

Weekly Devotions: THE REFINING FIRE OF TRIALS 8

Trials Train Us to be Ministers of Comfort

Experience is the best teacher; our trials equip us to be able to encourage and help others. As we go through tough times and learn what it means to trust God and to rise above our struggles, we will have a treasure trove of wisdom to share with others in the same situation. Our personal struggles also enable us to be able to empathize with those in distress. For those who are struggling, it is comforting to know that they are not alone and there are other 'comrades' in hardship.

Read 2 Cor. 1: 3-11

Paul was speaking from experience when he referred to God as God of all comfort (3). He had experienced God's comfort in his struggles; he testified that in every trial God had sustained and strengthened him. Not only was he able to persevere, his sufferings prepared him to be able to comfort others and to point them to God in their times of difficulty.

Scholars are not sure what affliction Paul was referring to in verse 8 but it was serious enough that Paul even felt death was imminent (9). The occasion led him to recognize his utter helplessness and taught him to trust God who has the power to even raise the dead (9).

As God had never failed to deliver His servants from peril, Paul was confident that He would deliver them from their struggles. From his personal experience of God's power, comfort and faithfulness, Paul was confident that God would deliver him and his fellow workers even from a life-threatening situation.

Questions to Ponder

1. How did Paul describe God and what would God do for those who are afflicted (3-4)? Why?
2. How did the Corinthian Christians benefit from Paul's hardships (6)? Was there a time when you experienced God's comfort in your time of difficulty and how can your experience be an encouragement to others?
3. How was Paul affected by the affliction in Asia and what lesson did he learn from it (8-9)? What is Paul confident of in times of difficulty (10)? On what do you place your hope in your time of difficulty?