

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About... Trials of Life

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord knows your heart (1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15). God allows us to choose who we will serve; whether the gods [idols] of this world or the living and true God (Joshua 24:15; Prov. 16:1,9). God also knows whether we have chosen to follow Him or to follow Satan (Psm. 139:1-16).

People ask, "What is the purpose of the tests [trials] that God sends our way?" If God already knows where we stand, then who benefits from the tests? Until we have to stand with Him in the face of trials we cannot be sure of our faith. Abraham's offering of Isaac, his son, on the altar, was a test by God of his faith (Gen. 22:1). Abraham considered this command a sentence of death for his son, but he intended to carry it out. He believed God would raise Isaac from the dead if necessary (Heb. 11:17-18). God knew Abraham's faith without putting Abraham and Isaac through this pain. When Abraham stretched out his hand to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped him and said, "I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Gen. 22:12). Abraham made a choice and God understood all of the reasons and depth behind that choice (Gen. 22:16-18). We recognize Abraham's faith by the deeds recorded for us in scripture (Rom. 4:16-25).

God could have delivered the promised land to the Israelites with no work on their part. A disease could have wiped out their enemies and they could have settled in empty cities without the risks of a battle. God said He would drive out their enemies "little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land" (Ex. 23:30). Each man's faith would be tried [tested] so he would know where the land came from. They wondered for 40 years to be tested (Deut. 8:2). When Israel stopped following God they received no help from Him (Judges 2:20-22). Yet, even with their efforts, they did not earn the land. It was given to them by God (Joshua 24:11-13; Psm. 44:1-8).

So when we say "we believe," is that not enough? Remember, Abraham had to act on his faith to show where he stood. Each Israelite had to face the enemy to let it be known where he had placed his faith. We must act on our faith to perform what may seem to be an unnecessary act [water baptism] to receive salvation. We too may declare our faith in Jesus, but if we cannot be obedient to the simple act of being baptized for the remission of our sins, then we too fail the test (Rom. 16:25-27).

After we are "in Christ" through baptism, we still continue to have tests [trials]. Even if a Christian should fail a test, he should ask for forgiveness and try again. In this way, trials purify as fire (1 Pet. 1:6-7). Trails are never easy or enjoyable, but we should view them as an opportunity to show where we stand in our faith and where we need more work (James 1:2-4).

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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