

Praise Him in the Midst of Trials

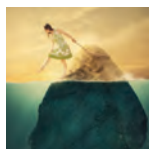


Webster's definition of the word *trial* is: (1) the act or process of trying, testing, or probation. (2) A hardship or suffering. (3) A source of annoyance. (4) A formal examination to decide a case by a court of law.

In many ways, Christians can claim all of these definitions and apply them to any trial experienced. Trials come in many forms: physical problems, mental anguish, financial shortfalls, or spiritual battles. These trials may come into our lives one at a time or all at once.

Consider several important thoughts to remember when experiencing trials. First, we are not the only ones to suffer through trials, and we will not be the last. Second, we need to be mindful of the kind of example we are setting for those observing our journey through trials. Third, God has a purpose for allowing the trials in our lives.

David suffered through various trials during his lifetime and addressed his reactions through many of the psalms he wrote. The word for psalms in Hebrew is *tehillim*, which means to praise God through song. Whether joyful or mournful, the singing of the psalms for the Children of Israel brought internal and external relief from the pressures of the trials they experienced. This was a way of teaching and admonishing one another during times of struggle, and their singing passed down truths to the following generations.



Proving House

In the book of Psalms, several words demonstrate the reasons for trials in the lives of Christians. One such word, *tried*, refers to the process of refining metals such as silver and gold. We read in Psalm 66:10, "For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us, as silver is tried." The Hebrew word for tried (try) in this passage is *bachan*. Psalm 66 refers to the Children of Israel being brought out of Egypt and taken to the Promised Land. God proved or examined (tried) them, as one who works with metals, to use their trials in changing the character of their lives into silver.

C.H. Spurgeon writes in his book, *The Treasury of David*, "All saints must go to the proving house; God had one Son without sin, but He never had a Son without trials." It is interesting to note that perhaps the Children of Israel would not have wanted to leave Egypt and the slavery that confined them if they had a preview of

the coming events they would face.

Living the Christian life has never been one of living free from trials. As believers, we need to be wary of those who preach the health-wealth philosophy so prevalent in our world today. God continually watches over us, and He will not allow trials to consume us. We may feel the Lord is not with us and is faraway during our trials, but He is not. As Christians, we must make an effort to not succumb to the trials that come into our lives. We should always be aware that God allows trials in our lives because He wants to make us better.

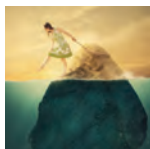
Satan wants to use the trials we endure to make us bitter because they can wear us down physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When we allow Satan to gain a foothold in our minds, we are allowing Him to build a fortress of negativity. If we follow the worldly philosophy of Christianity, we constantly will be depressed as we compare our personal lives to others and their prosperity instead of focusing on what God is trying to accomplish through the trials we experience.

Reflective Question

It is such a comfort to know God is continually watching over us as His children! Read Psalm 11:4. What physical feature of the Lord is mentioned in this verse?

God is always in complete control of our circumstances—past, present, and future. Where is the Lord in this verse?

Who is the Lord examining (trying) in this verse?



Purifying Heat

The trials Christians experience are God's way of purifying us to be more like Him. Many times God allows trials to build our character. Psalm 119:119 states, "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies." God's eyes are ever watching His children on their earthly journey, and He allows trials into their lives for a purpose. No trial is a joy to experience, but knowing there is a positive result can sometimes help make the journey tolerable. The dross mentioned in Psalm 119:119 refers to impurities or scum purged from silver or gold during the refining process. God is forming us to be more like Christ, His Son. God is in a constant mode of removing the dross (scum) from our lives. The Psalmist David praises God for the trials that molded and shaped him to be the man he had become.

Reflective Question

Read Psalm 119:71-75 and list all of the profitable positives David praised God for because of his afflictions (trials).

David states in Psalm 17:3 that God had tested his heart and visited him in the night hours when his life was free from the stress of everyday life. God examined his inner thoughts and found no evil motives. David had purposed in his life not to respond negatively to his trials. He accepted the fact that God allowed them. The word *tried* in Psalm 17:3 is translated from the Hebrew word *tsaraph* and means *refin* or *melt* our mind (thoughts) and feelings to be more like God. How do we respond to the trials that God allows into our lives?

How would Satan want us to respond to the refining trials that we experience?

As trials enter our lives, we demand immediate answers to our prayers, and solutions to the struggles we are experiencing. David asked God in Psalm 13 how long He (God) would forget him and keep His face hidden from him during his *trial*. Read the entire chapter of Psalm 13 and make a list of the negatives David shared with God.

David ends Psalm 13 on a positive note. Make a list of the positive phrases from verses 5 and 6.



Praising Heart

Traveling down a path of constant trials and struggles can be overwhelming. We pray and beg God to intervene for us and wonder why He doesn't answer our prayers sooner (or in a way we believe He should). Sometimes, we may not be suffering from personal trials but the consequences of bad choices made by a family member, friend, or a church member.

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 77, does not disclose the particular trial he was dealing with, but he makes it clear in verse 7 that the Lord was not listening to his constant pleas for answers. In verses 1-10, Asaph appears to be on a negative tirade as he continues to pray. The apparent lack of God's intervention on his behalf just made his struggles worse, and he complains to God how troubled he is. It is evident that his faith is beginning to waiver under the pressure of unanswered prayers.

Prayers are not prayed to manipulate God. Prayer is not a technique we learn to master during our time of need. Prayer is an intimate conversation between God and His children. God, in His sovereignty, has allowed trials into our lives for a particular reason. It may be years before the reason is revealed. The Lord allows painful experiences to enter our lives to purify our walk with Him and to form our character to be more like Him. He also desires to see us grow and learn from our trials.

It is imperative to teach our children how God continues to walk with us, answering our prayers on His terms, regardless of the trials. Creating a history book of moments and stories can demonstrate to our children and grandchildren how God answered our prayers. He is the same God who answered the prayers of the Old and New Testament saints as well as our prayers.

Asaph completely changed his prayer attitude in Psalm 77:11-12. The term *I will* has a different connotation than in the first ten verses. It is as if he finally realized his complaining was not working, and he began to focus on God's greatness and faithfulness down through the ages. As Asaph determined to meditate on the wonderful works of God, his emotions completely changed.

It is human nature to put ourselves in the center of our prayers. God's desire for us is to praise Him during our trials. He wants to

hear from us through praises for His goodness and greatness. A great way to praise God during trials is to journal everyday words that praise Him. As we meditate and praise God, our attitude will change, and we will become more like Christ. Our circumstances may not change; the trial may become more intense; our heart, however, will be more in tune with the heart of God.

Reflective Question

Read Psalm 77:1-10. Circle the words I, my, and mine. How many times does Asaph refer to himself?

How did Asaph's prayer attitude change after verse 10?

Take the time to journal words of praise to the Father for his goodness and greatness.

About the Writer: Pam Hackett has been a teacher for almost 30 years. She is coordinator for South Carolina WAC and Beaver Creek District WAC. She serves as missions study chairman in her local group and has been a WNAC board member since 2009. Her husband, Tim, pastors Fairview Free Will Baptist Church.