

Interpreting Troubles

Harmony M.B.C., July 19, 2008 (Morning)

Robert P. Myers

1Peter 4:12-16 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 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. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Scripture tells us that man is of few days and full of trouble. Every one of us can attest to the fact that life on this planet presents plenty of problems and seemingly fewer solutions. We experience troubles on every hand as we try to make a living, as we interact with other people, as we wrestle with inward things, and generally, as we do what people do in the normal course of life.

In the midst of all these various problems and challenges, we are sometimes perplexed and confused about how such things happen. We wonder at their presence in our lives and we would always like to see a time when there are no such troubles, when life is a smooth ride in a large boat down a placid river. But, that is rarely the case. So, it is important for us to properly meet, understand, and deal with troubles which come our way. This morning, I hope the Holy Spirit will help us all to gain a little more insight and thoughtfulness about life troubles and enable us to properly interpret their presence and purpose in our lives.

I. There Will Be a Fiery Trial For Each Believer; It is Generic Yet Unique

- We need to properly interpret what is happening
 - Not to be thought of as strange
 - We would think it strange if a fire were to break out in the middle of the lake, or if rain were to fall out of a clear sky; but the foundation principle about the Christian life is that the Lord is at work molding you. And he does this in part through challenges that create spiritual growth.
- tries us

II. This Kind of Trial Has a Predictable Profile and Positive Results

- Presents the Kind of Feedback that enables us to rejoice (v.13)
 - The work of God in and through us is like a self-perpetuating loop; we get tried, we see more of the purposes and actions of God, we rejoice that He is in us and working through us and giving us a victory in it
- Is A Kind of Personal Experience of Christ's Suffering (v.13)
 - It's the difference between reading about something and doing that something; you can read about riding on a roller coaster; but riding one is different; you can sit and watch a

fight between two extreme fighters and imagine how it would be; it is another thing to get out there on the mat and engage

- Will Result in Gladness and Great Joy (v.13)
- The Unbelieving Will Speak Evil of Christ (v.14)
- You will Interpret Your Experience In This As Glory to Christ (v.14)

III. But What About Other Kinds of Trouble Where You Can't Find Happiness, Gladness or Joy?

- These are placed in the class of those mentioned in v. 15
Those mentioned in v. 15 belong to a class of transgressions that have to do with faithlessness, lawlessness or disobedience to God
- Let's look at the instructions of God concerning this kind of trouble: We have several sentences of admonition by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. He is concerned with the Corinthian church's abuse of privilege. He gives these lines of warning from vs. 1 through vs. 11. The verses have a lot of sobering facts in them. But in order for us to understand the context of those words he wrote, we really need to understand what he is saying in verse 11 first of all:

1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for **examples**; and they are **written for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

(explanation: all this is to provide an example to them. It's like saying, "God made and example of them..." (The best way in the world to help somebody understand what it means to be burned is to let them feel a fire up close); And they were written for our admonition (instructions about what God does in making examples out of people) who are living now at the end time.

- Now that we understand what the context of why he wrote this to them, let me make a statement and ask a question: A lot of the time, we read this or teach this like it is talking about lost people. We say these things can't be acted out by saved people and that the outcomes of such behavior can't happen to saved people because they are under grace. But, think again about verse 11. Would any account of this be written for our admonition and to set an example if none of these things would be acted out by believers and if none of these consequences would happen to people of grace? You answer.
- Now, what is it He wrote for our admonition?
1Cor. 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
1Cor. 10:2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
1Cor. 10:3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;
1Cor. 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.
■ We don't know how many of them were truly saved; but salvation came to those in that day in the same way it does to us today and here the Lord shows the similarity in their experiences under the protective guardianship of the Lord; all experiences were alike!

1Cor. 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

- If the wilderness represents anything at all as a type, it represents the hard sojourn through this world where trouble abounds; it represents being in a place where the lay of the land holds no spiritual support. This is where they fell. They fell in a place and in a state of troubles and where the land gave no spiritual support. Not because God was a hard taskmaster, but because they refused to obey and get right with what God wanted them to do.

1Co 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

- What were these things for? (Examples for us) And to what intent? (That we should not lust after evil things)
 - Pavlov's dogs learned what to avoid by suffering discomfort when making the wrong choices
 - People in our society learn to avoid committing crimes when they see their fellow citizens who break the law go to prison

1Cor. 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

1Cor. 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

1Cor. 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

- What was this tempting of Christ that they did?
 - Going to the account of the fiery serpents in Num. 21:5-6 And the people **spoke against God**, and **against Moses**, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.
 - The tempting was speaking against God and His minister. That speaking was in the form of questioning whether God had a right to do what He did and whether or not He had good sense in doing it.

1Cor. 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

- Now before we leave this we want to notice the main reason we have taken a look at these bible verses:

The children of Israel suffered a number of troubles through faithless and disobedient acts

These troubles were not troubles suffered as a result of Christian behavior, or for standing for Christ

These troubles were many and varied

These troubles were God's dealings with them in their disobedience and faithlessness

IV. As a closing point, I want us to go to Deuteronomy 28. We want to read verses 1-7 then verses 15-19. We want to read these, remembering what Paul has said about what has been written about the people of God in the past: "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. "

- At the risk of simplifying what example is set forth here and what outcomes we can expect, I believe that the Lord is establishing a principle in what He shows us about how He dealt with Israel. To understand the principle in the light of the age of grace I want to make one point: All the law or commandments and the prophets hang on two concepts: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Mat. 22:37-38).
- Now, The principle for us today is this: If we strive to obey these, we can expect blessings from the Lord; if we neglect these and ignore their principles, we can expect ongoing troubles that are nothing less than curses in our lives. (Briefly summarize the basic principles of "love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind," and "love your neighbor as yourself") Troubles which are curses are those that are chronic; they do not seem to have solutions; that is because they are troubles coming to us as a result of being in the wrong spiritual frame. We are not listening to God. If we only listen, He will not only speak, but He will provide us solutions. In a disobedient state however, we do not want to go in the direction needed for the solutions to work. If we feel that way, our lives will continue to be full of troubles that torment and never resolve themselves.
- Summary: Blessings for obedience; cursings for disobedience