



THE THREE VICTORIES IN TRIALS

The typical definition of victory differs from God's viewpoint on the subject. When believers in Christ understand God's perspective and promise of victory in trials, they will deal with difficulties much differently than those who do not know the Lord.

God's Word presents three types of victory with regard to trials:

- **Deliverance from the trial**

2 Corinthians 1:10, He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

- **Development in the trial**

John 15:1-2, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

James 1:2-4, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- **Death by the trial**

John the Baptist was beheaded after being imprisoned by Herod (Matthew 14:1-2). The first martyr in Church history was Stephen, who was stoned to death after his arrest and subsequent interrogation by the ruling authorities (Acts 7:54-60).

All three types of victory associated with trials are mentioned in Hebrews 11:32-38, a passage that lists many of the heroes of faith.

Hebrews 11:32-38, And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—³⁸of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE TRIAL

In most cases, the first prayer uttered by those in difficulties is to ask God to get them out of the problem right away. That prayer is certainly understandable, since burdens and suffering are not welcomed guests but, instead, are viewed as intruders in everyday life.

God knows, however, that spiritual benefits can be realized by trials running their course. To accomplish His purposes, God determines the time element of trials. During this time frame, followers of Christ need to faithfully review the following promise.

Romans 8:28-29, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Since God is working out His plan for the ultimate good, believers are to trust His sovereign goodness and faithfulness. For further encouragement, believers should meditate on Psalm 31, among many other scriptural passages that deal with the trials of life. This plaintive Psalm highlights the anguish of a person in the midst of trials who realizes that he must trust the Lord for the outcome. When you read Psalm 31, notice verse 5. These are the words of Jesus as He was dying on the cross: "Into your hand, I commit my spirit."

Psalm 31

- ¹ *In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!*
- ² *Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!*
- ³ *For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;*
- ⁴ *you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge.*
- ⁵ *Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.*
- ⁶ *I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD.*
- ⁷ *I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul,*
- ⁸ *and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.*
- ⁹ *Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also.*
- ¹⁰ *For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.*
- ¹¹ *Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me.*
- ¹² *I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.*
- ¹³ *For I hear the whispering of many—terror on every side?—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.*
- ¹⁴ *But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.”*
- ¹⁵ *My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!*
- ¹⁶ *Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!*
- ¹⁷ *O LORD, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol.*
- ¹⁸ *Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.*
- ¹⁹ *Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!*
- ²⁰ *In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.*
- ²¹ *Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city.*
- ²² *I had said in my alarm, “I am cut off from your sight.” But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help.*
- ²³ *Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.*
- ²⁴ *Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!*

Psalm 31 reminds us that God is sovereign over all difficulties, and He determines the intensity and duration of trials. For someone in difficulty, the primary response is to trust the Lord and wait for His will to be accomplished through the trials. Should believers pray for deliverance from trials? That opportunity is certainly available, but remember that the answer and its timing are in God's hands. Trusting His sovereignty with regard to deliverance from a trial is a victory in itself!

DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRIAL

Growing in Christ is an on-going process for believers. This maturing process is sovereignly linked to the trials of life. Believers who are growing in Christ have cause to rejoice *in* trials since they are anticipating further Christ-like development.

Romans 5:3-5, *More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

The Lord prunes believers who are producing spiritual fruit so they can be even more fruitful. [See John 15:1-2, printed earlier in this study.] If a vine could respond verbally to the pruning process, the response would not be, “Pruning

feels really good.” Instead, the response would be, “Pruning hurts!” God, in His goodness, knows that “pruning pain” is unpleasant, but the discomfort is worth the harvest ... greater fruitfulness in the lives of believers.

Because of God’s great love for His children, He also brings purposeful trials into the lives of His disobedient children. This suffering is designed to bring wayward believers back to the Lord by a return to obedience of Scripture.

Hebrews 12:5-14, *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

⁷*It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?* ⁸*If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.* ⁹*Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?* ¹⁰*For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.* ¹¹*For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

¹²*Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,* ¹³*and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.* ¹⁴*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

To summarize: God, in His great mercy and goodness, encourages further Christ-likeness in a new convert, a fruitful believer, or a wayward believer. God does this through the attention-getting method of personal difficulties that, by their very nature, are designed to help believers grow closer to the Lord. That is a victory!

DEATH CAUSED BY THE TRIAL

Trials have a way of helping us “die to self” in order to more clearly follow the Lord.

Matthew 16:24-25, *Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

Spiritually speaking, dying to self is a definite victory. Physical death is not often placed in that same category; but, for a believer, going home to be with the Lord is a resounding victory!

Psalms 116:15, *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

1 Corinthians 15:53-55, *For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”*

Philippians 1:19-21, *for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,* ²⁰*as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* ²¹**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** *[Emphasis added]*

Some trials may be health concerns, or accidents, or physical safety, and all of these can result in physical death. For a believer, however, physical death is not the end of existence but, instead, is but a doorway by which believers enter into the presence of the Lord. Jesus said in John 10:10, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” In that declaration, He spoke of eternal life that begins with belief in Him and continues throughout eternity. Believers *really* never die, even though their physical bodies are made to expire.

Since they enjoy eternal life, believers are not to focus on physical death. Death is a defeated foe. Believers are, instead, to echo the testimony and focus of the Apostle Paul ... “For to me to live is Christ.” Each day provides further opportunity for believers to make a difference for Christ. What a victory! However, if death results from a trial of life, believers can continue to echo the words of Paul ... “and to die is gain.” What a victory!

TRIALS CONTAIN GOD’S PROMISE OF VICTORY FOR STEADFAST BELIEVERS

Problems of life are opportunities for believers to bring glory to Christ. They do that by being delivered out of trials, going through trials, or physically dying because of trials. All three possibilities are in the Lord’s hands, and all three have VICTORY written all over them. May believers approach trials with the perspective of bringing glory to God by

obeying His Word, praying for His help in every situation, and trusting Him to determine the best outcome in our trials to bring Him the greatest glory.

Romans 14:7-9, *For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*

(To review the varied purposes of trials, see [God's Purposes in His Children's Trials](http://www.wordtruth.net) at WordTruth.net – <http://www.wordtruth.net>)