

Living as a Christian

The apostle Paul encouraged us to follow his 'teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings'. He declared concerning his persecutions, 'Out of them all the Lord rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted'. If it is in your heart to live as a Christian, then three experiences will regularly impact your life. Either they will be an unwanted intrusion or a blessed intervention by the Lord. The first is the seven times trial of faith. This is 'of God' and from God. The second is affliction and it comes to us from Satan by the hands of evil men. And thirdly, you will experience temptation. It is very important that we know how to separate the trial of faith from our afflictions. We should be rejoicing in the trial of our faith, 'but all the days of the afflicted are bad'. Nevertheless, in all our afflictions, He is afflicted.

'Trial' is the work of God upon us to bring us to our inheritance as sons. The psalmist wrote, 'The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on earth, refined seven times.' The word of God is tried seven times. The purpose of trial, and a trial 'seven times', is to give you your inheritance as a son. It's producing for you the substance of your predestination and equipping you to inherit it. And that word is going to try you until it comes to pass. The trial of faith is completely pure in motive, intent, and outcome. The Scripture says that His way is blameless and His ways are just. When you are enduring a trial of your faith, this is the principle of seven times by seven Spirits directed completely towards your sonship.

References:

2Ti 3:12
Isa 63:9
Psa 12:6

Psa 18:30
Pro 15:15

Further Study

Psa 12

Daily Gospel

John 13

Refined, purified and purged

The prophet Daniel prayed from the place of the Jewish exile in Babylon. And the Lord spoke to Him, not only concerning their captivity and return, but also the end of the age when the saints will receive and possess a kingdom forever, for all ages to come. The prophet looked down to the time of the end and saw the experience of believers in all ages. The Lord spoke to him saying, 'Go your way Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the time of the end'. The salient statement was this: 'many will be purged, purified, and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand this, but those who have insight will understand this'.

There are two notable points for us today. Firstly, we will experience the sufferings of Christ as refining, purging and purifying and this will be the hallmark experience of believers in every age, until the 'time of the end'. Then the seven-sealed book will be opened. The second feature is that many will reject this proposition of fellowship in the sufferings of Christ in favour of a positional gospel. We are to fill up that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. None of the wicked will understand that it is in the heart of the Father to bring forth many sons to the glory of an everlasting kingdom.

On his first journey, Paul exhorted those who received him, that it is through many afflictions that we enter the kingdom. It is a wicked and false doctrine that teaches people to reject the disciplining work of the Father. We are to keep the word of His perseverance, be faithful unto death and receive the crown of life.

References:

Dan 7:18 Act 14:22
Dan 11:35 Dan 12:8
Rev 5:1 Rev 3:10-11

Further Study

Rev 3

Daily Gospel

John 14

The pure and blameless motive of God

The word of God is going to refine you to bring forth your sonship as a shining light, for a life of good works. By this operation you are His workmanship, and He will reward you with the eternal inheritance which has been determined for you. This principle is seen throughout the Scripture. Every word of God is 'tried seven times' as silver and gold. He knows the way you take and when He has tried you, you will come forth as gold, fit for the Master's use. This is the pure and blameless motive of God toward you. Nevertheless, where we struggle with this trial, we will experience suffering. God is not, in any way, imposing suffering upon us. But His work is trying and refining us. And as a consequence, we are being conformed to the word about us.

The psalmist refers to the experience of Joseph. 'He sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They afflicted his feet with fetters, and he himself was laid in irons; until the time that his word came to pass, that word tried him.' The particular word of the Lord about Joseph brought a specific trial to Joseph to prepare him for the works that had been prepared for him. Remember, the trial is always commensurate with the word concerning you and the apprehension of your work and inheritance as a son. When you hear and receive this word into your heart then you 'invite' a seven times trial. There is great encouragement in this. 'Every word of God is pure, He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.'

References:

Mat 5:6 Eph 2:10
Job 23:10 Psa 18:30
Pro 30:5 Psa 105:19

Further Study

Psa 18

Daily Gospel

John 15

The three outcomes of our trial

When you are in the trial by the word about you, remember that He is a shield to you as you take refuge and confidence in the word that He's bringing to you. And, if you will endure, that word will come forth as gold in you. When we consider Israel, the word and the trial were directed to them. It had come from the mouth of the Lord so that they could not only inherit a kingdom, but they could possess the land which the Lord had promised generations before to Abraham. We know that God tested Abraham. Concerning Israel's trial, Moses encouraged the people to know in their heart that the Lord their God was disciplining them, just as a man disciplines his son, and that they should not be afraid. He declared, 'God has come in order to test you'. Like Israel of old, you are tested for three very particular outcomes.

- 1) To know what is in your heart, and whether you will keep His commands. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.
- 2) In order that you may *fear Him*, and that you will not sin. If you are ensnared in besetting sin, then you must find the fear God. If we fear Him, then we will keep the word which He has spoken to us and not sin by deviating away from it. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him. The trial is blameless and the fear of the Lord is clean.
- 3) To do good for you in the end.

References:

Exo 20:20 Psa 111:10
Psa 25:14 Jas 1:3
Deu 8:2, 5, 16

Further Study

Deu 8

Daily Gospel

John 16

The Lord tries the heart and mind

These are the words of the Lord to Jeremiah in the time just before the exile to Babylon. 'Hear the words of this covenant ... cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant. Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God.' Concerning the trial of faith and inheriting the covenant of sonship, 'He knows those who are His' and 'He knows the way that I take'. Job marvelled that the Lord had set His heart on man, that He 'should visit him every morning, and test him every moment'.

We have it recorded in the Scriptures that so many of the servants of the Lord cried out that He would test and try them, and particularly at a time when many were breaking the covenant. Jeremiah said, 'You know me, O LORD, You see me; and You have tested my heart toward You'. David said 'Examine me, O LORD, and prove me, try my mind and my heart'. And again, 'Try me and know my thoughts'. We hear the same word which the Lord spoke to Israel as we journey to the inheritance of our sonship. 'You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you .. that He might *humble* you, *testing* you to *know what was in your heart*.' This verse of scripture is precious because we do want to know Him and fear Him. And *we want to know* what's in our heart. We must not trust the motives of our heart and mind as if they are pure according to our own righteousness. Nevertheless, we should be encouraged that 'for the righteous, God tries the hearts and minds'.

References:

Jer 12:3 Deu 8:2
Job 23:10 Psa 26:2
Job 7:17-18 Psa 7:9

Further Study

Psa 7

Daily Gospel

John 17

Seven times hotter

The seven-times trial by the word of the Lord will test our heart and mind. And of course, this trial of our faith is directed towards us through the Holy Spirit. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the fullness of the seven Spirits of God. This refinement comes to us 'to do us good in the end'. Like the experience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when the furnace is heated seven times hotter, the word is pure and it does not consume us. When the trial is complete, that particular area of your life will come forth as gold. That specific area of your work will be an effective and functional part of the lampstand church. You will be a viable, legitimate part of the cluster of a lampstand. In the face of His fire and its refining, we must not be accounted as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in our heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is bringing the fullness of the seven Spirits of God into our lives. This is the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. The trial is coming to bring us forward to a new level of capacity in the Spirit. It is a great blessing to receive the particular anointing from the Lord, the Spirit. After you have suffered the particular trial, for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. The Holy Spirit is applying the oil of seven Spirits to our lives to increase the capacity of our sonship. When the fire is on the oil then the light of seven Spirits is shining.

References:

Psa 12:6 Act 7:51
Dan 3:19 1Pe 5:10
1Pe 4:12-13

Further Study

Dan 3

Daily Gospel

John 18

According to His will

We must be clear in our understanding that the trial of faith is born in the pure motive of God as our Father. It is His process of discipline upon us so that we come to the full stature of our sonship. The word which brings the trial of faith is directed towards the formation and development of our capacity to do the works of our sonship. When the wise man said that the 'righteous fall seven times', he was referring to the periodic outcome of our incapacity to do the works prepared for us. It does not imply that any sin has occurred. In this case, we are 'suffering according to the will of God'.

This was the nature of Joseph's trial. And it became an affliction for him. The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. However, God was with him and rescued him from all his afflictions. Having been sold as a slave, they afflicted his feet with fetters. He was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.

The word of the Lord is true and it is faithful. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction'. There is a definite time span on the trial of faith. Unlike affliction, it is not a test of endurance, nor is it intended to produce perseverance. The trial of faith is firstly working to help us identify our name and sonship. It is also the process of discipline upon us to help us achieve and attain our sonship. It brings us to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of Christ.

References:

Eph 2:10 1Pe 2:19
Act 7:9-10 Psa 105:17-19
Isa 48:10 Isa 63:9
Eph 4:13

Further Study

Isa 48

Daily Gospel

John 19

Failing to possess the land

While the trial of faith is the means by which we inherit our sonship, it is through the ordeal of affliction that we enter and possess our inheritance. Moses said, 'I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers'. And again, 'See, the Lord your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.' The central theme of the book of Deuteronomy is 'possessing the inheritance' which the Lord promised to the fathers beforehand. By analogy, we are to go into the promised land and possess our inheritance. It is called a 'better possession'. Otherwise, under duress, we will turn aside, draw back and give it up.

It is remarkable that the apostle Paul endured in his flesh what appears to be the penalty for not possessing the inheritance of the land. This is the thorn in the flesh. Remember, the problem for the children of Israel was that, having received their inheritance, they never possessed the land which God had promised to them according to the covenant. They came up to the gateway of the land of Canaan and received their inheritance, but were not able to go in and possess it fully. If we draw back or come short, His soul has no pleasure in us. If we will apply ourselves to doing the works of our name, then affliction is producing endurance. We have need of endurance, so that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise. As the prophet says, 'In their affliction, they will earnestly seek Me'.

References:

Deu 1:8, 21
Heb 10:34, 36
Heb 11:40
Hos 5:15

Further Study

Deu 1

Daily Gospel

John 20

Satan standing up

Possessing the promise of our sonship is the crisis for many of us. We have heard so much about an inheritance of sonship. However, the moment we step forward to lay hold of it then Satan stands up against us. Remember, God is neither the author of our affliction, nor does He afflict anyone. It is His exclusive prerogative to bring upon us a pure and blameless trial of faith. Affliction comes from Satan and from the hands of wicked men. The dilemma that many Christians face is that they attribute their afflictions to God, as if it is the trial of faith. This is not the case. Afflictions come because Satan himself initiates them. He brings conflict and warfare against your predestination to stop you from going up and possessing your inheritance.

Remember that if we belong to Christ, then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. He has chosen us to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him. It is important that we are not shaken by these afflictions, because this is the doorway to the kingdom. We were appointed for this and we have been forewarned. Affliction comes at the hands of godless men. He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men. It appears there are only two occasions where the Lord takes responsibility for affliction. It is nevertheless the fruit of disobedience, not His pre-emptive will.

When we take the communion bread and wine we are committing ourselves to the sufferings of Christ and the afflictions of the righteous. We are committing ourselves to filling up that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. It is unleavened bread, the bread of affliction.

References:

Act 2:23 Gal 3:29
Jas 2:5 Deu 16:3
Lam 3:33 Mic 1:5-6
Nah 1:12 Col 1:24
1Co 5:7-8 Psa 34:9

Further Study

1Co 5

Daily Gospel

John 21

Understanding our warfare

We need to understand our warfare. The moment we set our face to obey the word of God, and submit ourselves to the seven-times refining process upon us, Satan stands up and instigates an ordeal of affliction. There are many occurrences of this in the Scripture. We know that Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. The book of Zechariah accounts for Satan standing at the right hand of Joshua the high priest to accuse him. And we are particularly familiar with the manifold afflictions of Job at the hand of the evil one. But perhaps the most remarkable occurrence is in Revelation chapter twelve when the woman, the church, is crying out in labour and Satan is standing up before her to devour her child.

The great apostle was certainly not ignorant concerning the schemes and devices of the devil. It seems that whenever Paul had an open door, Satan was there to oppose him. After receiving the word with joy, we must take care that we are planted, rooted and grounded in love. If we have no firm root in ourselves, we are only temporary. When affliction or persecution arises because of the word, we will immediately fall away. Those who reject the trial of faith and discipline of the Father, will eventually turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which they desire to be enslaved all over again. If you have learnt the way of trial, then you will receive wisdom to understand yourself and your way. The Lord is testing your heart and motive so that you can receive the Spirit of wisdom by the power of Eternal Spirit.

References:

1Th 3:3-4 1Ch 21:1
Zec 3:1 1Co 16:9
Gal 4:9 Pro 14:8
Isa 11:2

Further Study

1Ch 21

Daily Gospel

Matthew 1

Affliction for ten days

We read in the letter to the lampstand church in Smyrna, 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested [lit. tempted], and you will have affliction for ten days.' It is important to remember that He was not referring to ten literal days. In the code language of the Scripture, ten is the number of affliction. We recall that Jacob had his wages changed ten times and Job was insulted ten times. The afflictions of the number ten come from Satan and at the hands of evil men.

If we're not embracing the trial of faith that the Holy Spirit is bringing to us by the power of the seven Spirits of God then we will be confused. That was the crisis for the children of Israel. The Lord delivered them out of Egypt by the power of the seven Spirits of God. Moses declared, 'Has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within a nation by trials [1], by signs [2] and wonders [3] and by war [4] and by a mighty hand [5] and by an outstretched arm [6] and by great terrors [7], as the LORD your God did for you?'

If we are resisting the Lord as He is bringing us through the ten-times affliction, we are reciprocally testing the Lord ten times. We must not test God ten times when He wants to try us by fire seven times. We know now that every word of God is tried. If the word of the Lord has tried you and opened a door, then you must be diligent to work in that field and enter the kingdom through the affliction that is associated with your warfare.

References:

Gen 31:41 Job 19:3
Deu 4:24 Num 14:22
Pro 30:5

Further Study

Num 14

Daily Gospel

Matthew 2

An afflicted way

In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that we should enter through the narrow gate. The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. In a typically Hebrew way of speaking, Jesus repeated Himself a second time, only He replaced the word 'narrow' with 'afflicted'. The gate is small and the way is afflicted that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The word 'afflicted' is certainly a more helpful interpretation of this verse. In most other cases in the Gospels, it is translated as 'afflicted'. Affliction is not a negative possibility for the Christian; it is guaranteed. The apostle Paul certainly understood this. In the book of Acts, Paul accounts that, as he was returning to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, he was strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'. He reminded the Thessalonians that he had previously warned them that they would have afflictions. Then he rejoiced to see how they were dealing with their afflictions.

When Joseph named his second son Ephraim, he said, 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction'. The connection between affliction and a glorious inheritance is unbreakable. Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison. Nevertheless, we will have anguish of heart and many tears in these times. Paul described this as excessive burden and despair. When Satan stands up against us, it is his intention to break our confidence and morale. He seeks to divert us, like he did with the Galatian church.

References:

Mat 7:14 1Th 3:4
Act 14:22 Gen 41:52
2Co 4:1, 17

Further Study

2Co 4

Daily Gospel

Matthew 3

The works of evil men

We are coming to understand that afflictions are from Satan, so we also recognise that these are the works of evil men. Satan causes enemies and godless people to rise up against us. And we can be wounded, even in the house of our friends. The accusations and the insults of people, both in and out, become the crucible of our affliction. Many who are unresolved with their life, unresolved with their brothers in Christ, have made it their goal to bring us down. 'The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth.' If you are given to criticising people and putting them down, you should consider the possibility that you're a messenger of Satan. A messenger of Satan is someone who seeks to erode the morale, the confidence and the well-being of a person.

In this way they destroy the work of God. This is why we must not be those who are backbiters, critical and cynical towards our brothers and sisters, casting judgement over them. If we bite and devour one another, we will be destroyed by one another. We will be rescued from perverse and evil men. But we know also that evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. The seven lampstand churches in Asia experienced the full scope of evil against them, experiencing affliction because there was a synagogue of Satan among them. The symbolic reference to 'ten days' implies the fullness of affliction against them. The Lord Jesus warned them in advance that they would be tempted by the tempter and that this would result in death and imprisonment for some. But He also promised the crown of life to those who were faithful unto death.

References:

2Th 3:2 2Ti 3:13
Gal 5:15 2Co 12:7
Rev 2:10

Further Study

Rev 2

Daily Gospel

Matthew 4

Satan is a destroyer

Satan is described throughout Scripture as the tempter, deceiver, destroyer, a murderer and our adversary. He's filled with trickery, deceit, cunning, and manipulations. While society aggrandises this precocious arrogance and destructive behaviour, it does not realise that Satan is seeking their end. Satan comes to steal, kill and to destroy. And we should consider that 'kill' and 'destroy' are not the same thing. A study of the destroyer in the Old Testament attests that, more than seeking to kill, Satan desires to remove any evidence of our existence. He wants us destroyed.

Affliction assaults the character, the very essence of a person. And in most cases, our afflictions will come as injustice and not have merit in any way. Having done nothing other than receive the fiery trial seven times, they will be undeserved and unjust. The psalmist despaired that 'many hate me wrongfully' and that 'those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies; what I did not steal, I then have to restore.'

Indeed, in many of David's writings throughout the book of Psalms, he entreats the Lord for deliverance from the adversity caused by ungodly men. In the midst of Job's extreme suffering he reflected, 'God hands me over to ruffians and tosses me into the hands of the wicked'. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter proclaimed that Jesus Christ Himself was nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men. The lesson we learn is that, even though Jesus has removed the stronghold of law by nailing it to the cross, this does not mean we will not be afflicted by this same law in the hands of unrighteous men.

References:

2Jn 1:7 Joh 8:44
1Pe 5:8 1Co 10:10
Psa 69:4 Job 16:11

Further Study

Psa 69

Daily Gospel

Matthew 5

Persecution – suffering for His name

In the account of the churches in the book of Revelation, there are seven overcomings by seven Spirits. The letters refer to the ‘throne of Satan’ and the ‘deep things of Satan’. Undoubtedly, the things that are now being put forward in our society are the deep things of Satan. Anybody who seeks to be godly and live a godly life is going to be opposed. Satan has stood up against us, as he stood up against the whole of Israel. There are two sets of afflictions which we will experience if we seek to do the works of our name and sonship. There are the afflictions that result as a secondary outcome from the pure word of God. Then there are the afflictions that come just because we confess the name of Jesus Christ. We are reminded of the words of Peter, ‘If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed’.

You are being afflicted because Satan has stood up and you are now resisting him, firm in your faith and striving against sin. Paul said, ‘You have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.’ Satan is the one who weakens the nations. He afflicts us to weaken us, not registering that the power of God is manifested and perfected in weakness. Thus, God uses these afflictions as a secondary aid to bring us to glory. If Satan had understood this, Paul reckoned that the rulers of this age would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

References:

2Ti 3:10-12 1Co 2:8
Rev 2:24 1Pe 5:9
1Pe 4:14

Further Study

1Pe 5

Daily Gospel

Matthew 6

Suffering unjustly

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica concerning their suffering. 'We ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.' He encouraged the Thessalonians that their afflictions and persecutions are a plain indication of God's righteous judgement so that they would be considered worthy of the kingdom of God. We too are found worthy through suffering because He brings us into the position of a son. In the same way that Jesus suffered at the hands of evil men, being reviled but not reviling in return, we too can demonstrate the righteousness of God. Though we are oppressed and afflicted, we must resist the temptation to open our mouths in self-vindicating defence.

As we embrace weakness, we activate the power of God. Firstly, the power of God sustains us in our suffering. We are weak in Him, but we live with Him by the power of God toward us. Secondly, the power of God is directed toward those wicked men who need redemption. Weakness must become our mode. For it is in this moment of illumination that the most vitriolic assault can give way to the deepest of mourning. The prophet Zechariah foretold of Jesus Christ that they would look on Him whom they pierced. And they would mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. This realisation presents all men with a choice. Either we join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, or disobey the gospel of our Lord Jesus and pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

References:

2Th 1:4-5, 9 Isa 53:7
Rom 3:25 2Co 13:4
Zec 12:10

Further Study

Zec 12

Daily Gospel

Matthew 7

Momentary, light affliction

Remarkably, Paul said that he was 'well content' with distresses and insults. And we will readily confess that we have not yet attained to this level of contentment! Nevertheless, we must learn to endure. Jesus said, 'Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me'. In the same way that the church in Ephesus was commended, we also must have perseverance and endure for His name's sake, not growing weary. If we can endure, our suffering will become 'momentary, light affliction', producing for us an eternal weight of glory.

God doesn't pre-empt affliction, but He does allow it to come because it is producing maturity in our character. Affliction produces perseverance; and perseverance brings about proven character. This is proof, indicating that we have been approved by the Lord. This is the goal for all of us as we endure afflictions. We don't need godly character to inherit. That is the outcome of our new birth. However, we do need proven character to possess our inheritance as sons of God. When we understand this, we are greatly comforted and overflowing with joy in all our affliction. And it is here that we learn to offer, just as the Macedonians learned to offer liberally in their ordeal of affliction.

To one of the seven churches the commendation was made, 'You have kept the word of My perseverance'. This is an encouraging thought. We have heard about an obedience that is not our own and a righteousness that is not our own. Our obedience and righteousness come as a gift. In the same way, we cannot conjure up our own perseverance. It will come as a gift if we are diligent to keep the word of His perseverance.

References:

2Co 12:10 Mat 5:11
 Rev 2:2 Rom 5:4
 Rev 3:10

Further Study

Mat 5

Daily Gospel

Matthew 8

The parable of the sower

The Gospel of Matthew accounts for the parable of the sower and the seed which fell upon the rocky ground. Jesus said, 'Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.' He then explains that the seed which fell upon the rocky ground was received with joy. And of course, many of us receive the word with joy. Remember, in the first case, that word is the word about us and about our sonship. This word is trying us and refining us seven times through the Holy Spirit and by the seven Spirits of God. It's bringing illumination, a sense of hope and a sense of direction.

Christ continued, 'But they have no root in themselves, and when affliction and persecution arise because of the word, they fall away'. We have already discussed the suffering of affliction and persecution. However, Luke's account of this same parable is slightly different and very interesting. Having described the same scenario, he concludes that 'in a time of temptation they fall away'. It is important to note that those who fall away from Jesus Christ, do not usually fall away during the time of affliction and persecution. Rather, they fall away in the time of resulting temptation that comes because the affliction and persecution have broken them down. They become liable and vulnerable to temptation.

Satan wants to tempt you so that you deviate away from your predestination and your works. If you are not firstly aware of the cause of your affliction, then you will be vulnerable to temptation. Thus the Scripture warns us to 'be aware lest the tempter tempts you'.

References:

Mat 13:5, 21
2Th 1:4
Luk 8:13
1Th 3:5

Further Study

Mat 13

Daily Gospel

Matthew 9

The suffering of temptation

We have already made an important distinction. The trial of faith that comes upon us is from the hand of the Lord, according to His word. And we have noted that affliction is never from God. Rather, it is from the initiative of Satan himself, by the hands of wicked men. His goal is to break our morale, bring us under duress, and make us liable and vulnerable to temptation.

The suffering of temptation is not firstly related to our sin. Jesus was without sin, and we know He was tempted in all things as we are. And because He was tempted, He can sympathise with our weaknesses. Since He Himself was tempted in that which He suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. The first level of temptation is to be drawn away from the will of God by our own lusts. Lusts are not necessarily immoral behaviours or preoccupations, though they can be. Rather, they are any kind of fleshly desire extending beyond the necessary limit of our sanctification. This could be, for example, accruing wealth, undue profiteering in business, or inordinate pleasure seeking. It is at these points of personal inclination that Satan wages warfare on us through affliction.

The agony of affliction lies in the acute temptation directed at our innate and intrinsic predisposition. Right in the crucible of human life, where affliction is coming upon you, Satan is rising up against you to tempt you. We must never consider that God is responsible when we yield to temptation. He tempts no man and is tempted by no man. Each man is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

References:

1Jn 3:5
Jas 1:13-14
2Ti 2:22
Tit 3:3

Further Study

1Pe 1

Daily Gospel

Matthew 10

Satan – the tempter

When we are suffering, it is always because of sin and the consequences of our sinful behaviour. It is the consequences of our own sin, or the sin of others. And where we are suffering, it is there that we are tempted. Satan tempts you to deviate to another way. This will not be the narrow way of the Lord which leads to life. Right there, another word is coming to you. And if you are not aware of your affliction, then you are vulnerable. You must be aware less the tempter tempts you. The degree to which you do not understand the affliction in your life is the degree to which you will be vulnerable to temptation. However, to the degree that you understand your affliction, you will be able to stand in the face of temptation. You will be able to proceed forward and possess the inheritance that He has already given you. We should remember and take courage in the fact that, because Jesus Himself was tempted in that which He suffered, He is able to rescue us.

As Jesus entered the garden of Gethsemane with Peter, James and John, He instructed them to ‘watch and pray that they may not enter into temptation’. Jesus went just a stone’s throw away to pray, and the three disciples were immediately faced with the crisis of the hour of affliction. They did not understand their affliction, nor did they understand His affliction. They did, however, have a dawning awareness of trouble approaching them. This scenario explains our Christian life at times, when the word of God is being tried. We needn’t be surprised when we feel destabilised, unable to stand completely as a son of God, or as if we have no bearings.

References:

Heb 2:18
1Pe 1:20
2Co 11:3
Mat 26:38-40

Further Study

Mat 26

Daily Gospel

Matthew 11

Resist the devil – flee temptation

The apostle James encourages us to resist the devil and he will flee from us. In order to resist the devil we must draw on the power of God and flee temptation. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, 'For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.' Our striving against sin is two-fold. It is firstly striving against sin in us. And secondly, it is striving against the consequence of sin in others when it is levelled against us as affliction or persecution.

More often than not, it is this second striving against sin that we find particularly difficult to deal with. If we sin, we can accept the personal responsibility of dealing with it. Where we are not responsible, we must not lose heart or grow weary in the trial and testing of temptation. We must recognise and acknowledge our weariness, so that we do not rationalise our vulnerability to temptations. We can never say that our temptations are acceptable. The moment we build a case defending ourselves, we are rejecting the weakness of Christ. We can resist to the point of shedding blood, because there is power from outside of us to overcome. The lampstand church, and therefore every believer, is called to be an overcoming church. Indeed, there is a full measure of overcomings outlined in the letters addressed to the seven lampstand churches in the book of Revelation.

If we want to proceed forward in the will of God, we must bring our sin into the light. For if we are in the light then darkness cannot comprehend or overtake the light. When we come into the light and confess in fellowship, grace is towards us.

References:

1Pe 5:9
Gal 6:9
1Jn 1:7

Further Study

1Jn 1

Daily Gospel

Matthew 12

Remaining vigilant – watch and pray

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had instructed the disciples to watch and pray so that they would not enter into temptation. But they were asleep. Jesus came to them saying, 'Could you not pray with Me one hour?' They were distressed and they were stressed. And when Jesus looked up and saw the servant of the high priest coming with Judas, the disciples Peter, James and John were still sleeping for sorrow. They did not understand the things that would shortly take place. They were feeling pain and anguish, and they were not coping. Until then, Jesus had been very compassionate. But all of a sudden He commanded them, 'Get up!' 'Get up and pray that you enter not into temptation.' The intent of what He was saying was addressing the importance of vigilance in a crisis. This is the vigilance needed in the hour of temptation. In the book of Revelation, Jesus spoke similarly to the church in Smyrna, 'You will be tempted'.

We must always look backwards to our afflictions, and forward to our vulnerability to temptation. And the word of God, at that point, is not coming as a comfort or consolation. It is an admonition, an exhortation, and a warning to watch and pray. 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation'. The crisis of temptation for the three disciples was whether to remain or turn aside. And they did depart soon after. They gave way to temptation as humiliation came upon them. We recall Jesus had to spend time with Peter and restore him. He had to bring him back to the word tried seven times so Peter could make progress again. Where we are not understanding our affliction, we are liable and vulnerable to temptation.

References:

Joh 18:1-2
Mat 26:40-46
Luk 22:40-46

Further Study

Luk 22

Daily Gospel

Matthew 13

Darkness is the problem

When Jesus went all the way out to the death of sin, He found us there and told us to repent and join His obedience. Our suffering has no virtue and no merit. It is the evidence of the curse and the harbinger of our eternal death. But when we join the fellowship of His sufferings, He is bringing us back from the death of sin. Our eternal death is commuted to a process of discipline and chastening, which is redeeming us from the death of sin and bringing us to the inheritance of our sonship. We are delivered from suffering at the point where we cease from sin. This is where we join the statement of Christ, 'It is finished'. By this means, He works all things together for good to those who love Him. This is all part of the finished work of the everlasting covenant.

When Jesus Christ travelled outside the camp, He went further than anything or anyone could ever go from the presence of the Father. He went all the way to the 'bottoms of the mountains', to use the prophetic language of Jonah. And He took both sin and sinner with Him. For the person who does not repent and join the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in His cross, they are left in the land of forgetfulness. They are remembered no more. Their name is blotted out from the Lamb's book of life. The cross is the instrument of salvation and judgement. The fourth aspect of God's foreknowledge is that He knows who will reject His redemptive work. This does not change the fact that He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus went outside the camp to proclaim the truth of sonship to every man.

References:

Rev 1:4

Rev 3:1

Rev 4:5

Rev 5:6

1Jn 1:5

Further Study

1Jn 2

Daily Gospel

Matthew 14

Difficult times will come

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, 'But realise this, that in the last days difficult times will come'. These days are evidently upon us. There is an acute warfare, particularly upon our youth. The fundamental philosophy of the 'Y-generation' is antagonistic to the Scriptures. While the Scripture teaches a proposition of obedience, the education system today teaches the proposition, 'You can *do* what you want and you can *be* what you want'. To our shame, much of the pentecostal church teaches this same fallacy. We can only be that which God has ordained and named for us.

Paul continued, 'Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control'. Certainly, each of these behaviours is rampant throughout society today. 'Without self-control' is undoubtedly the warfare upon the young Christian's soul. The apostle admonished the Corinthians to devote themselves to prayer, so that Satan would not tempt them because of their lack of self-control. If the warfare takes away your self-control, you will cease to live in your predestination, cease to endure affliction, cease to overcome, and you will not receive your reward. Paul concludes that such men 'will make no further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all'.

Young people, and indeed all Christians, who have been caught in folly must bring it to the light. Countless young people have been caught because they were intoxicated and ensnared in their hour of temptation. Indeed, we have a murderous intoxicant in our society today. Satan is a liar, a thief and a destroyer from the beginning. His way is broad and there are many who go by it. They are lured in, believing they can withstand his devices. However, once ensnared, deliverance is only available by a seven-times sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

References:

2Ti 3:1-2, 9
Eph 2:10
Heb 12:24

Further Study

Heb 12

Daily Gospel

Matthew 15

The hardening of Pharaoh

When we are tempted, our behaviour will be both fundamentally instinctive and dangerously destructive to ourselves and others. That is how Satan destroys the church. If we become ensnared by yielding to temptation, it can be a very long road of condemnation, in the flesh, back to the trial of faith. However, Peter wrote that 'the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation'. This does not mean that He rescues us in the moment when we are being drawn by our lusts. Rather, the Lord has a mode, by offering, whereby we can be restored. It is paramount that we bring our sin into the light and present ourselves.

Leviticus chapter five provides the structural remedy by which, through offering, we recover ourselves from the consequence of the sin of temptation. We will note that the blood of the sin offering for us, Jesus Christ, has two elements. Firstly, the seven-times sprinkling of His blood cleanses us and brings us back into fellowship. This is the process of confession, godly grief, and mourning. Secondly, the offending matters are taken 'outside the camp' by the sincere and complete disclosure of our sinful deeds.

As we then present ourselves a burnt offering, we are included again in the fellowship of the communion. This is the means by which we can be recovered to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. When you present yourself for recovery, it will entail presenting yourself to the discipline of righteousness. This is a very practical commitment to continue in the fellowship of offering, so that fruit can be born and your progress seen by all. Lastly, there is a process of restitution to those who have been offended and sinned against. The apostle Paul refers to the symbolism of the *trespass offering* when he wrote, 'If anyone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one'.

References:

2Pe 2:12 Jud 1:10
Gal 6:1-2 2Co 7:11
Lev 5:8-10, 16

Further Study

2Co 7

Daily Gospel

Matthew 16