid the mindless massacre by the terrorist outfits, while we helplessly salvage the remains of a distressed society. Our wounded hearts are touched with suffering that surrounds us, so much so, that we are eager and ever so anxious to know, the reason for such insurmountable suffering and chaos.

Whenever sickness, death and devastation rob us of our loved ones, when the oppression of the underprivileged goes unrestrained, we are distraught, crushed, bruised and broken beyond tears. We wonder whether we have become mere spectators or, targets of a seamless cascade of human woe. Especially, when we have become victims of assault, abuse, depression and gloom, we often blurt out in desperation ... "Why me"? "What have I done to deserve this"? "Is there someone who understands"? "Does God even care"? "Why does He allow bad things to happen to good people".....?

¹ By Mounir Saada, Gaza, <http://othersite.org/mounir-saada-gaza-the-pain-and-suffering-and-the-human-tragedy-2/>





Charles Darwin, the famous naturalist, struggled with this very same idea and concluded, *“That there is much suffering in the world no one disputes... A being so powerful and so full of knowledge as a God who could create the universe, is to our finite minds omnipotent and omniscient, and it revolts our understanding to suppose that his benevolence is not unbounded, for what advantage can there be in the suffering of millions of the lower animals throughout almost endless time?...”*

Yet, he answers his own contradiction by saying ² *“If all the individuals of any species were habitually to suffer to an extreme degree, they would neglect to propagate their kind; but we have no reason to believe that this has ever, or at least often occurred. Some other considerations, moreover, lead to the belief that all sentient beings have been formed so as to enjoy, as a general rule, happiness”...* - Charles Darwin views on God, religion and religious belief from his autobiography and letters.

Like Darwin, many others cry out in their heart’s searing anguish for answers to questions like . . . Why is there sickness, suffering and death? How did it originate? What is its final outcome? Do we have a respite from this inevitable, inescapable tragedy?

Only in understanding this, can we find real meaning to life, in order to live with courage, fortitude and hope. It is then that we rise from the dungeons of despair, to the zenith of triumph from loathing gloom to exuberant joy.

Come, let us delve a little deeper to unveil the origin, the purpose of temptations, trials and suffering.

a) The Origin of sin

“To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love...Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil” – Great Controversy, p. 493.

Suffering has resulted as a consequence of sin. It originated in heaven, due to pride, self- exaltation, distrust in God and His wisdom. Lucifer, the chief of the angels, rebelled against God and His laws. The Bible says: *“Thou (Lucifer) [wast] perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee”* (Ezekiel 28:15). *“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation”* (Jude 1:6), joined the rebellion along with Lucifer against their Creator. Sin, thus entered the universe through rebellion against God, His rule and the deliberate misrepresentation of the character of God. Finally, this insurgence was carried down to this earth by Lucifer, who became Satan through rebellion.

The book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of this episode. *“This great dragon--the ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world--was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.”*(Revelation12:9, 12, NLB). In this conflict, man fell into sin by joining with Satan in distrusting God and disobeying Him. Through Satan’s temptations, man cast his allegiance on the side of Satan in rebellion against God.

“Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4), Adam and Eve, our first parents, through transgression, handed over their authority and dominion to Satan, the enemy of God and became subservient to his rule. In this way, *“by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”*(Romans 5:12). Thus, our sinless world was darkened by sickness and suffering and death.

² http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/philosophy/darwin_god_religion_religious_belief.html





Although, “the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

“Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer.” - *Councils on Health*, p. 168.

“Ever since the fall of man, Satan has been sowing the seeds of error. It was by a lie that he first gained control over men, and thus he still works to overthrow God's kingdom in the earth and to bring men under his power” – Christ Object Lesson. P.36.

Some blatant facts about sin is that, no one can sin and get away from it because it is corrosive, it infiltrates insidiously and destroys exponentially. Sin touches all and demolishes everyone in its path, hence no one can escape its fatal grasp. God alone is capable of rescuing us from its malignant destruction, therefore, Jesus bore the brunt of our sin. “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. “With His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5), -*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

b) God's purpose in suffering

In spite of such a horrible outcome that had encircled our sinless world, God's amazing plan was to redeem us from this terrible disaster of sickness, suffering and death through Jesus Christ.

³*“A true story is told about the sacrifice of three brave people. In 1986, a sudden surge of power during a reactor systems test destroyed Unit 4 of Chernobyl's nuclear power plant, spewing massive amounts of deadly radioactive material into the environment. Chernobyl blowings were the equivalent of 1000 Hiroshimas and Nagasakis together. The death toll was unknown and rumored to be anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand. Steam pipes became flooded with a highly radioactive liquid that was in danger of blowing up. While many perished, three clean-up volunteers – Alexi Ananenko, Valeri Bezpoalov and Boris Baronov, suited up in scuba gear and swam into the radioactive waters of the flooded chamber, knowing full well they would die as a result. They opened up a gate valve, which allowed the contaminated water to drain out”. Consequently they perished due to radiation yet saved thousands from disaster. Knowing the gruesome consequence that they would not come out unscathed but suffer imminent miserable death due to radiation, the volunteers plunged into the deadly irradiated jaws of death”. All this was done to save the lives of others. They sacrificed their own lives unselfishly for others.*

Similarly, as the irradiation of sin enveloped the earth, there was a redeemer. “As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour....There was not a human being in the world who was without sin. The Son of God stepped down from His heavenly throne, laid off His royal robe and kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity. He came to die for us, to lie in the tomb as human beings must, and to be raised for our justification. He came to become acquainted with all the temptations wherewith man is beset.” - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 13.

“It was through the desire for self-exaltation that sin entered into the world, and our first parents lost the dominion over this fair earth, their kingdom. It is through self-abnegation that Christ redeems what was lost.” – *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 17.

Even in our lost condition “God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners” and because “we were restored to friendship with God

³ http://www.oddee.com/item_98945.aspx





by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life” (Romans 5:8; 5:10, NLB).

“It is a wonderful thing that after man had violated the law of God and separated himself from God, was divorced, as it were, from God --that after all this there was a plan made whereby man should not perish, but that he should have everlasting life. . . . God gave His only-begotten Son to die for us....” - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 11.

In this plan “Christ was under no obligation to make this great sacrifice....Voluntarily He pledged Himself to bear the punishment due to the transgressor of His law. His love was His only obligation, and without a murmur He endured every pang and welcomed every indignity that was part of the plan of salvation.” - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 43.

c) More than recovery from sin

Although sin brought such disastrous consequences, it was not beyond the control of God. “By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but **in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen.**

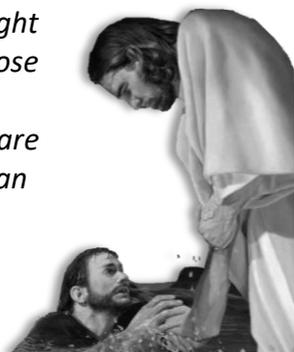
In taking our nature, **the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.** Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son” (John 3:16). He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race...**God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature.**” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

“Those who in the strength of Christ overcome the great enemy of God and man, will occupy a position in the heavenly courts **above angels who have never fallen**”- *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 243. “**Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God.**” -*The Desire of Ages*, p. 26.

Through “*the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life. Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners. But because one other person (Jesus) obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight. So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 5:17-21, NLB).

Having reconciled us to God through His infinite sacrifice, Christ desires to transform our character and make us perfect in Him. “*Of His people God says, "They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land"* (Zechariah 9:16, 17). The exaltation of the redeemed will be an eternal testimony to God's mercy. “*In the ages to come, He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*” “*To the intent that . . . unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known . . . the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Ephesians 2:7; 3:10, 11).

How glorious and grandiose is His plan for us! God says: “*For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than*





your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). Surely “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). God’s ways are marvelously unfathomable.

d) God under Trial

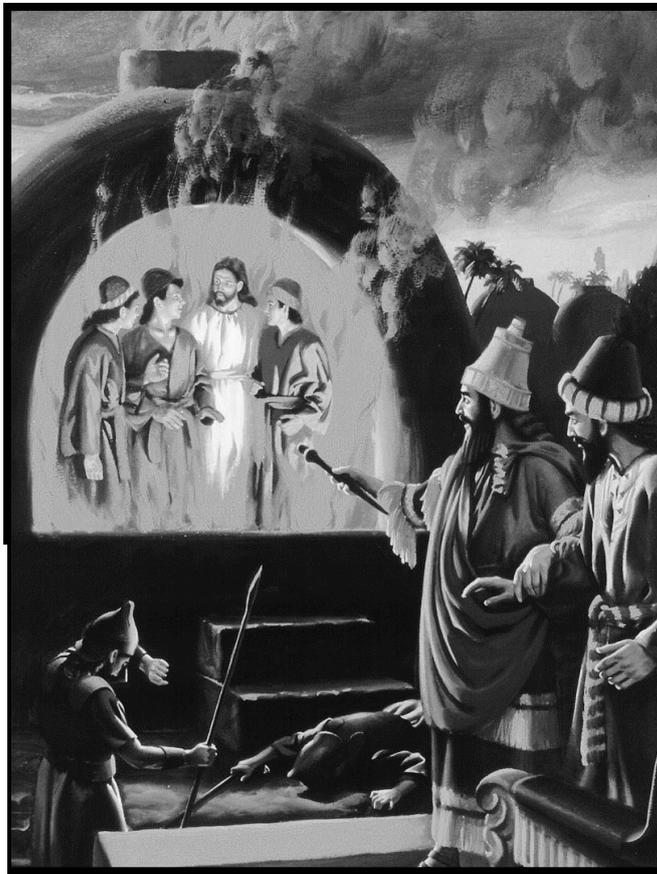
The God of the universe, infinitely loving as He is, has opened himself to be evaluated by all, regarding the issue of suffering and sin. He places Himself in ‘a platter’ as it were, to be judged, interrogated, and scrutinized by His own creatures.

In spite of being misrepresented and maligned by the arch enemy Satan, who portrays God to be evil, ruthless, impotent, unkind, unmerciful and unmindful of the misery that ravages mankind, God has given us the time and opportunity to evaluate Him.

Every creature, including Satan, his agents, atheists, infidels, hypocrites, ungodly men, pious people, rich, poor, free and bond can see the wisdom and works of God and pronounce whether what He does is in the best interest of all, and if this wonderful God is worthy of our trust.

Indeed, every one born on this earth has to answer this essential question: “Can we trust God completely?” “Is He just and merciful in His dealings?” “Is He capable of handling the complex problem of sin, suffering and death?” This issue has to be settled in the light of the eternal sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

One day, when all is said and done, heaven will be filled with people who will trust God to the utmost and than anything say like Job, *me, yet will I trust (Job13:15) and experience the outcome of trials, suffering. That is tongue (would) Jesus Christ [is] glory of God the (Philippians 2:11).*



love Him more else. They will “*Though he slay in him*” would know by glorious pain and when “*every confess that Lord, to the Father*”





“When thou passest through the waters, I [will be] with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2).

2) The Purpose of Trials and Temptations

Having considered God’s plan in the restoration of this planet Earth, it would be appropriate for us to ask a few more questions like, “Why should anyone go through temptations, trials and suffering? Are they truly essential? What is the purpose of suffering?”

a) Temptation - (trial or test):

The word ‘temptation’ comes from the root word ‘**Maccan**’ which means ‘testing’ or ‘trial’. It denotes a time of evaluation and examination. The meaning becomes clear in the texts given below regarding who is testing whom:

- "But, O LORD of hosts, **that triest the righteous, [and] seest the reins and the heart**" (Jeremiah 20:12).
- "But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, **that triest the reins and the heart**" (Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 17:10).

God tests the hearts of the people, not because He does not know them, but rather, that they themselves may understand who they really are both inwardly and outwardly.

A fitting example is seen in the life of Hezekiah where the Bible says: *“Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit in [the business of] the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was [done] in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all [that was] in his heart”* (2 Chronicles 32:31, 32).

The above passage clearly shows that God does not tempt or instigate anyone to fall. On the other hand, He tries (tests) our hearts, to reveal the “inner motives and desires” to us, as seen in the life of Hezekiah.

In another passage, Moses reminds the Israelites, *“thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, **to humble thee, [and] to prove thee, to know what [was] in thine heart**, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every [word] that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”* (Deuteronomy 8:2, 3). Israelites were tested to





reveal the true condition of their hearts.

James is forthright when he says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). But, "God sends trials to prove who will stand faithful under temptation. He brings us into trying positions to see if we will trust in a power out of and above ourselves. **Everyone has undiscovered traits of character that must come to light through trial.** God allows those who are self-sufficient to be sorely tempted that they may understand their helplessness. He suffers the deep waters of affliction to go over our souls, in order that we may know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, in order that we may have deep heart longings to be cleansed from defilement, and may come forth from the trial purer, holier, and happier. - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 279.

"It is in mercy that the Lord reveals to men their hidden defects. He would have them critically examine the complicated emotions and motives of their own hearts, and detect that which is wrong, and modify their dispositions and refine their manners.

God would have His servants become acquainted with their own hearts. In order to bring to them a true knowledge of their condition, He permits the fire of affliction to assail them, so that they may be purified"... **"The trials of life are God's workmen to remove the impurities, infirmities, and roughness from our characters, and fit them for the society of pure, heavenly angels in glory...The fire will not consume us, but only remove the dross, and we shall come forth seven times purified, bearing the impress of the Divine."** - *My Life today*, p. 92.

b) Temptation is not sin

It may come as a surprise to many that "Temptation is not sin; the sin lies in yielding. To the soul who trusts in Jesus, temptation means victory and greater strength." - *Our High Calling*, p. 87. Temptation is simply a test, a provocation to disobey God and therefore does not constitute sin. Yielding to temptation and disobeying God is sin. Nonetheless, how then, do we yield and fall into sin?

The Bible outlines the origin and the manner of committing sin. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14, 15).

We who are born in this world of sin have a nature contrary to God's way. We are inherently "self-centered and self-seeking" and all our decisions are influenced by that "craving nature" called "lust" to have its own way. When this craving or lust gets the approval and sanction from the higher center – "the mind", the two unite (lust & mind), leading to conception (pregnancy) of sin, which ultimately ends in death.

Desire/Lust + Consent of the mind (Conception) ⇒ Sin (the end result of sin) (Consequence) = Death

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8). When we sow seeds of lust in our mind the sure harvest is corruption and destruction. But empowerment by the Spirit brings holiness which leads to Eternal life.

[Power of the Holy Spirit]		
No union		
<u>Desire/Lust</u> (Temptation)	X	<u>No Consent of the mind</u> (Enlightened & Empowered mind)
		Holiness = Everlasting life





In this conflict "No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin." - *Testimonies to the church, vol. 5, p. 177.*

The starting point in the process of sin, or "the beginning of yielding to temptation is in the sin of permitting the mind to waver, to be inconsistent in your trust in God. The wicked one is ever watching for a chance to misrepresent God, and to attract the mind to that which is forbidden. If he can, he will fasten the mind upon the things of the world.

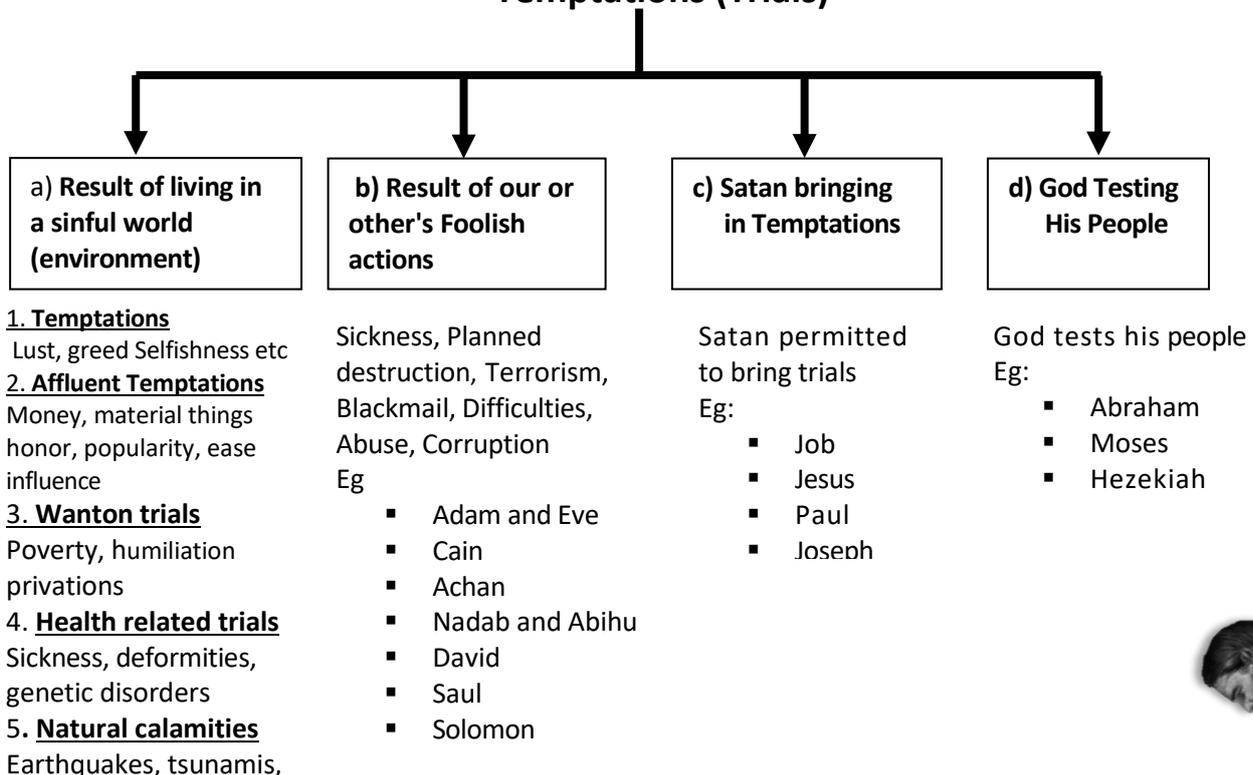
He will endeavor to excite the emotions, to arouse the passions, to fasten the affections on that which is not for your good; but it is for you to hold every emotion and passion under control, in calm subjection to reason and conscience. Then Satan loses his power to control the mind." - *Our High Calling, p. 87.*

Let us understand this:

Temptations, trials, and difficulties take place due to four basic reasons. They occur:

- As a result of living in a sinful environment (The World).
- As a result (consequence) of our own/other's foolish or irresponsible actions.
- As a result of Satan tempting and instigating us.
- When God specifically tests a few people.

Temptations (Trials)





Once, the disciples asked Jesus, when they saw a man, who was blind from his birth, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” They asked this because “It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 471. Jesus removed the confusion by answering, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3).

Even today, many still have the misconception that the reason why children suffer and are born with deformities is because God is punishing them for their parent’s sin. God eliminates this misunderstanding by saying “*The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own goodness, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness. But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my laws and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die. All their past sins will be forgotten, and they will live because of the righteous things they have done. “Do you think, asks the Sovereign LORD that I like to see wicked people die? Of course not! I only want them to turn from their wicked ways and live. However, if righteous people turn to sinful ways and start acting like other sinners, should they be allowed to live? No, of course not! All their previous goodness will be forgotten, and they will die for their sins”* (Ezekiel 18:20-24, NLB).

c) Suffering: a test for others.

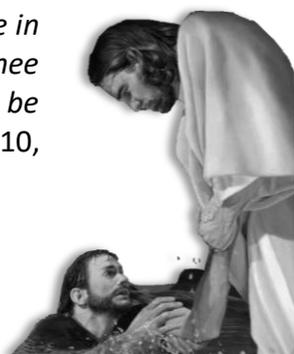
Another reason why suffering is allowed by God is because, He uses the suffering of one individual as an opportunity of the privileged (advantaged/affluent person), to help the unprivileged. The poverty and the suffering of a person is a test for the rich to relieve the wants of the needy.

We see this illustrated in the example of the Good Samaritan. Both the Priest and the Levite had equal opportunity to help the wounded Jew, but they passed by the suffering man.

The Samaritan, though considered an outcast by the Jews, had compassion on the dying man and thereby used the opportunity to help him. In this way he was able to partake of the divine nature of ‘benevolence and self-sacrifice’.

“Those who selfishly spend the Lord's gifts on themselves, leaving their needy fellow creatures without aid and doing nothing to advance God's work in the world, dishonor their Maker. Robbery of God is written opposite their names in the books of heaven” “There are today close beside us many who are hungry, naked, and homeless. A neglect to impart of our means to these needy, suffering ones places upon us a burden of guilt which we shall one day fear to meet. All covetousness is condemned as idolatry. All selfish indulgence is an offense in God's sight.” - *Christ Object Lesson*, p. 266, 261.

“God now entrusts men with means, with talents and opportunities, that they may be His agents in helping the poor and the suffering. He who uses his entrusted gifts as God designs becomes a co-worker with the Saviour. He wins souls to Christ, because he is a representative of His character” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 523. God promises, “[if] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness [be] as the noon day: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isaiah 58:10, 11).





d) Nature and suffering

Many have wondered why nature and the animal kingdom is subject to suffering when they have not contributed to sin.

The answer is explicitly given in the Bible where it says *“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected [the same] in hope,”... “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now”* (Romans 8:20, 22). As a result of man’s sin, nature fell under the curse of sin. The cruelty and the brutality seen in the animal world, is the evidence of the consequence of sin. Yet *“the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”* (Romans 8:21, 19).

“For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are...All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay” (Romans 8:19,21, NLB).

When the restoration of the earth after Christ’s return occurs, the nature will then be recreated and restored.

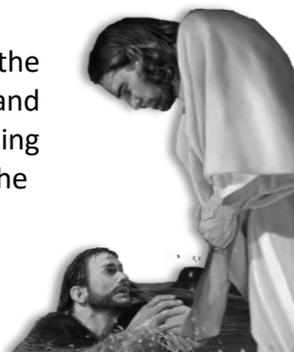
e) Trials permitted by God

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, acknowledged in her prayer that, *“The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, [and] lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set [them] among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth [are] the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them”* (1 Samuel 2:7, 8). She understood that all the circumstances were well-ordered by God, whether it be riches or poverty, high or low position. All these are under the control of His omnipotent hand. Therefore, in either way, ‘trials and temptations’ **are experienced only because, God has allowed them.**

In the book of Revelation, God encourages the church of Smyrna saying *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10). Satan may try his utmost in bringing relentless trials and difficulties, but all he can do is only cause physical suffering. He cannot stain the character if we are faithful to give up our lives for God. Jesus assures us, *“fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”* (Matthew 10:28-31).

A fitting example is seen in the life of Job, where Satan had to seek God’s permission and approval to destroy his possessions, his children or even to harm him (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-6). When tried immensely through the loss of property, loss of children and excruciating pain, his unshakable testimony had been ***“Though He(God) slay me yet will I trust Him, the Lord has given and the Lord hath taken blessed be the name of the Lord”***(Job 13:15;1:21). It should therefore encourage us to know that Satan cannot have his own way over God’s people.

But when people persistently refuse to be under God’s divine care by rejecting the light and instruction given by Him, it is then that God ‘gives up’ on that person and allows them to have their own way. In other words God honors their choice of refusing Him. The person at that point, comes under the direct control of Satan, who takes the





liberty to harm him.

The Bible says “*And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, ‘God gave them over’ to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient*” (Romans 1:28). “Fearful is the condition of those who resist the divine claims, and yield to Satan’s temptations, until God gives them up to the control of evil spirits. But those who follow Christ are ever safe under his watch care. Angels that excel in strength are sent from Heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about his people.” – *The Great Controversy*, p. 517.

f) Measured trials

Although God permits these trials, He measures and regulates every single circumstance so intricately, that every trial is ‘tailor-made’ according to the individual’s ability to bear it. It is unreasonable and unthinkable that God would enforce any trial on any one beyond their capacity to withstand.

The scripture reinstates clearly, “*that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it*” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT).

While “Each one has his own battles to fight, his own Christian experience to gain, independent in some respects from any other soul; and God has lessons for each to gain for himself that no other one can gain for him... **Our heavenly Father measures and weighs every trial before He permits it to come upon the believer.** He considers the circumstances and the strength of the one who is to stand under the proving and test of God, and **He never permits the temptations to be greater than the capacity of resistance...** Christ never failed a believer in His hour of combat. The believer must claim the promise and meet the foe in the name of the Lord ” - *Our High Calling*, p. 323.

The promise is crystal clear that no one will ever be “brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist. God made such ample provision that man need never have been defeated in the conflict with Satan.” – *The Faith I Live By*, p. 82.

Thus, every trial in the above mentioned categories are allowed by God and measured according to one’s ability to bear it. In fact, God Himself stands by our side to strengthen us. What a tremendous assurance from an Almighty God!

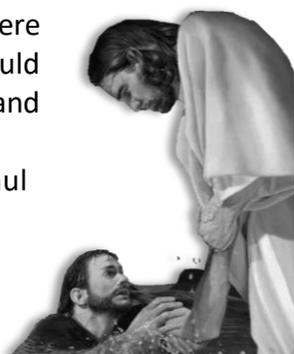
Apostle Paul testifies to this fact saying, “***the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and [that] all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion***” (2 Timothy 4:17). Surely God empowers us amazingly.

g) The Importance of temptation

Often we wonder, if it possible for God to save us without permitting us to be tempted? We question, “Why can’t an omnipotent God save us into His kingdom, without putting us through trials and difficulties?”

Although these queries are logical, however, the answer is a categorical NO! There will be no one found in heaven (after attaining the age of understanding) who would not have gone through difficulties or who had not been subjected to “temptations and trials”.

Let us look at several passages from the Bible to highlight this point. Paul





encouraged the Christians regarding the importance of tribulations saying, "***We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God***" (Acts 14:22). This thought is boldly reinforced again, "***For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake***" (Philippians 1:29). Therefore, it must be counted a privilege by every Christian, to suffer for Him.

To the church at Thessalonica he writes, "*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, **having received the word in much affliction**, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia*", and that "*No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto*" (1 Thessalonians 1: 6, 7; 3: 3).

This statement should not distress us a bit because, "While the Lord has not promised His people exemption from trials, He has promised that which is far better. He has said, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33:25). . . If you are called to go through the fiery furnace for His sake, Jesus will be by your side even as He was with the faithful three in Babylon. Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet". . "They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory" - *Reflecting Christ*, p. 365.

Jesus made this point adequately clear when He gave the illustration of the "Vine and the branch" in John 15:1-2, saying, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, **he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit***".

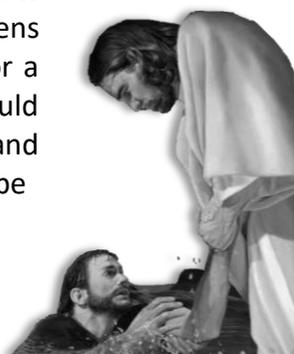
According to Jesus every one falls into one of the two categories:

- 1) Those that do not bear fruit.
- 2) Those that bear fruit.

The ones who does not bear fruit are removed, cut off and "*cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast [them] into the fire, and they are burned*" (verse 6) while those who bear fruit are "purged" or "pruned" (through trials and circumstances) so that they can bear more fruit. Thus the process of Pruning (through trials) is done to produce abundant fruit. If we can fully grasp this, it would transform our outlook towards trials and remain unshaken even under severe catastrophes.

"One evening a gentleman who was much depressed because of deep affliction was walking in a garden, where he observed a pomegranate tree nearly cut through the stem. Greatly wondering, he asked the gardener why the tree was in this condition, and he received an answer that explained to his satisfaction the wounds of his own bleeding heart. "Sir," said the gardener, "this tree used to shoot out so strong that it bore nothing but leaves. I was obliged to cut it in this manner; and when it was almost cut through, it began to bear fruit." - *My Life Today*, p. 93.

Thus, "In every affliction God has a purpose to work out for our good. **Every blow that destroys an idol**, every providence that weakens our hold upon earth and fastens our affections more firmly upon God, is a blessing. The pruning may be painful for a time, but afterward it "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." We should receive with gratitude whatever will quicken the conscience, elevate the thoughts, and ennoble the life. The fruitless branches are cut off and cast into the fire. Let us be





thankful that through painful pruning we may retain a connection with the living Vine.” - *My Life today*, p. 93-94.

The tremendous encouragement is that those who are going through trials, in reality belong to the category of those who bear fruit”, His beloved ones; and the purpose of being “purged” or “pruned” is to bear more abundant fruit and not to destroy them. Therefore, “*My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son [in whom] he delighteth*” (Proverbs 3:11, 12). “*Behold, happy [is] the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty*” (Job 5:17). Jesus admonished us saying, “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

Although temptations and trials are unpleasant to us, they are allowed **to make us perfect**. It is something similar to ‘gravity’ or ‘friction’. Without gravity, life as we know cannot exist. Similarly, without friction, everything slips. These laws in the physical world accomplish a great deal of good. In the same way, trials and temptations give us the grip to strengthen our spiritual life.

Here are some powerful texts pertaining to the will of God in relation to our character perfection:

- “*I [am] the Almighty God; walk before me, and **be thou perfect***” (Genesis 17:1)
- “*Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect***” (Matthew 5:48).
- “*But every one that is **perfect** shall be as his master*” (John 6:40).
- “*Always labouring fervently for you in prayers, **that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God***” (Colossians 4:12).
- “*That **the man of God may be perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:17).
- “*Now the God of peace . . . Make you **perfect** in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen*” (Hebrews 13:20, 21).

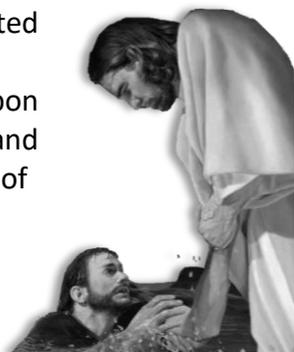
The above mentioned verses makes it clear that God’s definite plan for our lives, is to make us “**perfect**” in Christ, in this world.

If this is true, how can we, despicable sinners, achieve this goal of perfection? How can this plan of God be accomplished in our lives?

Here is how it is done, although man in Eden lost his perfect and sinless state through disobedience, God’s design and plan did not change. Redemption and restoration of man was set in operation through Jesus Christ, to reclaim what was lost.

It has been Satan’s orchestrated plan, from the beginning, to tempt us and cause our downfall. Once this is accomplished, he wants us to accuse God for our defeat, suffering and death. In this way he separates us from God. “Very often it is the studied ploy of Satan to magnify before us the trials and tribulations that come to us, and thus make us believe that God has overwhelmed us with great difficulties. We should never allow Satan to come between us and God... If you permit him to do this, he will tell you that your troubles are the most grievous, the sorest troubles that any mortal ever bore. He will place his magnifying glasses before your eyes, and present everything to you in an exaggerated form to overwhelm you with discouragement.” - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 266.

“The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us, He was to give an example of





obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences.” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

h) Perfect character and perfect nature

Many have been confused regarding the concept of “perfection” and when it actually happens. There are three types of perfections that must be clarified.

1) *Absolute Perfection* 2) *Character perfection* 3) *Nature perfection*.

That God is absolutely perfect (Absolute perfection) is acknowledged by one and all. Whereas the distinction between “**Character perfection (Perfect Character)**” and “**Nature perfection (Perfect nature)**” must be understood by everyone.

Because of our wrong choices our character had been stained with sin. Therefore, “*Character perfection*” is the virtue that must occur here on this earth before Jesus comes back the second time. Sadly, a lot of people are looking forward for “character perfection” after Jesus comes, which, in reality, does not happen. “Character perfection” through God’s power must be obtained here on this earth, before Christ comes. This is the reason why God gives us a temporary life (time) on earth. The Apostle Paul understood this when he said that God has appointed the church as a “production center” in order that “*we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13). This “perfection of character” should be and must be obtained by everyone before they are taken to heaven.

On the other hand “*Nature Perfection*”, is the transformation of (Nature) i.e. mortal bodies that are subject to sickness and death are changed to immortal, perfect bodies which occur only at Jesus' second coming (nature perfection).

Sick and dying bodies are transformed to immortal (not subject to death) bodies at His coming. These two distinctions must be clearly understood by everyone.

‘Character perfection’ is possible for every sincere believer here and now. Hence, we should not only value temptation which helps in character development, but should “greatly rejoice” (1 Peter 1:6), and “Count it all joy” (James 1:2), when we face trials. Every temptation is aimed at making us more like Jesus and “partakers of his divine nature” (2 Peter 1:3, 4). This “Christ-like life” is the fitness needed for heaven that God is willing to produce in our own lives. Trials are therefore allotted to every person whether rich or poor, honest or dishonest, good or bad, free or bond in order to obtain this perfection of character, here on this earth.

Often, many pious people imagine that because they are honest and righteous, they should suffer less. On the contrary, the Bible says “*all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Timothy 3:12). Thus, the more they resemble Christ, the more they partake of Christ’s suffering. Even though, they may not be tried in a certain areas like being dishonest (because they are upright), they will be tried in other areas like showing discrimination, seeking honor, or being self-righteous. Thus, every one, whether pious or impious, have equal opportunity to be tried and become like Jesus. In this way, God's Master plan in defeating the purposes of Satan and redeeming fallen man will be accomplished.

The brilliant design of God is in allowing the ‘temptations and trials’ that Satan throws at us, to work out for our good, and make us perfect.

i) God’s impeccable plan

How does God, in reality, accomplish this “Master design” of defeating the purposes of Satan? This is what God does, He arranges, regulates and allows every circumstance





in a way that these trials which are meant to discourage and destroy us, bring victory and triumph. God's plan is that every trial and tribulation no matter how horrible and fearsome it may be, should be 'recycled' back to accomplish 'only good' for us. This is the wonderful gospel that brings liberation.

None need be discouraged or disheartened because God has taken the challenge upon Himself to turn every trial that comes our way, for our good. *"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose"* (Romans 8:28). Hence, our trust in God is restored, even amid trials and difficulties.

What a wonderful assurance this is! Apostle Paul admonishes Timothy in similar words, *"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but **be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God** Who hath saved us, and called [us] with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Timothy 1:8-10).

When we submit to God, we become overcomers even amidst the worst of trials. Instead of retaliating, grumbling and murmuring, we gladly allow self to die by taking hold of God's strength. Then, by faith we are cleansed from earthliness and become Christ-like in character.

This is the perfection God intends each one of us to attain in our lives. This is the '**Alpha plan**', or the 'top-drawer' blueprint God has for us. "Not without a purpose does God send trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as workers together with Him. He subjects them to discipline to humble them, to lead them, through trial and affliction, to see their weakness and draw near to Him. . ." - *Our High Calling*, p. 322.

"If we have defects of character of which we are not aware, He gives us discipline that will bring those defects to our knowledge, that we may overcome them." - That I May Know Him, p. 282. "It is a great kindness on the part of our heavenly Father when He allows us to be placed under circumstances that lessen the attractions of earth, and lead us to place our affections on things above. **Frequently, the loss of earthly blessings teaches us more than their possession**"... **"Because "God will not suffer one of His truehearted workers to be left alone to struggle against great odds and be overcome. He preserves as a precious jewel every one whose life is hid with Christ in God."** - *Our High Calling*, p. 327, 322.

Yes, this way God does remarkably more than we ask or think because the Word of God promises, *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"* (Ephesians 3:20). Furthermore *"God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work"* (2 Corinthians 9:8).

This is the total victory which is possible to obtain, through the grace of God.

What an amazing God we serve!





	Patience	earthly dross)
(Suffering)	(Inner strength)	(Cleansing and Perfection)

This magnificent plan is the most prized possession and accomplishment we can ever desire on earth. No wonder the scriptures says, "*That the **trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold** that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*" (I Peter 1:6, 7).

"If we overcome our trials, and get victory over the temptations of Satan, then we endure the trial of our faith, which is more precious than gold, and are stronger and better prepared to meet the next. But if we sink down and give way to the temptations of Satan, we shall grow weaker and get no reward for the trial, and shall not be so well prepared for the next. In this way we shall grow weaker and weaker, until we are led captive by Satan at his will." -*Christian Experience and Teachings*, p. 103.

Similarly, James exhorts us, "*My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing [this], that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have [her] perfect work, that **ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing***" (James 1: 2-4).

"*God's discipline is always good for us so **that we might share in His holiness***" (Hebrews 12:10, NLB).

j) How valuable is every temptation?

Temptations and trials are extremely important because they are designed to strengthen our spiritual muscles and make us perfect, in the will of God.

Temptation benefits in the following ways:

- 1) Humbling one self
- 2) Strengthening faith.
- 3) Building up patience.
- 4) Comforting others struggling with similar temptations
- 5) Sharing in His Holiness
- 6) Making us perfect, entirely and wanting nothing

"The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked has been a cause of great perplexity to many who are weak in faith. Some are even ready to cast away their confidence in God because He suffers the basest of men to prosper, while the best and purest are afflicted and tormented by their cruel power. How, it is asked, can One who is just and merciful, and who is also infinite in power, tolerate such injustice and oppression? God has given us sufficient evidence of His love, and we are not to doubt His goodness because we cannot understand the workings of His providence. Said the Saviour to His disciples, foreseeing the doubts that would press upon their souls in days of trial and darkness: "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." John 15:20.

"Jesus suffered for us more than any of His followers can be made to suffer





through the cruelty of wicked men. **Those who are called to endure torture and martyrdom are but following in the steps of God's dear Son... He does not forget or neglect His children;** but He permits the wicked to reveal their true character, that none who desire to do His will may be deceived concerning them. Again, **the righteous are placed in the furnace of affliction, that they themselves may be purified; that their example may convince others of the reality of faith and godliness;** and also that their consistent course may condemn the ungodly and unbelieving.” – *The Great Controversy*, pp. 48.

k) Incredible outcome: Death to self and the life of Jesus

The incredible outcome of overcoming trials and temptations outlined in the Bible is, *“Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be obvious in our dying bodies. That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!”* (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11, 16, 17, NLB). Yes, trials give us an opportunity to die to self and helps in the development of the life of Christ. *“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.** For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh... but though our outward man perish, yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day”*** (2 Corinthians 4:11, 12, 16, KJV).

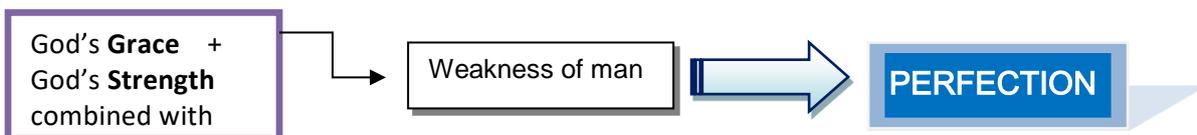
When we allow self to die, automatically the life of Jesus would be developed in our lives and we grow into the measure of the stature of Jesus Christ.



This is the wonderful outcome of facing trials because “the life of Jesus” will be produced in our weak mortal body.

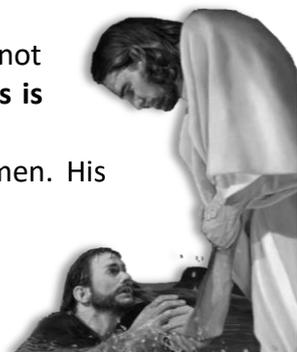
Thereby, we have the privilege of portraying the life of Jesus and thus receive the crown of life. The promise is *“Blessed [is] man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”* (James 1:12).

Can this glorious outcome be ours? Most assuredly! Paul describes that he himself had a “thorn in the flesh” (trial), for which He pleaded the Lord three times that it might depart from him. *But the Lord responded, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* It was at this juncture he recognized, that the ‘thorn in the flesh’ was permitted by God to make him perfect. He understood that God's **grace** and **strength** are combined with the weakness of man to make him perfect.



“The Lord permits His people to be subjected to the fiery ordeal of temptation, not because He takes pleasure in their distress and affliction, but because **this process is essential to their final victory.**” -*The Faith I live By*, p. 317.

“Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His





children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised; for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, and those who honor God shall be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels." - *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 33.

"Perfection of Christian character can be obtained only through labor, conflict, and self-denial. We do not always count upon this, and do not consider the painful and often protracted process of purifying necessary for us in order that we may be conformed to the image of Christ." - *Our High Calling*, p. 313. **"The Lord brings His children over the same ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility fills the mind, and the character is transformed; then they are victorious over self, and in harmony with Christ and the Spirit of heaven.** The purification of God's people cannot be accomplished without suffering. . . . He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. True grace is willing to be tried." "The fire will not consume us, but only remove the dross, and we shall come forth seven times purified, bearing the impress of the Divine." - *My Life Today*, p. 92.

Apostle Paul having realized this says, "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong*" (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).

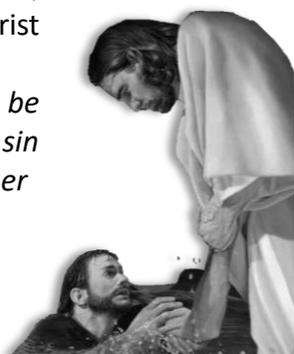
He goes on to say, that because our weakness is changed to strength through God's grace, "*being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat*" (1 Corinthians 4:12, 13). "*[We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed: [we are] perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed*" (II Corinthians 4:8, 9). "*As unknown, and [yet] well known; as dying, and, behold, we live: as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things*" (2 Corinthians 6:9, 10). God wants to bring this rich blessed experience into our lives.

The only way to gain such an experience is to respond or react to every circumstance, the way Christ reacted in similar situations.

We have to follow the "Christ-like" way which is possible only when self is dethroned and Christ is enthroned; when self has lost its mastery over us and no longer dictates us. It is then that in every trial, there will be pleasantness instead of petulance and gloom. Graceful words instead of grudging, blessing instead of cursing, honesty instead of hypocrisy, compassion instead of coldness and confidence in God instead of cowardice. **"It is no small thing to be a Christian and to be owned and approved of God."** – *The Faith I Live By*, p. 317.

God leads us to this "wealthy place" by allowing the trials to accomplish its desired work. It is then that our life will be filled with the richness of Christ-like attitude. His victory can be ours, when temptations are taken seriously, as an opportunity to overcome and become like Christ. "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." - *The Faith I live By*, p. 114. Through self-distrust, self-surrender and reliance on the strength of God, we shall overcome as Christ overcame. Such is the glorious possibility for every one of us.

Paul puts it appropriately when he says, "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither*





yield ye your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness unto God. .. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6: 11-13, 18).

A fitting illustration is given in the Bible regarding the nation of Moab where God says, *“Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed” (Jeremiah 48:11).*

Right from its birth, things had gone well with the nation of Moab, causing them to be at ease. They had not been “emptied from vessel to vessel,” had not gone through hardships and difficulties. Therefore, they had become stale and began to stink. They had not gone through the process of purification through trials and difficulties like the nation of Israel. Hence God says, Moab had become utterly worthless. Emptying and being poured from vessel to vessel, being tossed about, helps in the purification process. The sediment and dross is segregated, and the fluid becomes purer and fresher as it is transferred from vessel to vessel.

This is how it is with trials. They only make us more pure and fresh for the kingdom of God. When we allow temptations to come to us and overcome them through the power of God, we can say like Paul *“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” (Romans 8:18).*

*“Christ desires nothing so much as to redeem His heritage from the dominion of Satan. But **before we are delivered from Satan's power without, we must be delivered from his power within**”. **“The Lord permits trials in order that we may be cleansed from earthliness, from selfishness, from harsh, unchristlike traits of character.Often we enter the furnace of trial with our souls darkened with selfishness; but if patient under the crucial test, we shall come forth reflecting the divine character.** When His purpose in the affliction is accomplished, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Ps. 37:6), - *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 174.*

I) Workshop of Hewing, squaring and polishing

Look at the amazing work God does in our lives. “By God's mighty cleaver of truth we have been taken from the quarry of the world and brought into the workshop of the Lord to (be hewed and shaped and) be prepared for a place in His temple. In this work the hammer and chisel must act their part, and then comes the polishing. Rebel not under this process of grace. You may be a rough stone, on which much work must be done before you are prepared for the place God designs you to fill. You need not be surprised if with the hammer and the chisel of trial God cuts away your defects of character. He alone can accomplish this work. **And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow.**” - *The Faith I Live By*, p. 317.

“The axe, the hammer, and the chisel of trial are in the hands of One who is skillful; they are used, not to destroy, but to work out the perfection of every soul. As precious stones,





polished after the similitude of a palace, God designs us to find a place in the heavenly temple.” - *Testimonies to the Church*, vol, 6, p. 363.

“Christians are Christ's jewels. They are to shine brightly for Him, shedding forth the light of His loveliness. Their luster depends on the polishing they receive. They may choose to be polished or to remain unpolished. But everyone who is pronounced worthy of a place in the Lord's temple must submit to the polishing process. Without the polishing that the Lord gives they can reflect no more light than a common pebble... The divine Worker spends little time on worthless material. Only the precious jewels does He polish after the similitude of a palace, cutting away all the rough edges. This process is severe and trying; it hurts human pride. Christ cuts deep into the experience that man in his self-sufficiency has regarded as complete, and takes away self- uplifting from the character. He cuts away the surplus surface, and putting the stone to the polishing wheel, presses it close, that all roughness may be worn away. **Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master sees in it a reflection of Himself, and He pronounces it worthy of a place in His casket.**” - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 267.

m) The end of our self-life

Often God waits on the side lines till we come to the end of ourselves, before He can take over and transform us. For this to happen, we might have to go through the process of ‘toiling all night and catch nothing’ like Peter (Luke 5:5), before the miracle of abundance occurs. Probably, we are too strong in ourselves, our opinions, our capabilities, our impression and our reputation that God has to shatter these and bring us to nothingness, before He can bless us. Then, we will not glory in ourselves and our greatness, but in God alone. Often God puts us on our back, so that we can look up to Him.

Jacob wrestled all night with the Angel, till his thigh was touched and dislocated. It was then that he clung to God totally and said, “I will not let you go till thou bless me”, (Genesis 32:26). That was when Jacob “a grabber” became “Israel”- the prince who overcame.

The disciples of Jesus, who were expert fishermen struggled to steady the boat against the tempest, till they were about to drown. When they gave up on themselves and cried “Master we perish” (Luke 8:24), Jesus calmed the storm. Peter a seasoned fisherman and an expert swimmer had to give up and cry out “Lord save me” (Matthew 14:30), before Jesus could save him from drowning.

Yes, the quicker we come to the ‘end of ourselves’ the faster will be our deliverance and triumph. “There is, then, no ground for men to take glory to themselves. For every blessing which they enjoy, for every good quality which they possess, they are indebted to the grace of Christ. None should exalt themselves as possessing wisdom or righteousness. . . Those who have the deepest experience in the things of God, are the farthest removed from pride or self-exaltation. They have the humblest thought of self, and the most exalted conceptions of the glory and excellence of Christ. . . . When we have our eyes fixed upon heaven, and have clear views of the character of Christ, we shall exalt the Lord God in our hearts” –Sons and Daughters of God, p. 235.

n) Pain a gift, a blessing!!!

Can Pain be a blessing? How can anyone consider pain to be an advantage, let alone a gift? Dr Ravi Zacharias, an international apologist, wonderfully sums it up this way: ⁴

⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/18/magazine/ashlyn-blocker-feels-no-pain.html?_r=1





“Not far from my home lives a young woman who was born with a very rare disease called CIPA, congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis. You cannot feel physical pain.” (CIPA is caused by a mutation to the TrkA(NTRK1) gene. “Pain-sensing nerves along the body’s surface normally fire more frequently when we touch something hot or sharp, sending electrical signals to the brain, causing us to react. These electrical signals are generated by molecular channels produced by the SCN9A gene, says Stephen G. Waxman, a professor of neurology at Yale University School of Medicine... mutation prevents the gene from making the channel, and the electrical impulses are never produced.”)

“That sounds as if it would be a blessing. But the reason it’s a problem is that she (the young woman) lives under the constant threat of injuring herself without knowing it. If she placed her hand on a burning stove, she would not know she had just burned her hand except by looking at it. She needs constant vigilance because she could sustain an injury that could take her life or cause serious debilitation.

When her family was interviewed some years ago, the line I most remember is the closing statement by her mother. She said, ⁵ “I pray every night for my daughter that God would give her a sense of pain...The pain of pain clasps the lifesaving hand of God and draws us into God’s arms”.

“Her life story offers an amazing snapshot of how complicated a life can get without the guidance of pain,” “Pain is a gift.” Says Dr. Roland Staud, a professor of medicine and rheumatologist at the University of Florida.

“Many would feel that it would be a great thing not to feel physical pain. Pain though is a way one’s body tells it that something is wrong” says Dane Inouye.

If we are not convinced about it, just look at a leper whose digits and toes have fallen off because of insensitivity to pain, and is finally left with mere hapless stumps over the upper and lower limbs to carry on with daily life. Life is beyond mere argument!

Yes, God uses pain to draw us closer to Him and to help us understand the depravity of sin and its devastating effect on His creatures. He also wants us to know, how a loving God is intrinsically connected with us in suffering.

Some of the most amazing words penned in the Bible are, “Jesus Wept” (John 11:35). Certainly, Jesus Himself, the creator, felt the pain of suffering, sickness and death.

He wept beside the grave of His friend Lazarus and sympathized with the suffering. *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows”*. (Isaiah 53:4). There is no grief greater than that of Jesus; there is no sorrow that surpasses the Savior. Before we despise pain, we must know as finite beings that God is more than capable of using pain for our good and bring out the best from the worst of circumstances. We need to trust the Master designer.

o) Suffering helps to Comfort others

Having understood the wonderful lessons of trials and temptations, we are now equipped to comfort others who face similar circumstances.

Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians saying, *“All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. **He (God) comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. You can be***

⁵ by Ravi Zacharias [HTTP://RZIM.ORG/A-SLICE-OF-INFINITY/INTO-GOD’S-ARMS](http://RZIM.ORG/A-SLICE-OF-INFINITY/INTO-GOD’S-ARMS).





sure that the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in suffering, you will also share God's comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3-5, NLB).

"Those who have borne the greatest sorrows are frequently the ones who carry the greatest comfort to others, bringing sunshine wherever they go. Such ones have been chastened and sweetened by their afflictions.... . Let us all forget self as much as possible, cultivate cheerfulness, seek to brighten the lives of others, and we shall then have less desire to complain of our own lot... Let us search out the rays of sunshine that have brightened our pathway, and linger over their memory with grateful hearts. Let us dwell upon the matchless love of Christ, for in Him we have a constant theme of rejoicing." - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 273.

p) Nothing can separate us from God.

No matter how great a tribulation we may face, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God or His protection? "Even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed...The thorn and the thistle--the difficulties and trials that make his life one of toil and care--were appointed for his good as a part of the training needful in God's plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses. "God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass.

The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green -- all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy." - *Steps to Christ*, p. 9, 10.

"God would not have us remain pressed down by dumb sorrow, with sore and breaking hearts. He would have us look up and behold His dear face of love. The blessed Saviour stands by many whose eyes are so blinded by tears that they do not discern Him. He longs to clasp our hands, to have us look to Him in simple faith, permitting Him to guide us. His heart is open to our griefs, our sorrows, and our trials. He has loved us with an everlasting love and with loving-kindness compassed us about. **We may keep the heart stayed upon Him and meditate upon His loving-kindness all the day. He will lift the soul above the daily sorrow and perplexity, into a realm of peace.**" - *Reflecting Christ*, p. 365.



"There is no comforter like Christ, so tender and so true. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. His Spirit speaks to the heart. Circumstances may separate us from our friends; the broad, restless ocean may roll between us and them. Though their sincere friendship may still exist, they may be unable to demonstrate it by doing for us that which would be gratefully received. **But no**





circumstances, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always there, one given in Christ's place, to act in His stead. **He is always at our right hand, to speak soothing, gentle words, to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul.**" - *Amazing Grace*, p. 195.

In fact, even Satan with all his might and crookedness cannot separate us from the love of God. The Apostle Paul affirms, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:35-39).

"In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They revealed in their steadfast faith a mightier One than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hid with Christ in God. He could incarcerate in prison walls, but he could not bind the spirit. They could look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17), - *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30. It is true that, "Satan attacks us at our weakest points, but we need not be overcome. However severe or unexpected the attack, God has provided help for us, and in His strength we may conquer. In the hour of greatest need, when discouragement overwhelms the soul, then it is that Jesus comes very near. **The hour of man's necessity is God's opportunity.** He sees our danger and provides help for us. . ." – *In Heavenly Places*, p. 266.

Having understood the purpose of temptations, it is important to clarify another question – Did Jesus face temptations like us? Did He need them? Is He our example? This is what we will discover in the next chapter.

3. JESUS AND THE PLAN OF SALVATION

History irrefutably testifies to the fact, that Jesus was born, lived, died and resurrected. All this occurred and was attested by "eye witnesses" accounts who fearlessly affirmed, "*we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty, (2 Peter 1:16).*

Most of them died as martyrs for Christ and even now His followers continue to do so.

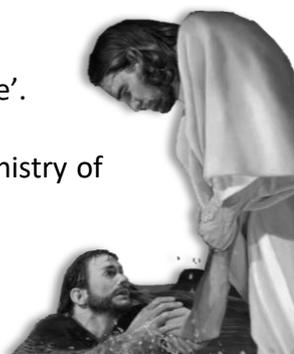
But why would so many give up their lives for Jesus Christ?

The answer is inherently present in the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth and the impact it had made on His followers.

Jesus came to the world to:

- 1) Redeem / Reclaim man from the pit of sin
- 2) Reinstall man to the original purpose of his creation – 'To manifest His Nature'.

The birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and the High priestly ministry of





Jesus, were all meant to accomplish this purpose.

a) Understanding Jesus

Let us understand, who Jesus was, what He accomplished through trials, and how we can obtain salvation through Him.

Jesus, before His incarnation, was the second person of God-Head, the Self existing, omniscient and Omnipotent one. He was not a created being. He was the one who created all things. The Apostle Paul confirms, in (Colossians 1:16,17), "*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: **all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.***" "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds;** "Who being the brightness of [his] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:2,3). Thus, Jesus is the one who created all things and sustains all things.



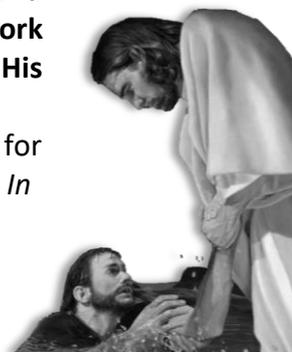
But, "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13), if so, He cannot save mankind while remaining in heaven, unless He became man and was tempted like us. "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on [him the nature of] angels; but he took on [him] the seed of Abraham... Wherefore **in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest** in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that **he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour(help) them that are tempted.***" (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Therefore, Jesus Christ, the second person of God-head, because of his undying love, took the form of humanity for our salvation. This He did, to be tempted and tried like us, and thereby obtain pure, spotless character by overcoming every temptation that human beings may ever face. The Bible says, "*For such an high priest became us, [who is] holy, harmless, undefiled separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" **but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin***" (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26).

God the Father, led Jesus through every range of hardship and grief like us. Although "*He (Jesus) had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the **LORD to bruise him; He {God the Father} hath put [him] to grief***" (Isaiah 53:9, 10).

"Christ became one with humanity, that humanity might become one in Spirit and life with Him. By virtue of this union in obedience to the Word of God, His life becomes their life." - *Sons and Daughters of God*, p.238. Truly, "the humanity of Christ reached to the very depths of human wretchedness and identified itself with the weaknesses and necessities of fallen man, while His divine nature grasped the Eternal. **Christ's work was to reconcile man to God through His human nature, and God to man through His divine nature.**" - *Confrontation* p. 38.

"One equal with God (Jesus), passed through death in our behalf. He tasted death for every man that through Him every man might be a partaker of eternal life." – *In*



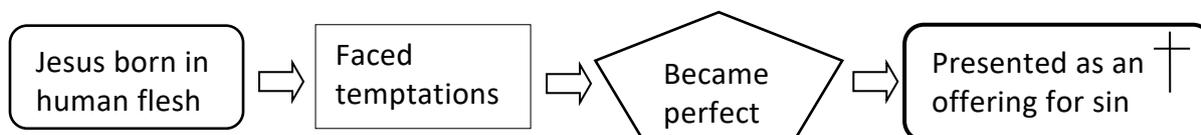


b) Jesus is NO exception

No one would debate or argue about the sinless and perfect life of Jesus. Yet, many of us may not know, how He obtained such a pure and perfect life. When Jesus Christ came to this world in the form of humanity, He had to adhere to the same formulae of obtaining 'Character perfection', through trials and temptations like any one of us. There were no exceptions, or exemptions made by the Father for Jesus to obtain a perfect life. There were no short cuts or instant "quick fix" solution for Jesus. He had to follow the same path of humility and self-denial in trials, and obtain such a sinless impeccable life.

c) Jesus : The Perfect Sacrifice

We all rejoice in the fact that Jesus became a "substitute" and a "sacrifice" on behalf of sinful humanity, to bring salvation to us. But before Jesus could offer Himself on the Cross, there was one condition He had to fulfill. He had to become "sinless" in order to offer himself as a 'perfect sacrifice'. Without being "perfect" His sacrifice would be invalid and insufficient to pay the penalty or ransom for our sins.



It was for this purpose that Jesus came to this earth - to suffer temptations like any one of us and be "sinless" by resisting and overcoming sin. When this was accomplished He could, at that point, offer Himself as a 'perfect sacrifice'. Only such a "pure sacrifice" would be the "perfect substitute" on man's behalf for sin. Hence, Jesus did not take the form of an angel, because angels cannot be tempted the way we are tempted, as they do not have flesh and blood like us. "For verily he took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16).

Yes, it was in our flesh that Jesus overcame sin and became the perfect sacrifice.

d) Jesus: The Lamb without blemish

In the Old Testament, a "lamb without blemish" had to be offered as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. This lamb "without blemish" represented the "spotless character" of the Son of God, who would one day come and give His life as a ransom for the sins of the world. Just like the lamb that had to be blameless and without defect, Jesus had to become faultless and perfect before offering Himself as a sacrifice.

But how could Jesus as a man become "perfect?" The only way, was to face trials and temptations like man, overcome them, and be made perfect and holy. This formula for the perfection of Jesus was the same as it is for us. For this reason, Jesus had to empty Himself, take the form of humanity, and become perfect through trials like any one of us. Only then could He become the "Perfect Substitute" to bear the sins of the world.

The Bible says "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8,9).





e) Jesus Emptied Himself

The essence of Christianity lies in the fact that Jesus had to be born as man (incarnation) in order to be a perfect example and save us from sin. In other words, He, as the Omnipotent God, had to “empty Himself”. But, what did Jesus empty himself of, when He became man?

Jesus emptied Himself of the “**prerogatives of the Godhead**” and took the lowest place among men. He had to leave the prerogatives such as *omniscience*, *omnipresence*, and *omnipotence*, which He had with the Father and become man. It was only then that He could mingle with us as a man. “But (Jesus)made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”. Philippians 2:2-5.

For example, just like a millionaire’s son who would not want to use the credit card he had with him, in spite of all the bank account in his possession, Jesus did not use the privileges of Godhead when he was on this earth. So completely, He had emptied Himself that “He (Christ) left His home of security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe. He went forth, a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood, the seed of life for a world lost” – Christ Object Lessons, p. 36.

Jesus had to go through the process of growing and learning even from His birth because He emptied himself of the prerogatives of Godhead. He had to be taught by His mother to understand the scriptures like anyone else. All his experiences on earth were similar to mankind; He had no additional advantage above anyone else. “Through all the lowly experiences of life He consented to pass, walking among the children of men, not as a king, to demand homage, but as one whose mission it was to serve others. There was in His manner no taint of bigotry, no cold austerity... Jesus emptied Himself, and in all that He did, self-did not appear.” -*The Mount of Blessing*, p. 14.

“The gift of God to man is beyond all computation. Nothing was withheld. God would not permit it to be said that He could have done more or revealed to humanity a greater measure of love. **In the gift of Christ He gave all heaven**”- *Amazing Grace*, P. 176. Yet, in His incarnation (taking the form of Man) Jesus is both **GOD + MAN**.

On occasions, for the benefit of the people, He used the supernatural gifts like miracles and signs, only as the Father allowed Him to use. In this way He condescended to our level.

Since, Jesus is both GOD and Man, our response should be as follows:

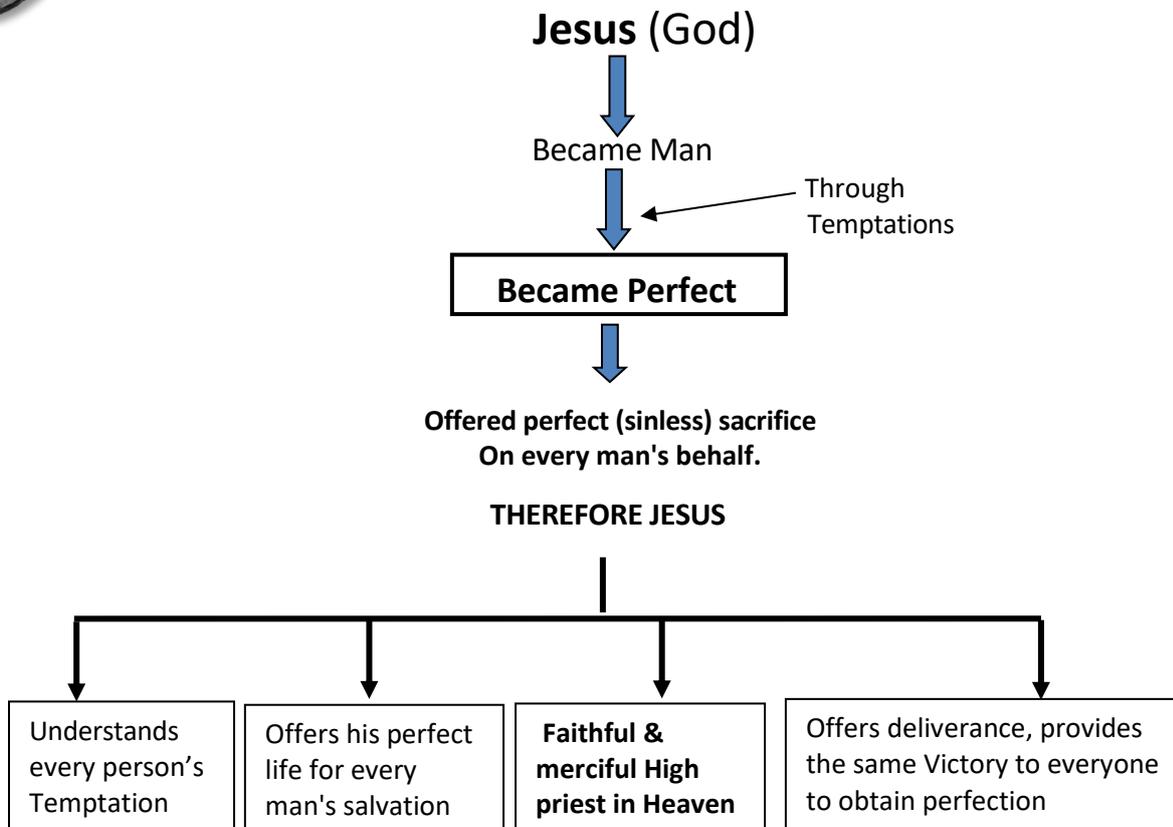
As God, He deserves our adoration, reverence, praise and worship.

As Man, He has this relationship with us:

- a) **Our substitute**: Jesus became our substitute and our sacrifice. He took our place to offer us pardon and clothe us with his righteousness (Justification).
- b) **Our Forerunner**: Jesus became the example for us to emulate. He now presents before us His life as an example, offers us His strength to follow Him and be transformed into His likeness (Sanctification).

Therefore “We are called not only to worship Christ as God, but also to follow Him as a Man” - *Living as Jesus Lived*, p.6.





Jesus went through similar experiences like us, *"For in that He Himself (Jesus) hath suffered being tempted",* hence *"he is able to succor them that are tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18).

He also understands us since *"we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but **was in all points tempted like as we are** yet without sin. **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"*** (Hebrews 4:14, 15). We can have the boldness to go to God for help.

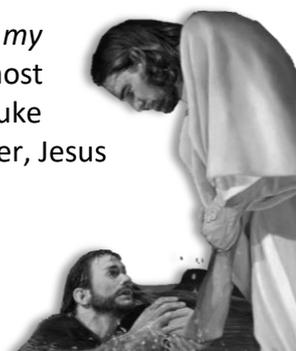
f) Inconceivable anguish

Often we ask the question, "Why is there so much pain, suffering, sickness and death? If there is a God of love why does He allow it to happen? Does He understand? Or is He helplessly waiting to see us wriggle out of it?"

The amazing answer is that God cares enough, because He personally suffers with us.

Even when this world was in its infancy *"God saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually...and **it grieved Him at His heart"*** (Genesis 6:5, 6). Every sin, however small, affects God and hurts Him immensely. Can we comprehend that! God experiences "grief" and "pain" even though we have wronged Him. Hence, He chose to come down to our level, into this sin darkened world, to share the pain of suffering for you and me.

Jesus once told His disciples, *"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations."* (Luke 22:28). In the garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus faced the most severe trial, He prayed "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me:" (Luke 22:42). The answer to this, was not a shielding or prevention from the trial, but rather, Jesus





was strengthened to go through it by an angel. "*And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him*" (Luke 22:43). The angel did not come to remove the cup of suffering but to strengthen Jesus to take it. Jesus suffered an unimaginable anguish, which no human being had ever been through or will ever be. Therefore in comparison, no one can ever say that they suffer more or that God does not understand. He understands us perfectly, even when we go through the darkest moments of our life.

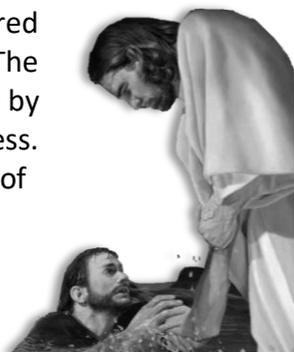
"It was through infinite sacrifice and inexpressible suffering that our Redeemer placed redemption within our reach. He was in this world unhonored and unknown... During His thirty years of life on earth His heart was wrung with inconceivable anguish. The path from the manger to Calvary was shadowed by grief and sorrow. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, enduring such heartache as no human language can portray. He could have said in truth, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. 1:12).

Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world. Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty. Innocent, yet offering Himself as a substitute for the transgressor. The guilt of every sin pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world's Redeemer. The evil thoughts, the evil words, the evil deeds of every son and daughter of Adam, called for retribution upon Himself; for He had become man's substitute. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." - *Amazing Grace*, p. 172.

"He who came to redeem the lost world was opposed by the united forces of the adversaries of God and man. In an unpitiful confederacy, evil men and evil angels arrayed themselves against the Prince of Peace. Though His every word and act breathed of divine compassion, His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility. Because He would give no license for the exercise of the evil passions of our nature, He aroused the fiercest opposition and enmity. So it is with all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. **Between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood, there is an irrepressible conflict.** When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is drawing away the subjects of Satan's kingdom, and the prince of evil is aroused to resist it. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ. The character of the persecution changes with the times, but the principle--the spirit that underlies it--is the same that has slain the chosen of the Lord ever since the days of Abel." - *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29.

Once a boy was complaining about the quality of the shoes he had, and thought that he was suffering great insult among his friends. In reply, his father turned his attention to a lame boy, who did not have limbs to put shoes on. In comparison, the boy's suffering paled into insignificance. He then understood, that actually, he had nothing to complain, but was enjoying a greater privilege than the lame boy.

"With many the story of the condescension, humiliation, and sacrifice of our divine Lord awakens no deeper interest . . . than does the history of the death of the martyrs of Jesus. Many have suffered death by slow tortures; others have suffered death by crucifixion. In what does the death of God's dear Son differ from these? . . . If the sufferings of Christ consisted in physical pain alone, then His death was no more painful than that of some of the martyrs. But bodily pain was but a small part of the agony of God's dear Son. The sins of the world were upon Him, also the sense of His Father's wrath as He suffered the penalty of the law transgressed. It was these that crushed His divine soul. . . . The separation that sin makes between God and man was fully realized and keenly felt by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary. He was oppressed by the powers of darkness. He had not one ray of light to brighten the future. . . . It was in this terrible hour of





darkness, the face of His Father hidden, legions of evil angels enshrouding Him, the sins of the world upon Him, that the words were wrenched from His lips: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

"What a price has been paid for us! Behold the cross, and the Victim uplifted upon it. Look at those hands, pierced with the cruel nails. Look at His feet, fastened with spikes to the tree. Christ bore our sins in His own body. **That suffering, that agony, is the price of your redemption.**" - *Amazing Grace*, p. 171, 172.

What amazing love !!! What more could He do to convince us that He understands and cares for us? What more should He do to make us trust Him more? When we realize all this, dare anyone complain that they suffer more? Can anyone say that there is no one who comprehends their problem?

There is no suffering greater than Christ's, no sorrow deeper than His, no anguish and alienation meaner than the Saviour's. "Nature could not witness such a scene as Christ dying in agony while bearing the penalty of man's transgression. **God and the angels clothed themselves with darkness, and hid the Saviour from the gaze of the curious multitude while He drank the last dregs of the cup of God's wrath.**" - *Volume 5, Bible Commentary*, p. 1108.

"The thought that Christ died to obtain for us the gift of everlasting life, is enough to call forth from our hearts the most sincere and fervent gratitude, and from our lips the most enthusiastic praise" – *Sons and Daughters of God*, p.239.

"When Christ bowed His head and died, He bore the pillars of Satan's kingdom with Him to the earth. He vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory. The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature. The power of the Saviour's Godhead was hidden. **He overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power.** This is the privilege of all In proportion to our faith will be our victory." - *Bible Commentary*, p. 1108.

Since Jesus suffered and was tempted like us, the advantages we have are:

1) **He understands us :**

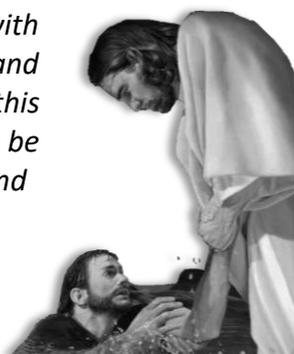
In every trying circumstance, Jesus comprehends the mental, physical and emotional trauma that anyone goes through. He understands what it feels like to be in heartbreaking and embarrassing situations (Hebrews 4:15).

2) **Saves to the uttermost:**

He (Jesus) is able also to save (us) to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Hebrews 7:25). Because Jesus became perfect through trials and temptations, He is the author of our salvation. He says, "*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37). No one who comes to him will ever be driven away. We have the assurance of total support from our Saviour.

3) **Faithful and merciful High priest:**

Jesus is **the only one mediator** between God and man. He is our faithful and merciful High priest or mediator. "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world*" (1 John 2:1, 2). "*For this [is] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For [there is] one God, and*





one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:3-5).
"Seeing He (Jesus) ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25; 4:14).

Our Savior Jesus, is the all sufficient intermediary and advocate. There is therefore, no need for Mary, saints, priests or other intercessors to be negotiators between God and man. Since Jesus overcame sin, lived a pure life, died on the cross and rose again on our behalf, He alone can fulfill the role of the **mediator** and the **intercessor**. "*Surely he hath borne our grief's, and carried our sorrows...He was wounded for our transgressions, He (Jesus) was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:4, 5). Therefore, "*By his knowledge shall my righteous servant (Jesus) justify many; for he (Jesus) shall bear their iniquities*" (Isaiah 53:11). Hence, pilgrimages, penances, confessionals, rosaries and rituals to obtain favor or forgiveness from God are not required. We can go to God directly, through Jesus Christ wherever we are in prayer, and have the assurance that He will hear us.

4. Strengthens us:

The consolation we have from the example of Jesus is that, if we are sincere in our desire to overcome as Jesus overcame, God will send the angels, if necessary and strengthen us to overcome every hindrance and obstacle. "The pitying Saviour stands right by your side to help you. **He would send every angel out of glory while you are struggling to overcome sin**, so that Satan cannot have the victory over you." - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 263.

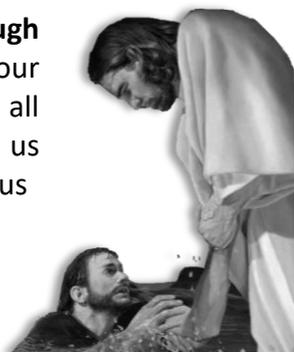
"God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such a one, rather than allow him to be overcome... Angels are ever present where they are most needed, with those who have the hardest battle with self to fight, and whose surroundings are the most discouraging". "He has not forsaken us, leaving us to grapple with the power of the enemy in our own finite strength. Heavenly angels fight our battles for us, and cooperating with them, we may be victorious over the powers of evil." - *Sons and Daughters of GOD*, p. 35, 53.

g) Overcoming as Jesus overcame

"Christ took man's human nature upon Him that He might come right down to man in the temptation wherewith man is beset. The pitiful Redeemer knows just how to help us in every one of our strivings." - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 263. The apostle Peter wrote, "*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that **ye should follow his steps**: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*" (1 Peter 2:21 – 24).

Further the Bible says that Jesus "died for all, that they which live **should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him** which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

"Jesus has not only redeemed us through His death, but also shown us through His life on earth, how God intended man to live. He is not only our savior but our forerunner". "He has given us an example of how to live at all times and in all situations, in perfect obedience to God". "The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to show us the Glory of the Lord Jesus in the scriptures (the mirror) – and then seeks to change us





into that likeness” - *Living as Jesus Lived*, p. 6, 7.

“There was never one who walked among men more cruelly slandered than the Son of man. He was derided and mocked because of His unswerving obedience to the principles of God's holy law... They hated Him without a cause. Yet He stood calmly before His enemies, **declaring that reproach is a part of the Christian's legacy**, counseling His followers how to meet the arrows of malice, bidding them not to faint under persecution” - *Reflecting Christ*, p. 366.

“**While slander may blacken the reputation, it cannot stain the character.** That is in God's keeping. **So long as we do not consent to sin, there is no power, whether human or satanic, that can bring a stain upon the soul**” . . - *Reflecting Christ*, p. 366.



Anyone “who beholds Christ in His self-denial, His lowliness of heart ...The independence and self-supremacy in which we glory are seen in their true vileness as tokens of servitude to Satan... But he who learns of Christ is emptied of self, of pride, of love of supremacy, and there is silence in the soul. Self is yielded to the disposal of the Holy Spirit. **Then we are not anxious to have the highest place. We have no ambition to crowd and elbow ourselves into notice; but we feel that our highest place is at the feet of our Saviour.** We look to Jesus, waiting for His hand to lead, listening for His voice to guide...” -*The Mount of Blessing*, p. 15.

This is our calling in Jesus – the Christ-like transformation. The word of God is clear concerning God’s plan, to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). **“As Christ in His humanity sought strength from His Father, that He might be enabled to endure trial and temptation, so are we to do.** We are to follow the example of the sinless Son of God. We are to cast our helpless souls upon the One who is ready to help us in every time of need. Too often we forget the Lord. Self gives way to impulse, and we lose the victories that we should gain.” -*In Heavenly Places*, p. 50.

Every event and circumstance in our life is intended by God, to mould and transform us a little more into the likeness of Jesus. Our Father in Heaven and the Holy Spirit in our hearts are both working towards this one goal – to make us like Jesus.

Praise God that Christ came in our flesh, and having accepted the limitations of our flesh, gave us an example to follow.

Since, Jesus as a man, lived a holy, pure life, there is no reason now, why we also cannot “walk as He walked.” Even though we are weak human beings, God offers us the same power of the Spirit, given to Jesus when He lived on this earth as a man. With this power we can live as Christ lived.

“Jesus took our nature, and came to our world marred by the curse of sin, because he loved us. That he might rescue us from the pit of destruction into which we had fallen, he drank the cup of human woe and misery to its very dregs. He resisted all the temptations that Satan can bring to bear upon fallen man, yet without sin, thus showing that none, whether young or old, need feel helpless even when sorely tempted. He encircles us in arms of love and pity, while he grasps the throne of the Eternal, thus connecting us in our sinfulness and helplessness with the infinite God” *Youth Instructor*, May 14, 1884 par. 1.



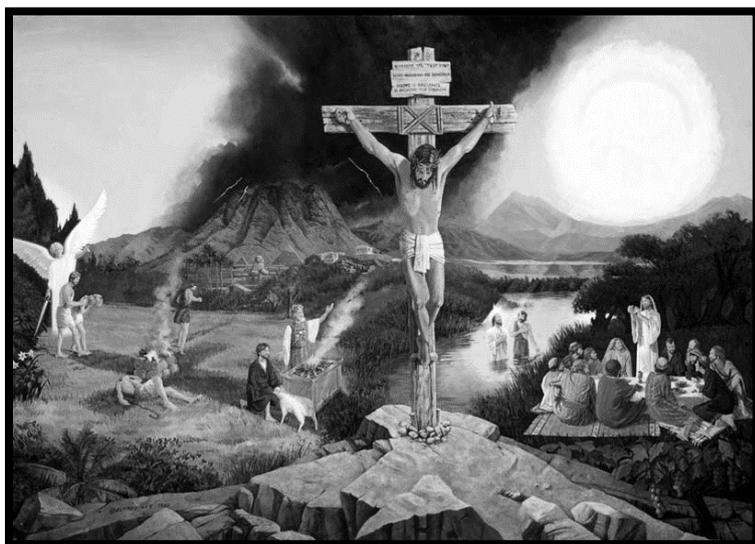


When we see the travail of Jesus, we understand that there is a purpose and an end to suffering. There will never be any one, at any time, who will ever come close to the suffering of Jesus. He not only suffered physically, but mentally and spiritually for our sake. "Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe" - *Desire of Ages* p.756. "The cup of suffering was placed in His hand, as if He were the guilty one, and He drained it to the dregs. He bore the sin of the world to the bitter end. . . . **No line can fathom, no measurement compute, the love revealed by the cross of Calvary**" *That I May Know Him*, p. 369.

Whenever trials assail us, when inconceivable searing pain grips us due to illness and torture, when we see mangled bodies of our loved ones blown apart by the brutish killing of fellow men; when faced with insult, ignominy and deliberate cruelty, we can have the consolation that Jesus, having experienced it beforehand understands us very well. While suffering under deep poverty, debauchery and wantonness, remember there was one who was the poorest among the poor who did not have a place to lay his head. Knowing this, gives us courage amid conflict, consolation amid confusion and strength amid suffering.

It is in the Love of God shown by Jesus on the cross, that we find answers to man's every problem. It is at the cross we see pride, arrogance and self-sufficiency condemned and rebuked. It is here that those with pain and suffering find hope. It is only at the cross that alienation, insult and abuse is understood. It is also there that self-pity and insecurity gives way to trust and confidence in a God, who gave it all at the expense of Himself.

Jesus endured every temptation that can ever come to man. He was tempted "in every

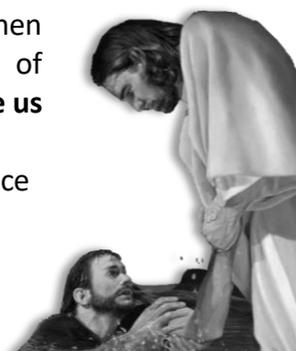


point as we are" (Hebrews 4:15), "Jesus exercised no power that is not offered to us by God today. He met and overcame temptation, as a man, in the strength given to Him by the father through the Holy Spirit". "Jesus demonstrated through His life as man on earth, that the power God makes available to us is sufficient to meet the demands of His law that we see in His word". "The sinless life of Jesus is God's demonstration to

the world that it is possible for man through the power of the Holy Spirit to have full victory over sin and to obey God Joyfully .If we abide in Him, we CAN "walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:8), - *Living as Jesus Lived*, p. 7, 8.

"The road may be rough and the ascent steep; there may be pitfalls upon the right hand and upon the left; we may have to endure toil in our journey; when weary, when longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; when discouraged, we must still hope; but with Christ as our guide we shall not fail of reaching the desired haven at last. **Christ Himself has trodden the rough way before us and has smoothed the path for our feet.**" - *Mount of Blessing*, p. 140.

"Christ's example shows us that our only hope of victory is in continual resistance





of Satan's attacks. He who triumphed over the adversary of souls in the conflict with temptation understands Satan's power over the race, and has conquered in our behalf. **As an overcomer, He has given us the advantage of His victory**, that in our efforts to resist the temptations of Satan **we may unite our weakness to His strength, our worthlessness to His merits**. And sustained by His enduring might, under strong temptation, we may resist in His all-powerful name and overcome as He overcame." - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 251.
 What a mighty God we serve!

Once an old dog, accidentally fell into a dry well, at the edge of a property. The land owner, seeing the dog at the bottom of the well, decided to bury it alive, since it was too old for rescue. Quickly, he brought out his shovel and started throwing mud and filling up the well. After a while, to his surprise, he found the dog emerging from the dirt. It quickly jumped out of the well and ran away. It was then that he realized that each time he threw the dirt, the dog shook itself and stood over it. This way, the dog gradually rose higher and higher till it could jump out of the well.

Do you think that your life is filled with dirt thrown over you by others? By God's grace, if you trust Him, you'll be able to climb out of it. Each temptation, is a stepping stone to rise higher into liberation. Jesus overcame every temptation, so we too can overcome like Him.

h) Suffered in the Flesh

The formula of victory is given here. "*Forasmuch then as **Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh**, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*" (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

"Jesus faced all the enticements to sin that we face every day, and was taken by the Father through every temptation that can ever come to any man...In all those situations, He denied Himself and mortified the desires of the flesh that tempted Him to sin. Thus He consistently "Suffered in the flesh." - *Living as Jesus Lived*, p. 16, 17.

Resist temptation ⇔ **Suffer in the flesh** ⇔ **Die to self** ⇔ **Cease to sin**

"The essence of all sin is found in doing one's own will. And the essence of holiness in a human being is found in denying one's own will and in doing the will of God. This is how Jesus lived...Jesus offered up His human will as a perpetual sacrifice to His Father, even when it meant intense suffering... The significance for us of Jesus facing temptation and overcoming it lies in the fact that thereby He has opened for us a way wherein we may follow Him... The way that Jesus opened, is called, "**the New and Living Way**" in Hebrews 10:19, 20....It was through death to the flesh that the glory of God's Holiness was seen in the Life of Jesus. And there is no other way for us. If we bear this "Dying of Jesus" in our body, then and then alone will that pure and Holy life of Jesus be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10), - *Living as Jesus Lived*, p. 18, 19.

When we see that Jesus came in our flesh and did not sin, then two things happen:

- (1) We no longer have any excuse for sinning or complaining.
- (2) "We too can have faith that we can gain the victory over sin as Jesus did."
 - *Living as Jesus Lived*, p.7, 8.

In principle there are **three basic steps in the process of salvation**:

Justification – Receiving pardon/forgiveness from Jesus through repentance.





Sanctification – Living daily the life of Jesus (Trials are essential in this process).

Glorification - Sinful mortal beings transformed to immortal, sinless beings at His coming.



Temptations and trials are essential ingredients in the process of sanctification which occurs here on earth. As we receive God's power through the Holy Spirit, we become overcomers over every trial and temptation, thus we advance in the process of sanctification.

i) Affluent trials

Many imagine that the "difficulties and privations of life" are the only type of trials that one faces in life. On the contrary, we must understand that trials and temptations come in various colors and forms. Prosperity, influence, affluence, comfortable life, honor, praise, popularity, etc., are even greater temptations than poverty, deprivation and pain. Although "affluence and popularity" are usually not viewed and recognized as trials, these "affluent trials" have a tendency to cause "pride and arrogance" and lessen their dependence on GOD. Jesus warned us regarding this, "*And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are **choked with cares and riches and pleasures of [this] life, and bring no fruit to perfection***" (Luke 18:4). Consequently, many are destroyed spiritually, by not realizing and recognizing that these too are temptations to overcome.

Furthermore there are two reasons why affluence cause a spiritual downfall:

- 1) Pride:** Affluence makes people proud and arrogant. The Bible says, when this happens, "*God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*" (1 Peter 5:5). People who are resisted by God cannot prosper.
- 2) Self-sufficiency:** Those who are prosperous are self-sufficient and have a tendency to depend on their "substance", "material things" and their "influence" to get their way through life. Dependence on Christ and the need for God is not felt, thus they drift away from God.

The Apostle Paul warns, "*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (1 Timothy 6:9, 10). Truly, riches are a snare to those who do not overcome the love of riches, affluence and honor-seeking.

j) What God does not do.

Now that we have understood the purpose of trials, let us clarify one more aspect regarding trials. What is it that God does not do concerning trials?

The clearest answer is that God does not eliminate or remove trials from our lives, because our salvation depends on them. Instead, He does something far better. He





stands by our side, helping us in every difficulty, turning everything amazingly for our good, so much so, that we have nothing to complain.

Let us look at some of the wonderful promises of God.

- "When thou passest through the waters, I [**will be**] with thee;" (Isaiah 43:2).
- "**I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**" (Hebrews 13:5).
- "**I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee**" (Joshua 1:5).
- "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned;" (Isaiah 43:2).
- "**I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you**" (John 14:18).

The tremendous hope in these promises is that, God's presence **will** be with us in every difficulty and discouragement to strengthen us.

King David describes the blessing of such an experience by saying, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word*" (Psalms 119: 67).

How did he come to this conclusion? Having experienced God personally he says, "*For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: **but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy [place]***" (Psalms 66:10-12).

God may not remove the "fires or waters" that come to us. In fact, He may allow us to go through them because, He promises to be with us to deliver us.

God's guarantee is that in the course of these trials, we will be brought into a wealthy place of rich spiritual experience, full of victories through Jesus Christ.

"The LORD [is] good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him" (Nahum 1:7).

Let us see, how this is practically illustrated in the lives of Bible heroes and how they were sanctified through trials.

k) Trials and Bible heroes:

Joseph

Even though Joseph did not commit any misdeed, God allowed him to go through repeated trials, betrayals, reproach and humiliation without having an opportunity to defend himself.

In spite of such a horrible ordeal, this is what he tells his brothers, "*Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life*". "*And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now [it was] not you [that] sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt*" (Genesis 45: 5-8). What an indomitable spirit! What an acknowledgement!

God did not shield Joseph from trial and temptation, but was with him, strengthening him to overcome. He made him an example of patient suffering and victorious living amidst bitterness, cruelty, unfair oppression, revenge and unforgiving attitude.

Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and Daniel





The three Hebrew worthies, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abednego), stood steadfastly for God in defense of His commandments. Yet, God did not prevent them from being thrown into the fiery furnace, which was heated seven times. Instead, God was with them in person and delivered them marvelously. As a result, the proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, came to know the true and Living God (Daniel 3:25).

Daniel is another example of unswerving fidelity towards God. His peers cunningly conspired his destruction. Even then, God did not prevent his enemies from plotting, or from throwing him into the Lions' den. As a prime minister he suffered great humiliation, of being treated as an offender. But God sent His angel to deliver Daniel. As a result, this event also worked out wonderfully, for the salvation of King Darius (See Daniel 6). "From age to age the Lord has made known the manner of His working. When a crisis has come, He has revealed Himself, and has interposed to hinder the working out of Satan's plans. With nations, with families, and with individuals, He has often permitted matters to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked. Then He has made manifest that there is a God in Israel who will maintain His law and vindicate His people." - *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 178.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist, was a forerunner of Jesus, pointing to the "Lamb of God" who would take away the sins of the world. He was called the greatest of the prophets. Yet, God allowed him to be cast into the dungeon and be slain. But before his death, Jesus had comforted and strengthened him, although He did not visit him personally.

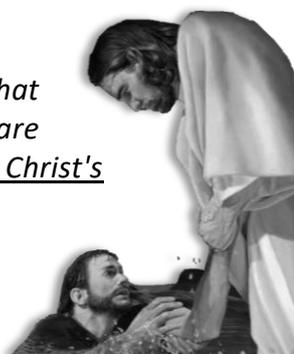
"To many minds a deep mystery surrounds the fate of John the Baptist. They question why he should have been left to languish and die in prison. The mystery of this dark providence our human vision cannot penetrate; but it can never shake our confidence in God when we remember that John was but a sharer in the sufferings of Christ. . Jesus did not interpose to deliver His servant. He knew that John would bear the test.

But for the sake of thousands who in after years must pass from prison to death, John was to drink the cup of martyrdom. As the followers of Jesus should languish in lonely cells, or perish by the sword, the rack, or the fagot...what a stay to their hearts would be the thought that John the Baptist, to whose faithfulness Christ Himself had borne witness, had passed through a similar experience! God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him".... - *Conflict and Courage*, p. 278.

"Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians. 1:29). **And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.**" - *Conflict and Courage*, p. 278.

Paul

Paul recounts his experience and makes this abundantly clear, "*For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it **were appointed to death**: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.*" **We are fools for Christ's**





sake, but ye [are] wise in Christ; we [are] weak, but ye [are] strong; ye [are] honourable, but we [are] despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, [and are] the offscouring of all things unto this day" (1 Corinthians 4: 9 – 13).

Even with all this he goes on to say, "*But in all [things] approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and [yet] true; As unknown, and [yet] well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things"* (2 Corinthians 6:4-10).

"*In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness"* (2 Corinthians 11: 23 – 28). Such was the powerful testimony of Paul.

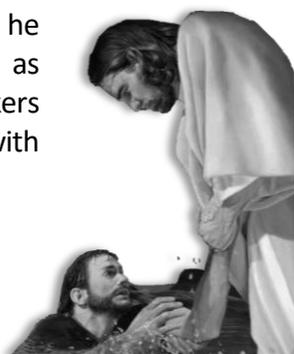
"Paul's life was an exemplification of the truths he taught, and herein lay his power... The love of the Saviour was the undying motive that upheld him in his conflicts with self and in his struggles against evil as in the service of Christ he pressed forward against the unfriendliness of the world and the opposition of his enemies. Paul had never faltered in his allegiance to his Saviour... Wherever he was--whether before scowling Pharisees, or Roman authorities; before the furious mob at Lystra, or the convicted sinners in the Macedonian dungeon; whether reasoning with the panic-stricken sailors on the shipwrecked vessel, or standing alone before Nero to plead for his life--he had never been ashamed of the cause he was advocating. **The one great purpose of his Christian life had been to serve Him whose name had once filled him with contempt; and from this purpose no opposition or persecution had been able to turn him aside.**" - *Conflict and Courage*, p. 356.

Peter

Jesus once said of Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift [you] as wheat: But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not:" (Luke 22:31, 32). Yes, Jesus prayed for Peter, that in the hour of temptation, he would cling in faith to the savior's love and forgiveness. This is what saved Peter ultimately.

"It was to Peter a bitter lesson, and one which he learned but slowly, that the path of Christ on earth lay through agony and humiliation. The disciple shrank from fellowship with his Lord in suffering. But in the heat of the furnace fire he was to learn its blessing.

"Long afterward, when his active form was bowed with the burden of years and labors, he wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13) - *Conflict and Courage*, p. 312. 239





John the Beloved

“In the terrible persecution that followed, the apostle John did much to confirm and strengthen the faith of the believers...(He) was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith...John was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant... Again the hand of persecution fell heavily upon the apostle... By the emperor's decree John was banished to the Isle of Patmos... a barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, had been chosen by the Roman government as a place of banishment for criminals; **but to the servant of God this gloomy abode became the gate of heaven.** Here, shut away from the busy scenes of life, and from the active labors of former years, he had the companionship of God and Christ and the heavenly angels, and from them he received instruction for the church for all future time.” - *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 572

Unnumbered heroes

There are a host of unnumbered heroes in the Bible, who perished under the most forbidding circumstances in ignominy and obscurity. Those heroes “were *tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth*” (Hebrews 11:36-38).

“Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ. Trials and persecution were but steps bringing them nearer their rest and their reward.” -*The Great Controversy*, p. 41.

We too can be counted among this elite group of conquerors.

1) Self-inflicted or sadistic suffering – Not God’s design

Before we go any further, let us unmask this deception regarding sadistic suffering. Self-inflicted pain and suffering is never God’s design for salvation or character building. How often we witness ignorant and innocent people flogging themselves, piercing their bodies with wires, swords and rods dissecting their cheeks, tongues and back to appease their gods. How many have been deceived through false religions and even perverted Christianity, flogging and crucifying themselves in festivities? Women, men & children walking on hot burning coals, sharp nails and glass pieces, can never portray the heart of a loving God. Ritualistic burying of children alive, rolling on hot sand, and walking bare foot on pilgrimage is contrary to God’s plan.

What purpose is accomplished by this self-inflicted suffering? Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is a blatant distortion of a self-sacrificing God of love. Such suffering is a product of ignorance of the God of Love. It relies of appeasement of God, as if He is a stubborn, insensitive tyrant, waiting to avenge the people of their sins.

The answer becomes crystal clear in this passage “*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, [and] bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with*

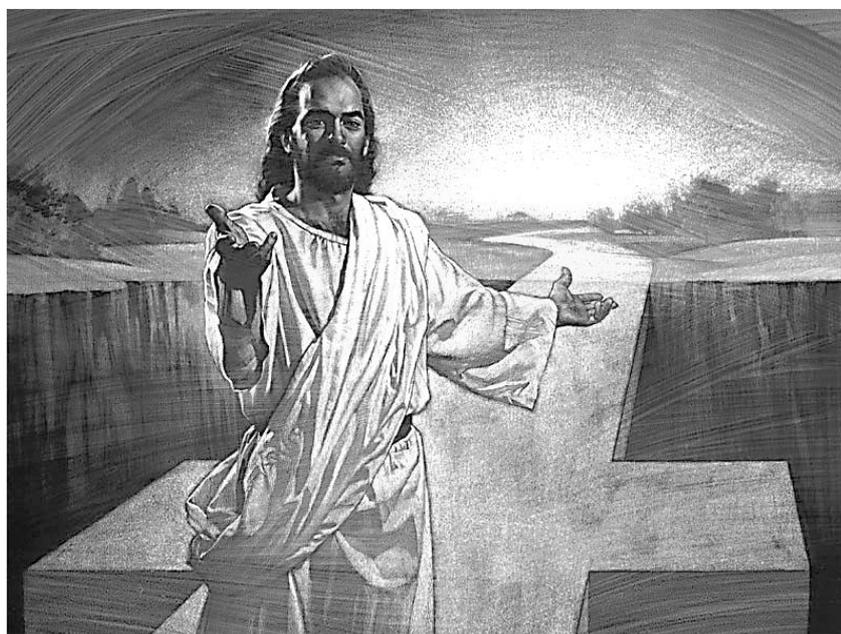




calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, [or] with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn [for] my transgression, the fruit of my body [for] the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:6-8). God will not be appeased with any of these rather "The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17). This is the true offering.

Even the doctrine of eternal torment in hell is blasphemously wrong. How can God, miraculously keep people alive in hell and yet continue to burn them? This is totally an unbiblical concoction, calculated to destroy the faith of people in the God of self-sacrificing love. "[As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live..." (Ezekiel 33:11).

In this context, let us clarify what Jesus meant when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me?" (Matt. 16:24). It means that, "Self-denial and the cross lie directly in the pathway of every follower of Christ. The cross is that which crosses the natural affections and the will. Jesus is our pattern... Jesus will come to us in no other character than that of the meek, crucified One. If we would be with Him in heaven, we must be like Him on earth. Let us follow the Saviour in His simplicity and self-denial. Let us lift up the Man of Calvary by word and by holy living. And to all who lift it and bear it after Christ, the cross is a pledge of the crown of immortality that they will receive." - *The Faith I Live By*, p. 151.



"And he said to [them] all, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 9:23, 24; 14:33).

4. The Cause of Failure – Why do we fail?

Having considered the purpose of trials, let us identify some of the reasons why we fail and are defeated during temptations.

a) Falling into temptations





The book of James admonishes, “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*” (James 1:2, 3). “The Word does not say that we are to count it all joy when we **fall under** temptation, but when we **fall into** temptation.... It is not necessary to fall under temptation, for temptation comes upon us for the trying of our faith. And the trying of our faith worketh patience, not fretfulness and murmuring. If we put our trust in Jesus, He will keep us at all times, and will be our strength and shield. We are to learn valuable lessons from our trials.” - *That I May Know Him*, p. 278.

Falling “under temptation” means that, we are overpowered and overcome by temptation. This occurs, when we depend on self and lose our trust in God. Every temptation is an opportunity for us to become like Christ. But when we “fail or fall” under temptation, we lose an opportunity to become like Christ. Yet, God is faithful, because He allows similar temptations to try us again and again, in order for us to succeed in God’s strength and be overcomers. Thus we become partakers of Divine nature (Christ likeness).

In the Lord’s Prayer, the phrase “*Lead us not into temptation*” means, lead us not into temptation that overwhelms and brings us failure, keeping us away from our natural tendencies to sin. Surely, this should be our prayer too, when we are weighed down under temptations.

Let us now look at some specific reasons why we tend to fail during temptations. One of the primary reasons for our failure is distrust in God.

1) Distrust God

“The beginning of yielding to temptation is in the sin of permitting the mind to waver, to be inconsistent in your trust in God. The wicked one is ever watching for a chance to misrepresent God and to attract the mind to that which is forbidden.” - *Mind Character and Personality*, vol. 1 p-31.

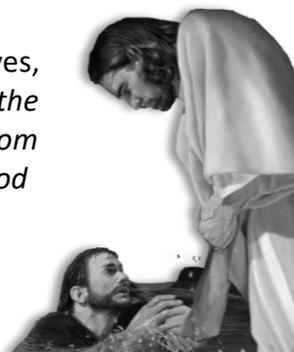
We become overpowered, when we fail to recognize that God has measured every trial meticulously and timed it so accurately for our advantage. When we distrust God, even when He says “*greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4), and do not realize that God will make “*all things work together for good to them that love God...*” (Romans 8:28), we succumb to defeat.

We face failure and defeat when we disbelieve the following:

- 1) God in His infinite wisdom, *allows* temptation to come to us.
- 2) God in His wisdom, measures *every trial* such that it is tailor-made for our good.
- 3) God *understands the feelings*, difficulties and pressures we go through at the time of temptations.
- 4) God is *ever present to sympathize*, empower and encourage without forsaking us.

2) Self-confidence

We also fail when self-confidence controls us in a way that we trust in ourselves, our influence and our abilities rather than God. “*Thus saith the LORD; Cursed [be] the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good*





cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, [in] a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed [is] the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is" (Jeremiah 17:5-8).

"There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable." - *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 155. Peter, the closest of Christ's disciple failed because in the hour of trial he trusted in his own ability to stand for Christ. Painfully, he discovered that his own strength was utterly futile. When he realized that he cannot rely on his weak, vacillating self but rather need the power and strength from above, he was truly converted and became triumphant. "It was through self-sufficiency that Peter fell; and it was through repentance and humiliation that his feet were again established. In the record of his experience every repenting sinner may find encouragement. Though Peter had grievously sinned, he was not forsaken" - *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 156.

God may allow us to fall, so that we come to the end of ourselves and our abilities. He permits failures, in order for us to distrust and give up self. It is then that God can freely work in our lives. "When one who professes to be a child of God becomes careless in doing His will, thereby influencing others to be irreverent and unmindful of the Lord's injunctions, it is still possible for his failures to be turned into victories if he will but accept reproof with true contrition of soul and return to God in humility and faith. The humiliation of defeat often proves a blessing by showing us our inability to do the will of God without His aid"- *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 633. "God brings men into trying places to see if they will trust in a power out of and above themselves. He sees not as man sees. He often has to break up human connections and change the order which man has mapped out, which is perfect in his estimation... Tests are placed all along the way from earth to heaven. It is because of this that the road to heaven is called the narrow way. Character must be tested, else there would be many spurious Christians who would keep up a fair semblance of religion until their inclinations, their desire to have their own way, their pride and ambition, were crossed."- *In Heavenly Places* p. 266.

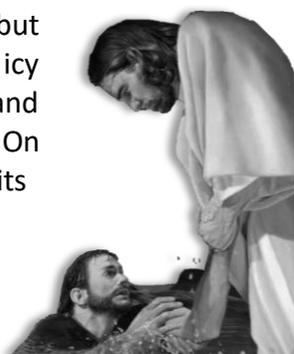
Here is where, the "Kingdom of God" and the "Kingdom of the World" stand apart. To succeed in this world, one must have self-belief and self-confidence. But to succeed in God's kingdom one must have self-distrust and be thoroughly emptied of self, trusting in God alone. That's when one becomes an overcomer.

3) Grumbling and murmuring

We often fail, when we grumble and murmur during trials and difficulties. The injunction is: "'Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (I Corinthians 10:10). "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, [and] grieve him in the desert' Yea, they turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 78:41). By murmuring and complaining, we say in effect, that God is an unloving being, who brings on adversities without understanding our problems. In this way, we "limit" the power of God to deliver us. The clear instruction is to, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (Philippians 2:14).

James also admonishes us, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned" (James 5:9).

"Sorrow comes and goes; it is the lot of man; we should not seek to magnify it, but rather dwell upon that which is bright and pleasant. When winter spreads its icy covering over the earth, we do not let our gladness freeze up with the flowers and brooks and continually mourn because of the dismal days and the chilling winds. On the other hand, we reach forward in imagination to the coming summer, with its





warmth and life and beauty...God is not pleased to have us pass our lives in despondency and gloom, magnifying every trouble that visits us. By so doing we not only make ourselves miserable but cloud the happiness of those around us. We should not search out and linger over the dark shadows in our life experience, but rather open our eyes and arouse our senses to see and appreciate the many blessings surrounding us, which should make us not only grateful but very happy... We are unconsciously diffusing the fragrance of our character upon the moral atmosphere surrounding us or we are poisoning that atmosphere by thoughts, words, and deeds which have a deleterious influence"- *In Heavenly Places*, p. 274.

Whatever the trial and suffering may be, "Let there be no faintheartedness, no peevish repining, no complaining.... **A single ray of the evidences of the undeserved favor of God shining into our hearts will overbalance every trial of whatever character and however severe it may be**"- *Our High Calling*, p. 323.

"Many professed Christians dwell too much on the dark side of life, when they might rejoice in the sunshine; they repine when they should be glad; they talk of trials when they should offer praise for the rich blessings they enjoy. They look at the unpleasant things, hoard up the disappointments, and sigh over the griefs, and, as a consequence, grow heavyhearted and sad, when, should they count up their blessings, they would find them so numerous that they would forget to mention their annoyances. If they would every day take note of the favors that are done them; if they would store their minds with the precious memory of kindnesses received, how much occasion they would find to render thanks and praise to the Giver of all good"- *My Life Today*, pp. 327. "The cross . . . is to be lifted and borne without a murmur or complaint. **In the act of raising it, you will find that it raises you.** You will find it alive with mercy, compassion, and pitying love" -*Sons and Daughters of GOD*, p. 245.

4) Lack of Humility

Often we forget that "The strongest temptation cannot excuse sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to do evil." -*In Heavenly Places*, p. 266.

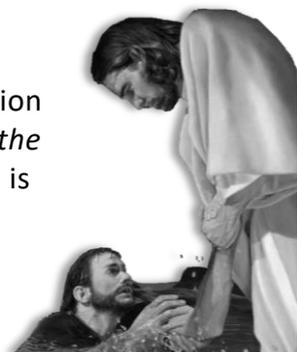
A tremendous promise is given in (I Corinthians 10:13), which declares, "*God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].*"

What a wonderful consolation this promise is! God assuredly takes the full responsibility on Himself, that He will not allow any temptation beyond our ability to distress us. Just like a teacher who would not give a question paper beyond the knowledge of the student, God does not test us beyond our ability. He regulates and fine tunes every trial, to suit the individual's capacity to withstand. Surely, it is irrational and ridiculous to imagine that God is less reasonable than teachers or parents to deal with us.

Not only does God regulate temptations, but also there is something more than wonderful that God promises. It is a '**way of escape**' during temptation. What is this, 'way of escape' that is present with every temptation?

It is an assured solution of defusing any temptation. This way of escape is the opportunity to '**humble oneself**' during every trial.

When we humble ourselves and acknowledge our helplessness, the temptation loses its power. Peter admonishes, "*be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*" (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6). God's grace is





given only to the humble.

In every trial and temptation, we need to humble ourselves before God since:

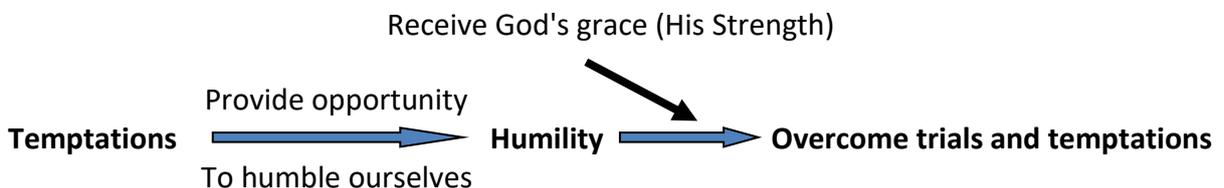
- Our ability to see the good in every trial is limited.
- We are extremely weak and helpless in our own selves to overcome the temptation, as acknowledged by Paul saying, "*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Romans 7:24).
- God gives grace only to the humble, which was stated by James, "*But He (God) giveth more grace...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*" (James 4:6). Thus humility is the only way to receive God's grace and His strength.
- The trials we face could be the result of our own foolish choices, whereby we have messed up our lives. This realization should humble us.

Let us once again reinstate the formulae for success given by Apostle Peter, "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time*" (1 Peter 5:6). When we humble ourselves, we receive God's grace. When we receive God's grace (strength), we can overcome the temptations that come to us.

Trials ⇒ Humbling oneself ⇒ Receive Grace (Strength from God) ⇒ Victory

There is no greater safety than humbling oneself, since the most stable place is the lowest place, from which we do not fall. When we get upset, irritated, angry, grumble and murmur, we refuse to humble ourselves before God and therefore we fail. It is an arrogant, rebellious and proud heart that will not humble itself.

Further, the clear instruction from the scripture is "*Let nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*" (Philippians 2:3). If we are truly humble, we will have no problem esteeming others better than ourselves. When we have small thoughts about ourselves, it will be impossible to accuse, blame or slander others. It will be difficult to hold a grudge against others, when we think better (highly) of others. This is the freedom from self that God wants to produce in us. God promises "*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will-forgive their sin and will heal their land*" (2 Chronicles 7:14).



Yes "*The LORD [is] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit*" (Psalms 34:18).

5) Self-Justification and blaming others

Another reason why we fail is because, we justify our improper words and actions and in turn vehemently defend them.

Most often we blame others instead of accepting our own fault, and make excuses for the wrongs we have committed, however small they may be.

"It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready



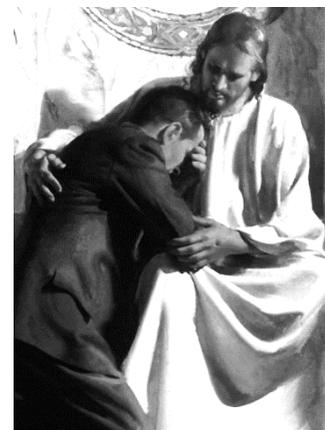


continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult... **Far better would it be for us to suffer under false accusation than to inflict upon ourselves the torture of retaliation upon our enemies.**" -*The Mount of Blessing*, p. 17. "Do not utter one despondent word, for such words please Satan. Talk of Christ's goodness and tell of His power. Words of hope and trust and courage are as easily spoken as words of complaint. . . . "When the enemy tells you that the Lord has forsaken you, tell him that you know He has not; for He declares, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). "Dismiss the enemy. Tell him you will not dishonor the Lord by doubting His love."- *In Heavenly Places*, p. 275.

6) Lack of Grief and Mourning

We fail when we take sin lightly and do not mourn over it. A genuine sorrow for sin is called "Godly sorrow", which is expressed for sins committed secretly or openly.

Mourning for unchristian acts like, speaking rude, harsh words that hurt others and cause pain, automatically, places a guard against repeating similar mistakes. It brings quick victory, enabling us to find grace from God to overcome them. When we know that we have hurt the feelings of others, by our un-Christ-like conduct through words and attitudes, mourning brings speedy recovery. Apostle James admonishes, "*Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*" (James 4:9, 10). The attitude of being frivolous with sin and not mourning over it, hinders us from overcoming. When we are truly sorry for our un-Christ like behavior and grieve to be liberated from them, God's promise is "*To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified*" (Isaiah 61:3).



"A Christian must have a sanctified tenderness and love in which there is no impatience of fretfulness; the rude, harsh manners must be softened by the grace of Christ."- *Adventist Home*, p. 51. "The Lord Jesus is our only helper. Through His grace we shall learn to cultivate love, to educate ourselves to speak kindly and tenderly. Through His grace our cold, harsh manners will be transformed. The law of kindness will be upon our lips, and those who are under the precious influences of the Holy Spirit, will not feel that it is an evidence of weakness to weep with those who weep, to rejoice with them that rejoice. We are to cultivate heavenly excellences of character. We are to learn what it means to have good-will toward all men, a sincere desire to be as sunshine and not as shadow in the lives of others." - *Amazing Grace*, p. 299.

Having learnt the purpose and the tremendous advantage of trials, the appropriate question we need to ask God is not, **why** we have difficulties, or why we have become the target of suffering. Rather, we should ask the Lord **how** we ought to go through trials and what is the right attitude we should have in suffering.

Instead of questioning "why me" Lord, we should implore, Lord, show me the right approach to trials and how to overcome through your strength.

This is what we will explore in the next chapter.

5. Deliverance from temptations





Having learnt about the purpose of temptations, let us understand how to overcome them.

a) **Deliver us from evil (Matt 6:13, Luke 11:4).**

Often we repeat the 'Lord's Prayer' and say, "Deliver us from evil". But what does it mean?

This phrase "deliver us from evil" means, we beseech God to prevent us from yielding to temptation that leads us to sin. In essence, we are asking God to deliver us from evil influences that cause us to fall. It is always God's will to deliver us from evil but, we need to seek His help to overcome temptations.

Deliverance or victory from God comes in two ways:

a) **Supernatural external deliverance**: When God allows us to go through trials, difficulties or tribulations, and yet brings deliverance supernaturally, e.g. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Paul and Silas in jail.

b) **Divine internal empowerment**: When God allows us to go through trials, but does not deliver us supernaturally. Yet his divine presence is assured to be with us, empowering us to go through trials like Jeremiah and John the Baptist.



The Bible says, "*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations*" (2 Peter 2:9).

Paul amplifies it this way: "*Grace [be] to you and peace from God the Father, and [from] our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might **deliver us from this present evil world**, according to the will of God and our Father*" (Galatians 1:3, 4).

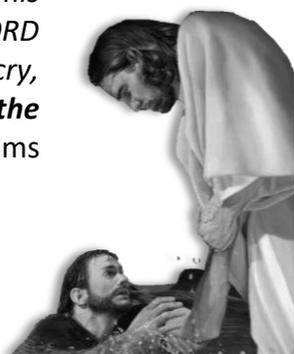
In the above texts, we find that God will deliver us from temptations and from the present evil influence of this world.

Jesus in His supplication to the Father prayed, "*I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst **keep them from the evil***" (John 17:15). Jesus did not pray to remove temptations from the disciples, but for empowerment within to overcome evil.

Hence, deliverance does not mean shielding from trials, but victory when exposed to trials and temptations. It is deliverance from self and unchristian behavior in the time of trial.

Paul confidently acknowledges saying, "*And the Lord shall **deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve [me]** unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen*" (2 Timothy 4:18). Surely, God will "**deliver us**" and "**preserve us**" and our character for His heavenly kingdom.

Let us look at a few more powerful promises: "*Now thanks [be] unto God, which **always causeth us to triumph in Christ**, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place*" (2 Corinthians 2:14). Further, "*The eyes of the LORD [are] upon the righteous, and his ears [are open] unto their cry... [The righteous] cry, and the LORD heareth, and **delivereth them** out of all their troubles. **Many [are] the afflictions** of the righteous: but the LORD **delivereth him** out of them all*" (Psalms 34:15, 17, 19).





Many of these wonderful promises assure us of deliverance in times of trouble.

b) Overcoming temptations and trials

Given below are few admonitions to overcome trials and temptations that come to us.

i) Arm yourself

Peter gives us a wonderful formula that says "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, **arm yourselves likewise with the same mind**: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*" (I Peter 4:1). When our mind is armed like the mind of Jesus to crucify self and suffer in the flesh, we cease from sin.

Jesus used the word "**watch**", for arming oneself in the mind. "*And what I say unto you I say unto all, watch*" (Mark 13:37). Paul similarly admonishes "watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13).

"**Watch**" means '*waiting in anticipation*'. Especially when we know that we are prone to fall in certain areas, like 'bad habits' and 'addictions', we need to watch, so that we do not deliberately place ourselves in areas that make us vulnerable to temptation.

Avoid Vulnerable places: We can avoid unnecessary enticements by not, "*walking... in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standing in the way of sinners, nor sitting in the seat of the scornful*" (Psalms 1:1). The admonition is, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (I Peter 5:8).

Seeking God's Help: When we are aware of our weakness in certain areas like getting easily irritated, anxious, and provoked or hurt, we should restrain ourselves by seeking God's help in advance and submitting to Him through prayer.

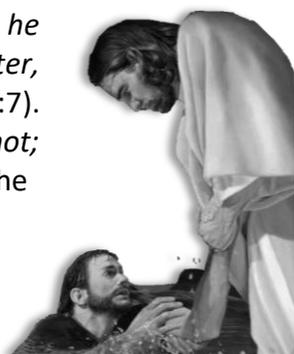
Dying to self: We also prepare ourselves to "suffer in the flesh" by our willingness to die to self in the moment of temptation. Here our opinions, our views, our way of doing things, and our egos are put to death. This willingness to deny our own way, causes tremendous suffering to ourselves internally, but ultimately the 'self-life' is put to death by the strength we receive from God. Thus we learn to "Cease from sinning".

Even Jesus, when he had to choose between having His own way or to go to the cross He said "*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name*" (John 12:27).

Jesus took the path of suffering by putting self to death, and in the moment of temptation He chose not to have His own way. No matter how great the suffering was or how inconvenient the situation was, He would rather suffer the insult and ignominy and be thoroughly misunderstood, than have His own way. At any cost, He would not defend Himself or allow others to fight for Him. In this way He armed Himself. "*Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (Matthew 26:52-54).

Jesus surrendered Himself to the Father at all times. "*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth*" (Isaiah 53:7). "*when he (Jesus) was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously*" (1 Peter 2:23). This is the





example Jesus upheld before us.

ii) Prayer

We can be vigilant against temptations, only through prayer and fortifying the mind with the Word of God. As humans, we are naturally weak. We need God to enlighten and guide us when temptations come in various subtle forms.

Jesus made it emphatically clear by His example and showed that prayer is the essence of a victorious life. "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*" (Matthew 26:41, 38, Mark 14:3.4.37), was His constant emphasis.

"We are to watch and pray just as long as Satan brings up clouds of unbelief, composed of every evil thing that he can devise to lead the human mind to yield to temptation. But this cloud that lies between God and the human agent cannot envelop man and penetrate his soul unless he opens his mind and heart to its dark beams. The angels of God will guard from the poisonous malaria of temptations of the wicked one every man who will rise beyond self and circumstances and surroundings, looking unto Jesus through every mist and fog and cloud, and penetrating by faith the darkest temptations" - *Our High Calling*, p. 126.



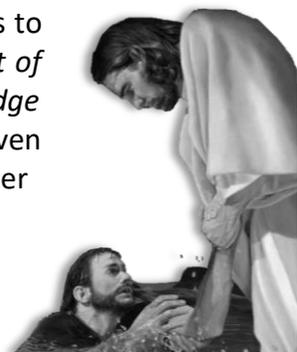
Let us look at some admonitions regarding the necessity of prayer.

- "*Men (and women) ought always **to pray, and not to faint***" (Luke 18:1).
- "*But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and **watch unto prayer***" (1 Peter 4:7).
- "***Pray without ceasing***" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- "***Praying always** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18).*
- "*Prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16).
- "*Continuing **instant in prayer***" (Romans 12:12).

Prayer, should be offered both individually and collectively on behalf of others. James exhorts us saying, "*And pray one for another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16). Intercessory prayer is essential to enable others in their fight against sin. Knowing that someone is praying for us, would give us great encouragement in our strife against wickedness. We are preserved because someone else is battling for us on their knees.

Jesus admonished, "*Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matthew 18:19, 20).

Whenever two or three people agree in prayer and are in one accord, **they give God the legal right to intervene and work on behalf of others.** Intercession, gives God the right to act on behalf of other fellow human beings. In this way, God wants us to be involved in the salvation of others "*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all ... to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:3, 4). "No man liveth unto himself. Your life is interwoven with all others in the common web of humanity, and you are to be laborers together





with God for the salvation of those who perish in degradation and woe. You are to be instruments in influencing all those with whom you associate to a better life, to direct the mind to Jesus.”- *Christian Education*, p. 89. This is the secret behind intercessory prayer.

Jesus had this object in mind when he prayed. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (John 17:20).

He was concerned for others who were lost in sin. Hence, He entreated, “other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Such was the passion of Jesus, that on several occasions, He spent the whole night praying and interceding for His disciples. “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6: 12).

Jesus reminded Peter, that He had been praying for Him. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift [you] as wheat: **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not**” (Luke 22:31.32). His prayer saved Peter from backsliding and apostasy. We too can have this consolation that this very prayer of Jesus is also for our victory.

Paul prayed fervently for the churches. He wrote to them saying, “God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (Romans 1:9), and “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy” (Philippians 1:4).

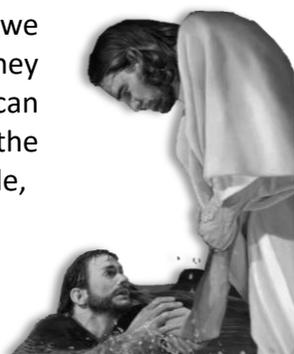
Paul, not only prayed for others, but also depended on their prayers for his spiritual encouragement. “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive **together with me in [your]prayers** to God for me” (Romans 15:30). “Ye also helping together by prayer for us” (2 Corinthians 1:11). He never felt super-spiritual and self-sufficient, in soliciting their prayers. In fact, he longed for the prayers of the church members on his behalf. In return Paul thanked the church for their prayers, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:19).

Likewise, the people in Macedonia prayed for the brethren in Corinth. “And by their prayer for you (Macedonians), which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you” (2 Corinthians 9:14).

The book of Revelation gives us insight regarding the importance of prayer. John saw a vision where, “...the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand” (Revelation 8:4). “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four [and] twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the **prayers of saints**” (Revelation 5:8). The activity going on in heaven is prayer, praise and intercession.

The Lord is ever willing to listen to our prayers. “The eyes of the Lord [are] over the righteous, and his ears [are open] unto their prayers” (I Peter 3:12). Thus, “...there is no danger that the Lord will neglect the prayers of His people. **The danger is that in temptation and trial they will become discouraged, and fail to persevere in prayer.**” - *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 175.

“Never is one repulsed who comes to Him with a contrite heart. Not one sincere prayer is lost. **Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being.** We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude,





to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard.

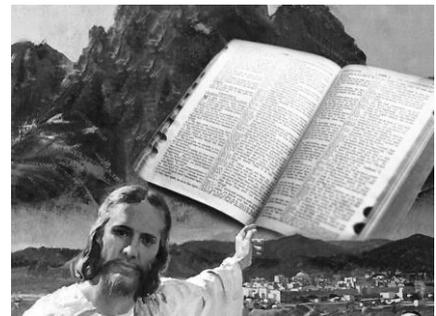
You, who feel the most unworthy, fear not to commit your case to God. When He gave Himself in Christ for the sin of the world, He undertook the case of every soul. He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32), - *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 174.

In answer to our prayers, God will bring deliverance by empowering us to go through trials or help us supernaturally. "Nothing is too great for Him (GOD) to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. *Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest.* "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). **The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.**" *Steps to Christ*, p. 100.

Surely, "...the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of [them] whose heart [is] perfect toward Him?" (2 Chronicles 16:9). Thus, through prayers, our wonderful God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

iii) Claiming God's promises

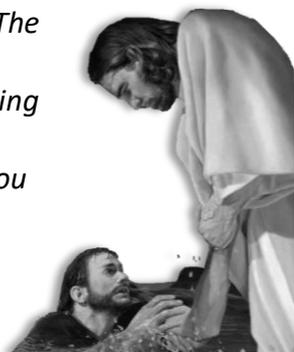
We overcome temptation by claiming God's promises and fortifying our minds with His Word. Amazingly, God has "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust**" (2 Peter 1:4). By claiming His wonderful promises, we can be strengthened to overcome every temptation. David says, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (Psalms 56:3), and "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalms 119:11).



The word of God also preserves us from wicked ways. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed [thereto] according to thy word" (Psalms 119:9).

Let us look at some powerful promises, which can be claimed by any one facing trials.

- "Like as a father pitieth [his] children, [so] the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we [are] dust" (Psalms 103:13.14).
- "He **will** turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).
- "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD [shall be] a light unto me" (Micah 7:8).
- "The LORD [is] good to all: and his tender mercies [are] over all his works... The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psalms 145:9.15.16).
- "Come unto me. all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you





rest"

(Matthew 11:28).

- "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).
 - "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).
 - "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).
- Keeping these promises in our mind we can overcome any temptation or trial.

iv) Looking unto Jesus

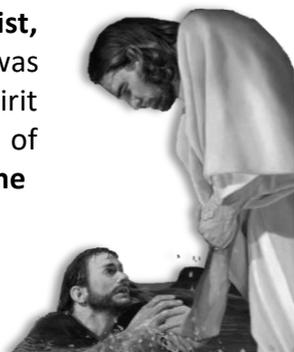
Jesus desires that we copy His example in order to be triumphant in this life. He says, "For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). Jesus is the perfect example in every walk of our life because, He was "tempted in all points like as we are" and yet did not sin. Therefore, we need to look at how Jesus faced each temptation and overcome as he overcame.

If we seek a place in His kingdom, it is imperative that spiritually we walk as Jesus walked. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). Walking as Jesus walked means, overcoming as He overcame and purifying himself even as He is pure. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Jesus emphatically said, "Take my yoke upon you **and learn of me.**" **What is it that we learn from Jesus?** We learn how to overcome sin, depression, gloom, irritability, bad temper, bitterness, animosity, etc., from the example of Jesus. Even among hostile surroundings He was pure and uncompromising. Therefore we too can "run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

Jesus is our role model in all things. "As one becomes acquainted with the history of the Redeemer, he discovers in himself serious defects; his unlikeness to Christ is so great that he sees the necessity for radical changes in his life. Still he studies with a desire to become like his great Exemplar. He catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master. By beholding . . . he becomes changed into the same image. It is not by looking away from Him that we imitate the life of Jesus, but by talking of Him, by dwelling upon His perfections, by seeking to refine the taste and elevate the character, by trying, through faith and love, and by earnest, persevering effort, to approach the perfect Pattern. By having a knowledge of Christ, -- His words, His habits, and His lessons of instruction, -- we borrow the virtues of the character we have so closely studied, and become imbued with the spirit we have so much admired. Jesus becomes to us "the chiefest among ten thousand," the One "altogether lovely" -- Sons and Daughters of God, p.235, 236.

The disciple John is a classic example of this amazing transformation that occurs by beholding Jesus. "John, the beloved disciple, the one who most fully reflected the likeness of the Saviour, did not naturally possess that loveliness of character. He was not only self-assertive and ambitious for honor, but impetuous, and resentful under injuries. But as the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, he saw his own deficiency and was humbled by the knowledge. **The strength and patience, the power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness that he beheld in the daily life of the Son of God filled his soul with admiration and love. Day by day his heart was drawn out toward Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master.** His resentful, ambitious temper was yielded to the molding power of Christ. The regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit renewed his heart. The power of the love of Christ wrought a transformation of character. **This is the sure result of union with Jesus. When Christ abides in the**





heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven." - *Steps to Christ*, p. 73.

Truly, "John, who came into closest association with the meek and lowly One, was not himself naturally meek and yielding. He and his brother were called "the sons of thunder." While they were with Jesus, any slight shown to Him aroused their indignation and combativeness.... "Evil temper, revenge, the spirit of criticism, were all in the beloved disciple.

He was proud, and ambitious to be first in the kingdom of God. But day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. He opened his heart to the divine influence, and became not only a hearer but a doer of the Saviour's words. Self was hid in Christ. He learned to wear the yoke of Christ and to bear His burden."- *The Desire of Ages*, p. 295.

v) Surrender

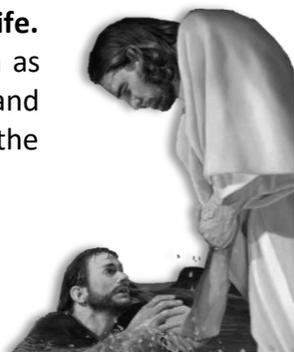
Another secret for success is "surrender". Particularly, in the areas of bad habits, bad attitudes, and secret sins. We need to surrender our desires and will to God. Then, the strength of the temptation is lost.

"Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour."- *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 35. When we submit to God and to His desires, His plans, His will, and refuse to yield to our own, He will bring us success.

Let us look into some Bible admonitions in this regard:

- *"Neither yield ye your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness unto God. **For sin shall not have dominion over you**" (Romans: 6:13, 14).*
- *"Yield your members (organs of the body) servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Romans 6:19).*
- This yielding to God means "not offering our body" to fulfill its desires. *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to [fulfill] the lusts [thereof]" (Romans 13:14).*
- *"Dearly beloved, I beseech [you] as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).*
- *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).*

The success formulae for victory is submission, **"When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah" - *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311.





We must let go of everything we think is important, and like Jacob cling only to Jesus. Our job, money, possessions, plans, security, rights, privileges, health and future etc., must be given into God's mighty hand, before He can do anything for us. We should present to God a clean page, every single day, to write His will on it.

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work...Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ."- *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

vii) Trusting in God

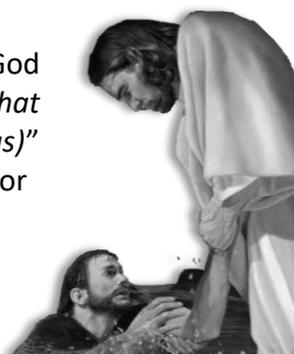
One of the reasons why there is so much disappointment, grief and sorrow in a person's life is a lack of trust in God's sovereign wisdom and power. We must believe that the God we serve is so powerful, that He will allow only the "very best" for our lives. He who controls the unnumbered worlds with such precision, can also control every circumstance, so that it can work only for our best interest. We should be assured that nothing can collide and destroy our destiny.

Undoubtedly, "God cares for everything and sustains everything that he has created. He who upholds the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, at the same time cares for the wants of the little brown sparrow that sings its humble song without a fear. When men go forth to their daily toil, as when they engage in prayer; when they lie down at night, and when they rise in the morning; when the rich man feasts in his palace, or when the poor man gathers his children about the scanty board, each is tenderly watched by the heavenly Father. **No tears are shed that God does not notice. There is no smile that he does not mark. If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed. Our lives would not be filled with disappointment as now;** for everything, whether great or small, would be left in the hands of God, who is not perplexed by the multiplicity of cares, or overwhelmed by their weight. We would then enjoy a rest of soul to which many have long been strangers." - *Steps to Christ*, pp. 85, 86.

When Jesus was on this earth, sadly, He could not do many mighty things in His own place Nazareth, because of their stubborn unbelief. "*And he (Jesus) could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed [them]. And he (Jesus) marvelled because of their unbelief*", (Mark 6:5). Just imagine, even though Jesus, the son of God lived in Nazareth, His own people could not be the recipients of His mighty work because of their unbelief. What a tragedy! Unbelief ties the hand of an Almighty God from doing great things for us.

Why should we ever be in doubt, when the awesome sacrifice of Jesus should convince anyone that God is more than willing to bestow all for us? When God did not spare His own Son but sacrificed Him for us, why will he not provide that which is good for us? This probing question is for us to answer. The Bible says, "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32). God assures us with these words, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*" (Jeremiah 29:11). Without doubt, God is a "... rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

If there is something that should convince us of God's love for us, it is that God loves us as much as He loved His Son Jesus. Turning to His disciples Jesus said, "*That the world may know that thou (GOD) ...hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (Jesus)*" (John 17:23). God loves us as He loved Jesus and will provide for us as He did for





Jesus. These wonderful promises should persuade us beyond a shadow of doubt, that His love is immeasurable.

God says, "*For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isaiah 55:9). His plans are vastly superior to ours, to navigate us through any insurmountable distress or difficulty. We need not be perturbed at the impossibilities that surround us.

King David at the end of his life makes this profound statement "*I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*" (Psalms 37:25). What an incredible testimony!

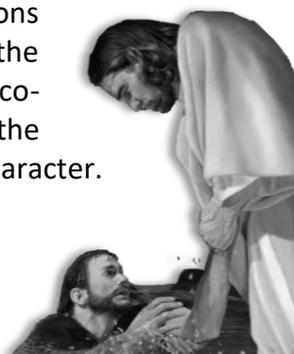
When we are able to comprehend this, we will have a restful life in Jesus "A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character... Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love --this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. **It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness**" - *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

vii) Resist the devil

In situations where we are overwhelmed with depression, gloom and sadness; when Satan **insinuates us to** doubt God and his leading, we need to firmly resist him. Only then will we be triumphant. The admonition is, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye sinners and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded*" (James 4:7.8). We need to resist the tempter's crafty temptations.

Apostle Peter warns us to "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith*" (1 Pet 5:8, 9). "God requires His servants to walk in the light and not cover their eyes that they may not discern the working of Satan. They should be prepared to warn and reprove those who are in danger through his subtlety. Satan is working on the right hand and on the left to obtain vantage ground. He rests not. He is persevering. He is vigilant and crafty to take advantage of every circumstance and turn it to his account in his warfare against the truth and the interests of the kingdom of God. It is a lamentable fact that God's servants are not half as much awake to the wiles of Satan as they should be. And instead of resisting the devil that he may flee from them, many are inclined to make a compromise with the powers of darkness"-*Testimonies to the church, Volume 3*, p.196.

Paul encourages us, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (I Corinthians 15:34). "God wishes us to have the mastery over ourselves. But He cannot help us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the powers and faculties given to man. Of ourselves, we are not able to bring the purposes and desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are "willing to be made willing," the Saviour will accomplish this for us. The work of gaining salvation is one of co-partnership, a joint operation. There is to be co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character.





Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing". "God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness, absolute helplessness."- *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 482.

"If we are overcome let us not delay to repent, and to accept the pardon that will place us on vantage ground. If we repent and believe, the cleansing power from God will be ours." - *In Heavenly Places*, p. 50.

In this way we can obtain total victory in Jesus Christ, even to the extent of bringing into captivity every thought by, "*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in readiness to revenge all disobedience*" (2 Corinthians 10:5, 6). This is the ultimate victory in Jesus.

viii) Victory through praise and thanksgiving

One of the best ways to overcome trials and temptations is through praise and thanksgiving. "Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings--as much a duty as it is to pray". "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts;...and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15). Forgetting our own difficulties and troubles, let us praise God for an opportunity to live for the glory of His name. Let the fresh blessings of each new day awaken praise in our hearts for these tokens of His loving care" "...let us educate our hearts and lips to speak the praise of God for His matchless love. Let us educate our souls to be hopeful and to abide in the light shining from the cross of Calvary. **Never should we forget that we are children of the heavenly King, sons and daughters of the Lord of hosts.**" - *Ministry of Healing*, p. 253.



Scientific research has shown that feelings of gratitude, thanksgiving and praise help in the production of antibodies that boost the immune system. While, feelings of remorse, guilt and bitterness tend to depress the immune system, leading to a host of diseases. Therefore it does a world of good to obtain health of body, mind and spirit through praise.

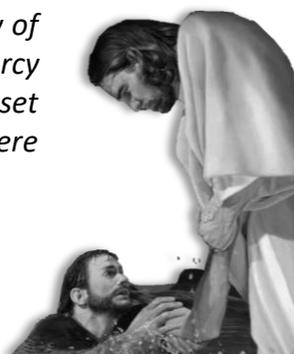
Here are some examples of godly people who obtained victory through praise:

Solomon

At the temple dedication, "*when they lifted up [their] voice with the trumpets... praised the LORD, [saying]. For [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever: that [then] the house was filled with a cloud, [even] the house of the LORD*" (2 Chronicles 5:13).

Jehoshaphat

When King Jehoshaphat was overwhelmed by a great army of Moabites, Ammonites and Syrians he "*appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy [endureth] forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon. Moab. and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten*" (2 Chronicles 20:21,22).





Hezekiah

At the revival instituted by Hezekiah in Jerusalem " *the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, [singing] with loud instruments unto the LORD ..Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: **and their voice was heard, and their prayer came [up] to his holy dwelling place, [even unto heaven]**" (2 Chronicles 30:21, 27). Nehemiah exhorted the people saying, "The Joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).*

Children of Israel.

Look at the amazing experience, the children of Israel had in the wilderness. "The people of Israel, as they journeyed through the wilderness, praised God in sacred song. The commandments and promises of the Lord were set to music, and all along the journey these were sung by the pilgrim travelers... So it should be now... He longs to see gratitude welling up in our hearts because our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, because we may cast all our care upon Him who cares for us. He bids us rejoice because we are the heritage of the Lord, because the righteousness of Christ is the white robe of His saints, because we have the blessed hope of the soon coming of our Saviour. ... To praise God in fullness and sincerity of heart is as much a duty as is prayer...**These exercises drive back the power of Satan.** They expel the spirit of murmuring and complaint, and the tempter loses ground. They cultivate those attributes of character which will fit the dwellers on earth for the heavenly mansions." - *Christ Object Lessons*, pp. 299, 300.

Paul and Silas

At Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into the inner prison. "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God... And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and even one's bands were loosed*" (Acts 16:25, 26).

The Word of God admonishes, "*Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6, 7).

"**Do not talk of your lack of faith and your sorrows and sufferings.** The tempter delights to hear such words. When talking on gloomy subjects, you are glorifying him. We are not to dwell on the great power of Satan to overcome us. Often we give ourselves into his hands by talking of his power. Let us talk instead of the great power of God to bind up all our interests with His own. Tell of the matchless power of Christ, and speak of His glory. **All heaven is interested in our salvation.** The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, are commissioned to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.

"They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. Have we not reason to be thankful every moment, thankful even when there are apparent difficulties in our pathway?" - *Ministry of Healing*, p. 253.

c) Rejoicing in suffering

When sorely troubled, isolated, betrayed and abandoned, we can overcome





pain, humiliation and gloom through praise and thanksgiving. Jesus gave us a wonderful example regarding this. At the last supper, " *He (Jesus) took the cup (symbolizing his blood through suffering), and gave thanks, and he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake [it]*" (Luke 22:17, 19). " *And when he (Jesus) had given thanks, he brake [it], and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you*" (I Corinthians 11:24).

This prayer of thanksgiving by Jesus, was offered much ahead of His crucifixion. Yet, we should notice here that Jesus, in advance, thanked the Father for the suffering He was about to go through. He was thankful that His "body would be broken" and "wounded" for others. This is how Jesus, because of "***the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame***" (Hebrews 12:2). He endured the supreme agony of the cross, for the joy of saving the lost.

What an example of praise through surrender! The disciples having learnt from that example of Jesus, "Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. **The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ.**

Trials and persecution were but steps bringing them nearer their rest and their reward. They "rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth, and songs of triumph ascended from the midst of crackling flames. Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest and regarding their steadfastness with approval." – *The Great Controversy*, p. 41, 42.

All throughout the Bible the emphasis is to rejoice in suffering. Let us see few of these passages:

- "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: **But rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy***" (I Peter 4:12, 13).
- "*If [any man suffer] as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; **but let him glorify God on this behalf***" (I Peter 4:16).
- "*Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. **Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven.***" (Matthew 5:11, 12).
- Paul says. "*I Paul am made a minister; **Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you***" (Colossians 1:23, 24).
- Moses had the same attitude "*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; **Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible***" (Hebrews 11:24, 27).

To the Corinthians, Paul writes, "**I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation**" (2 Corinthians 7:4). Tribulations did not bother the Apostle, but rather brought rejoicing because it was for the sake of Christ and the furtherance of the gospel. He knew that the





tribulations brought only good to the gospel proclamation, hence he could be exceedingly joyful.

d) Death is gain

Writing to the church, Paul utters this profoundly bold statement, “*for to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain’*” (Philippians 1:21). In this declaration, he was not perturbed by death, because death is not a defeat but victory for the one who dies in Jesus. Death in Christ secures ones character.

When we understand the advantageous plan of God, in allowing us to go through trials and temptations, we will surely rejoice and be thankful. Instead of being frightened and alarmed, we will face trials bravely with God's strength and overcome as Jesus overcame.

Jesus promises, “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*” (Revelation 3:21). This privilege can be ours.

“The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love,... love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, “For to me to live is Christ;” for his life revealed Christ to men; “and to die is gain,”--gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. “Christ shall be magnified in my body,” he said, “whether it be by life or by death” Phil. 1:21, 20 – *The Desire of the Ages*, p. 549.

“As men seek to come into harmony with God, they will find that the offense of the cross has not ceased. Principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places are arrayed against all who yield obedience to the law of heaven. Therefore, **so far from causing grief, persecution should bring joy to the disciples of Christ, for it is an evidence that they are following in the steps of their Master.**” - *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29.

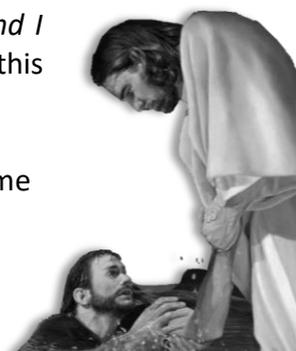
e) The Extra Oil

Jesus spoke about the “extra oil” in the parable of the five wise and foolish virgins recorded in Matthew 25. This “extra oil” is, “the grace that produces the perfect character” which is required of us now, before the second coming of Jesus.

Perfection of character cannot be produced in a ‘hurry’ like the foolish virgins thought. It is a day by day surrender of our will and self, through which we receive the grace that Christ alone can give. Thus we partake of His divine nature. The **only place** we can obtain perfect character, amidst trial and temptation, is here. The **only time** to attain this extra oil is now, and this is our **only privilege**. “*For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation*” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

What a tremendous honor, God has given us to become like Him, a privilege not given to the angels. This opportunity is granted to pitiful, insignificant men like us, to be His sons and daughters. His promise is, “*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*” (Revelation 21:7). If only we could grasp this and overcome, what a triumphant life ours can be!

Having discovered such amazing truths, we should be challenged to overcome





every temptation that manifests itself, either subtly or openly. Anger, depression, gloom, bad moods, insecurity should be vanquished. Every reproach, humiliation and insult should be defeated by blessing those who curse us because we follow our Lord Jesus who said *"Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you"* (Luke 6:27). Paul in a similar vein says, *"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not"* (Romans 12:14). His own example had been *"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it"* (1 Corinthians 4:12). *"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh"* (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11).

This Life of Jesus can be ours, when there is a constant death to self. **"Every act of obedience to Christ, every act of self-denial for His sake, every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory."**- *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 140.*

Paul learnt by experience the joy of the Christ-like life, which is being, "cleansed of all filthiness of flesh and spirit" by *"renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"* (2 Corinthians 7:1; 4:2). Thus everyone, rich or poor, great or small, black or white, have equal opportunity to overcome. Blessed are those who grasp this opportunity, in this life, here on earth.

f) All things work together for Good

By now we should be thoroughly convinced that God takes the full responsibility to see that **"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.** "(Romans 8:28).

Let us remind ourselves that God, the sovereign of the universe, takes the onus on Himself to ensure that all circumstances, whether difficult or easy, are recycled and redirected for our good. Every trying situation, every difficult person to get along with, inclusive of what Satan can do to us, is moulded for our benefit. In this way, every trial becomes subservient to our enrichment. Nothing on earth can prevent us from becoming overcomers.

Here is where our eyes should be opened. Paul prays, *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power"* (Ephesians 1:17).

God's power works in us, both in good and bad times, strengthening our faith, and perfecting our character. This is the reason why, God takes us through loss and gain, to bring us to a place where we are unmoved and unshaken. Then, neither riches nor success, honor nor praise will puff us up. No loss, either financial or of loved ones, wantonness or humiliation, insults or injury, extortion or exploitation will cause us depression or hopelessness. Thus, all circumstances in life will be like servants, working, only for our good.

Unquestionably, this is the tremendous possibility that can be achieved by every person on earth. Right from the King on the throne to a humble servant on the street, everyone has equal opportunity to be exposed to trials and be overcomers. It is then that we





testify that, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, **worketh for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory**" (I Corinthians 4:17). "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net: thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: **but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place**" (Psalms 66:10-12).

Once a little boy was watching his mother stitching an embroidery on his shirt. Looking puzzled at all the jumbled and twisted bundles of thread he exclaimed "Mom I don't understand what you are doing"? From where I am looking, everything looks knotted, disorderly and confusing. I can't figure out, why you are stitching the dark threads along with the bright ones? It looks to me that everything is in a great mess. To this, the mother gently said, son in a little while, when I am done, I'll put you on my lap and show you from 'my side' this grand design I am stitching.

It is true that from '**your side**' everything looks messy, jumbled up and a mere waste of time. But from '**my side**' you will see shortly, the splendid design on your shirt. The brightly colored threads along with the dark ones are essential for a purpose. You will soon behold the wonderful embroidery I am working with. This design will resemble the original I have in mind for you, and it will be the very best design you'd ever seen.

Is your life filled with remorse and confusion? Do you find your life all knotted up and messy beyond recognition? Are you wondering why there are these dark chapters in your life along with the bright ones? Perhaps it's time to handover you're knotted and twisted life to the master designer. He never makes a mistake. He can take your life, and stitch a wonderful design. Finally, when it is all done, you will be granted the privilege to view things from '**His point of view**'. You will then discover that it all fits into a perfect pattern and plan. Soon the tapestry of your life will be complete and it will be the very best, the grandest that you've ever imagined.

There is a song by Lanny Wolfe that aptly portrays it:

*"And whatever it takes, to draw closer to You Lord , That's what I'd be willing to do,
Take my houses and lands; Take my dreams and my plans.*

*I place my whole life in your hands. And if you call me someday,
To a land far away, Lord, I'll go and Your will obey.*

And whatever it takes to draw closer to You, Lord, That's what I'll be willing to do.

And whatever it takes for my will to break, That's what I'll be willing to do.

***Take the dearest things to me, if that's how it must be. To draw me closer to thee
Let the disappointments come, lonely days without the sun,
If through sorrow more like you I'll become.***

*I'll trade sunshine for rain, comfort for pain, that's what I'd be willing to do
For whatever it takes to be more like you, that's what I'd be willing to do..."*

Another meaningful song penned beautifully by Laura.

*"We pray for blessings, we pray for peace Comfort for family, protection while we sleep
We pray for healing, for prosperity, we pray for your mighty hand to ease our suffering
All the while, you hear each spoken need, yet love us way too much to give us lesser things*

"Cause what if your blessings come through raindrops,





***What if Your healing comes through tears
What if a thousand sleepless nights, are what it takes to know you're near
What if trials of this life are your mercies in disguise?***

*We pray for wisdom, your voice to hear, and we cry in anger when we cannot feel you near
We doubt Your goodness, We doubt Your love, As if every promise from Your Word is not
enough*

*All the while, You hear each desperate plea, And long that we'd have faith to believe
When friends betray us, when darkness seems to win
We know the pain reminds this heart that this is not, this is not our home*

*What if my greatest disappointments, or the aching of this life
Is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy?
And what if trials of this life. The rain, the storms, the hardest nights
Are your mercies in disguise” - Laura story Lyrics*



Without a shadow of doubt “The trials of life are God's workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our characters. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process, it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone is brought forth

prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace....” - *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 23, 24.

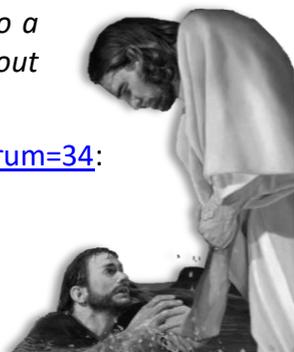
Here is where God is leading us - to a spiritually wealthy place. Are we willing?

The great missionary to China in the 1800's – Hudson Taylor, understood practically, what it means to live a Christ-like life. He had penned these precious words in his sermon “God’s hand in His servant’s life” - J. Hudson Taylor.

⁶*“If God has called you to be really like Jesus, He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put on you such demands of obedience that He will not allow you to follow other Christians; and in many ways He will seem to let other good people do things that He will not let you do. Other Christians and ministers who seem very religious and useful may push themselves, and work to carry out their schemes, but you cannot do it; and if you attempt it, you will meet with such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you sorely penitent. Others may brag on themselves, on their work, on their success, on their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing; and if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.*

“Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, but it is likely that God will keep you poor, because He wants you to have something far better than gold, and that is helpless dependence upon Him, that He may have the privilege (the right) of supplying your needs day by day out of an unseen treasury. The Lord will let others be honored and put forward, and keep you hidden away in obscurity, because He wants some choice fragrant fruit for His coming glory which can only be produced in the shade. He will let others do a work for Him and get the credit for it, but He will let you work and toil on without

⁶ http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=11853&forum=34:





knowing how much you are doing; and then to make your work still more precious, He will let others get the credit for the work you have done, and this will make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes.

"The Holy Spirit will put a watch over you, with a jealous love, and will rebuke you for little words and feelings or for wasting your time, over which other Christians never seem distressed. So make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign, and has the right to do as He pleases with His own, and He may not explain to you a thousand things which may puzzle your reason in His dealings with you. He will take you at your word and if you absolutely sell yourself to be His slave, He will wrap you up in a jealous love and let other people say and do many things which He will not let you say or do.

"Settle it forever that you are to deal directly with the Holy Spirit, and that He is to have the privilege of tying your tongue, or chaining your hand, or closing your eyes, in ways that He does not deal with others. Now when you are so possessed with the Living God, that you are in your secret heart pleased and delighted over the peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship of the Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of heaven."

g) Character formation here and now

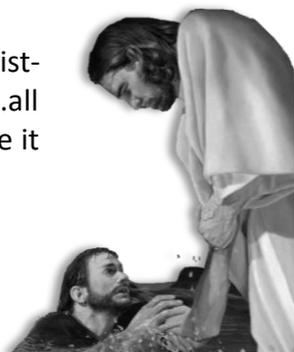
"We are forming characters for heaven. **No character can be complete without trial and suffering.** We must be tested, we must be tried. Christ bore the test of character of our behalf that we might bear this test in our own behalf through the divine strength He has brought to us. "Christ is our example in patience, in forbearance, in meekness and lowliness of mind. He was at variance and at war with the whole ungodly world, yet He did not give way to passion and violence manifested in words and actions, although receiving shameful abuse in return for good works. He was afflicted, He was rejected and despitefully treated, yet He retaliated not He possessed self-control, dignity, and majesty. He suffered with calmness and for abuse gave only compassion, pity, and love. ... **"Imitate your Redeemer in these things. Do not get excited when things go wrong. Do not let self arise, and lose your self-control because you fancy things are not as they should be.** Because others are wrong is no excuse for you to do wrong. Two wrongs will not make one right. You have victories to gain in order to overcome as Christ overcame.

"Christ never murmured, never uttered discontent, displeasure, or resentment. He was never disheartened, discouraged, ruffled, or fretted. He was patient, calm, and self-possessed under the most exciting and trying circumstances. All His works were performed with a quiet dignity and ease, whatever commotion was around Him. Applause did not elate Him. He feared not the threats of His enemies. "He moved amid the world of excitement, of violence and crime, as the sun moves above the clouds. Human passions and commotions and trials were beneath Him. He sailed like the sun above them all. Yet He was not indifferent to the woes of men.

His heart was ever touched with the sufferings and necessities of His brethren, as though He Himself was the one afflicted. He had a calm inward joy, a peace which was serene. His will was ever swallowed up in the will of His Father. Not My will but Thine be done, was heard from His pale and quivering lips." - *This Day with God*, pp. 263.

"Christ's servants can and should be able to meet and overcome every temptation. They should say, "I am not my own; I have been bought with a price. By the infinite sacrifice Christ has made for me, He has put it out of my power to give Him more than He demands. All is His. He has purchased me, body, soul, and spirit. He calls for all my time, all my capabilities." – Sons and Daughters of God, p. 230.

This is the wonderful possibility where you and I can progress to, which is "A Christ-like life." Do you think that God can accomplish this in your life? Jesus said, "...all things [are] possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29).





“Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.

Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God. Many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no definite object for which to live, no standard to reach. Such will obtain a reward proportionate to their works...set your mark high, and step by step, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress. Let nothing hinder you.

Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty. ..The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances...Stand like Daniel, that faithful statesman, a man whom no temptation could corrupt. Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His own life to cancel your sins. He says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer...**A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next...** The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, I am at your right hand to help you. **As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent.** Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. **All His biddings are enablings"** - *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 331-333.

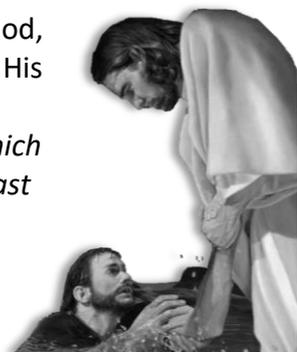
God expects that such a character is formed within us, before the door of probation closes forever. *"Behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2). *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let [them] slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation"* (Hebrews 2:1-3).

Prophetic warning!

Thus far, we had seen the wonderful plan God made for us i.e., to become more than conquerors in this world of suffering. Our battle against self and sin will not cease until the Lord's Second Advent.

The book of Revelation prophetically warns us that Satan, the arch enemy of God, would not give up without a fight. It is his nefarious plan to hurt God by hurting His people.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast





out with him...Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman (Church)” (Revelation 12:9, 12, 130).

As penned above, it has been the orchestrated plan of Satan to persecute the church of God and destroy it. But praise God, His people have withstood the test of time, and through the centuries, the church has prevailed. Now as we foresee the future, we should recall the warning of Daniel who foretold, “and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1).

As we draw to the close of time, the conflict between good and evil will undoubtedly intensify, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:21, 22). The outcome of this struggle is seen in the book of revelation “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:13, 14).

Yes, a shout of triumph rings through the prophecy because, “**they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death**” (Revelation 12:11). The church has triumphed.

Secret Deception

In spite of such clear teaching regarding the triumph of the church through tribulation, there has erupted a twisted and corrupted teaching within the church called “**The secret rapture**”.

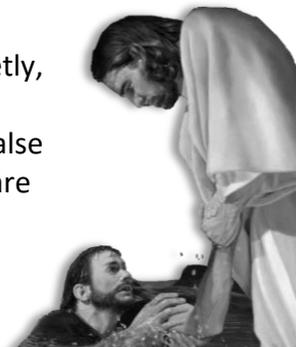
It can be identified through its synonym words like – ‘Rapture’, ‘Tribulation’, ‘Armageddon’, ‘Millennium’, ‘Antichrist’, etc. Here the single event of the second coming of Jesus had been split into two phases. The first phase is the secret rapture where the present day Church (Living Saints) along with the resurrected saints are whisked away secretly, silently, suddenly and invisibly to heaven. Consequently, the world will be thrown into confusion due to the sudden disappearance of people

into thin air. In the meantime, a Roman dictator called ‘The Antichrist’ will emerge, who will rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem and rule over the whole world for the first 3 ½ years.

Through this sinister teaching, millions are deceived into thinking that they would be secretly whisked away before the tribulation and thus are not making any preparation to go through it.

The danger in this ‘Secret Rapture theory’ lies in the following unscriptural assertions:

- I. The saints living today, escape the tribulation, as they are raptured secretly, (Snatching away) which is unbiblical and incorrect.
- II. The attention is diverted, from the real Antichrist that exists today, to a false “make believe” Antichrist in the future, that is not Biblical. Thus the people are





subjected to the dangers of the mark of the beast imposed by the true Antichrist.

III. The seriousness to follow Christ, by living a life of victory over sin is truly lost, because a second chance to do so is anticipated at a later date (a date which does not exist) leading to carelessness in spiritual life, till probation closes, thereby ending in eternal ruin.

IV. Several 'false predictions' and 'date settings' are made that ultimately destroy the faith of believers.

Therefore, the teaching of the 'secret rapture' is a deliberate deception of the last days.



the

As studied earlier, we know that tribulations are ordained to strengthen and perfect the Character. Escaping it will make us unfit for heaven.

The truth of the matter is that, there is a conflict awaiting all of us. We must through power of God be prepared to meet it.

6. The Final Conflict

There is a conflict awaiting every one of us. A conflict "such as never was since the foundation of the world" This conflict is not a political one but spiritual.

The book of Revelation candidly describes the intense battle between the people of God and Satan which culminates at the second coming of Jesus.

"And the dragon (Satan) was wroth with the woman (God's Church), and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17). It is a real fierce war that is targeted against the people of God by the Devil and his agencies.

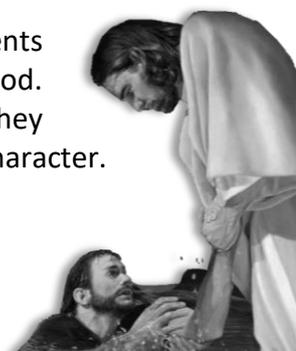
Satan miserably failed in his attempt, to destroy Jesus and His mission, while on this earth. Even amidst apparent loss on the cross, Jesus became a conqueror over sin and death. After His ascension, Satan redoubled his efforts to destroy Christ's representatives on earth. Through fierce persecution, deep poverty, alienation and being ostracized from society, the church of God marched triumphantly through successive generations. As the conflict now comes to a close and the battle lines are drawn, Satan targets for one last time, God's end-time church called the 'Remnant church'. In this cryptic language, it is described that Satan is "wrath" with the woman (Church) which is the 'Remnant Church - the final phase of God's true church on earth.

It is important then to identify this "Remnant" church against whom the forces of evil are unleashed. The unmistakable identity is given in verse 17, which says the "Remnant" are those who fulfill these requirements:

a) *"They keep the commandments of God"*

b) *And "have the testimony of Jesus which is the Spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).*

This "Remnant" church will be the prime target of assault by the Devil, his agents and all the forces of evil men, who will make an all-out war against the church of God. Yet, through this "Remnant" church, God will vindicate His character, because they have learnt through trials the value of suffering and have perfected a Christ-like character.





They will give the last warning message of the three Angels, seen in Revelation, to the world. They will stand un-assailed amidst deception, error and false signs and wonders.

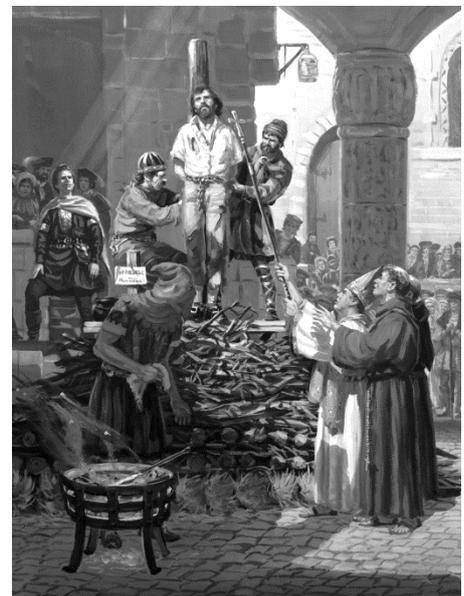
The 'Remnant church' understands *that* "The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering,--a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition". - *The Great Controversy*, p. 582. In this battle "The (seventh-day) Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty; for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve him not." - *The Great Controversy*, p. 606.

The commandment keeping Remnant church are "Those who honor the Bible Sabbath (who) will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government. Ministers who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the duty of yielding obedience to the civil authorities as ordained of God. In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment-keepers will be misrepresented and condemned.

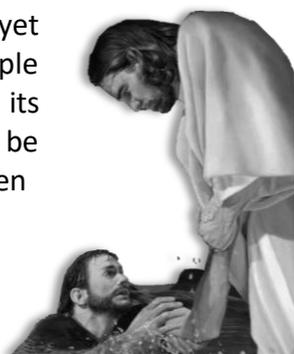
A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives." - *The Great Controversy*, p. 592.

"God desires His people to prepare for the soon-coming crisis. . . . Those only who have brought their lives into conformity to the divine standard, will stand firm at that time of test and trial. When secular rulers unite with ministers of religion to dictate in matters of conscience, then it will be seen who really fear and serve God. When the darkness is deepest, the light of a godlike character will shine the brightest. . . . And while the enemies of truth are on every side, watching the Lord's servants for evil, God will watch over them for good. He will be to them as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." - *Conflict and Courage*, p. 354.

"Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. **To stand in the defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.** . . . The Captain of our salvation will strengthen His people for the conflict in which they must engage". . . . - *Sons and Daughters of God*, p.201.



"In every age God's chosen messengers have been reviled and persecuted, yet through their affliction the knowledge of God has been spread abroad. Every disciple of Christ is to step into the ranks and carry forward the same work, knowing that its foes can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even





through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God's means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber." - *Reflecting Christ*, p. 366.

"How often this result has been seen in the history of God's messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrist who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." - *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 32-34.

"The church of God, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial, and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory. In holy vision the prophet saw the triumph of the people of God. He says: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory ... stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." - *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 75.

a) Promises to strengthen us

In order for us to be transformed like Him, God has given us His divine power to live that Godly life. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

- ✓ "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
- ✓ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:16,17,20).
- ✓ God is able to keep us from falling "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present [you] faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24).

May our lives, while on this earth, be transformed, renewed through trials and temptations and reflect Christ-like character. May we be prepared to meet Jesus, in peace, when He comes the second time and be found in His kingdom.

Are we willing to have this character formed within us?

May God help each one of to be victorious Christians each day till Jesus comes.





“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Revelation 1:7)

7. The End of Suffering

a) Resurrection and Restoration

Jesus promised, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also”* (John 14:1-3).

Surely Jesus is coming soon He says in Revelation 3:11, *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”*.

When Jesus comes the second time in the clouds of heaven, the experience of the redeemed is revealed to us. *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel (Jesus), and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth”* (John 5:28, 29).





“Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: "Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!" Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55). And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory. - Last Day Events, p. 276.



Christ is coming with clouds and with great glory. . . . He will come to raise the dead, and to change the living saints from glory to glory. . . . There will be a re-linking of the family chain”. – My Life Today, p. 352.

“The living righteous are changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Angels "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God. – Great Controversy, p. 645.

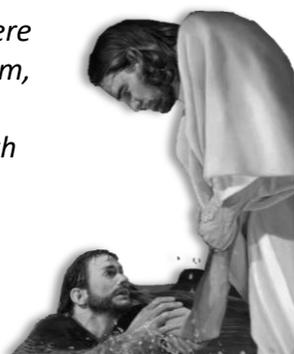
“In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost.

He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will "grow up" (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory. The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ's faithful ones will appear in "the beauty of the Lord our God," in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord. Oh, wonderful redemption! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation, but never fully understood”. – Great Controversy, p. 644.

b) Heaven at last

The Word of God gives us a glimpse of the new world. When Jesus comes back and gathers the redeemed to heaven, He will create a new heaven and new earth.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall





be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Revelation 21:1-5).

"In the home of the redeemed there will be no tears, no funeral trains, no badges of mourning, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isaiah 33:24. One rich tide of happiness will flow and deepen as eternity rolls on" - Maranatha, p. 352. "We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the city of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard" - Maranatha, p. 352.

"The earth originally given to man as his kingdom, betrayed by him into the hands of Satan, and so long held by the mighty foe, has been brought back by the great plan of redemption. All that was lost by sin has been restored" God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made the eternal abode of the redeemed. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever." - My Life Today, p. 350. "No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences of sin" - Maranatha, p. 351.

"All faces will reflect the image of their Redeemer. There will then be no anxious, troubled countenances, but all will be bright, and smiling in spotless purity. The angels will be there, also the resurrected saints with the martyrs, and the best of all, and what will cause us the most joy, our lovely Saviour, who suffered and died that we might enjoy that happiness and freedom, will be there.--His glorious face will shine brighter than the sun, and light up the beautiful city and reflect glory all around" -My Life Today, p. 357. "Upon all things, from the least to the greatest, the Creator's name is written, and in all are the riches of His power displayed". - My Life Today, p. 362.

"And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise". "The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love" - Great Controversy, p. 678.

One Final reminder

"One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory: "He had bright beams coming out of His side:

**What
Happened To
Your Hand?**





and there was the hiding of His power." Habakkuk 3:4, margin. That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God--there is the Saviour's glory, there "the hiding of His power." "Mighty to save," through the sacrifice of redemption, He was therefore strong to execute justice upon them that despised God's mercy. And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power"- Great Controversy, p. 674.

"In this life we can only begin to understand the wonderful theme of redemption. With our finite comprehension we may consider most earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy, that meet in the cross; yet with the utmost stretch of our mental powers we fail to grasp its full significance. The length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of redeeming love are but dimly comprehended. The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. Though the grief's and pains and temptations of earth are ended and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost".

"The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore--humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father's face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary's cross.

That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the



universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!" - Great Controversy, p.

651.

The scars in His hands are reminders that God understands suffering very well; and that, through suffering, He had triumphed exceedingly over sin. Those scars are a pledge of self-emptying, self-effacing love, for a world that crucified Him. Those very scars are the security and guarantee, that iniquity will not arise a second time. They are the emblem of the triumph of God's redeemed.

Through ceaseless ages, those scars would speak of the unending Love of God. They can never be erased, ignored or forgotten.

Yes, we can trust those nail scarred hands. Those hands are more than capable of, steering us in our journey through life.

Eternity will never be enough to fathom or even thank God for His unlimited, self-





emptying love. Oh! What matchless Love of God; it is worth giving all for Him.
It is worth a thousand sacrifices, worth a million hardships or a trillion abuses for a
SAVIOR, who is - LOVE IMMESURABLE. Amen!!!

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall

"Every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory"- MB 140.

