

THEOLOGY OF TRIALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2 Thessalonians 1:4

As we live for Christ, we will experience troubles because we are trying to be God's people in a perverse world. Some people say that troubles are the result of sin or lack of faith, but the Bible teaches that they may be a part of God's plan for believers. Our problems can help us look upward and forward, instead of inward; they can build strong character; and they can provide us with opportunities to comfort others who are also struggling. Your troubles may be an indication that you are taking a stand for Christ.

Trial	Verse
Suffering is not always the result of sin.	John 9:2-3 . . . "Teacher," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it a result of his own sins or those of his parents?" "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "He was born blind so the power of God could be seen in him."
God provides hope and love in suffering.	Romans 5:3-5 . . . We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.
Problems help us trust in God's sovereign purpose for our lives.	Romans 8:28-29 . . . And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters.
Suffering enables us to comfort others.	1 Corinthians 1:3-5 . . . May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you his grace and peace. I can never stop thanking God for all the generous gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. He has enriched your church with the gifts of eloquence and every kind of knowledge.
Our eternal reward outweighs our suffering.	2 Corinthians 4:17-18 . . . For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.
Problems open up opportunities for service.	Philippians 1:12 . . . And I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.
Problems may be a confirmation that we are living for Christ.	2 Thessalonians 1:5 . . . But God will use this persecution to show his justice. For he will make you worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering.

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2 Thessalonians 1:4 *Continued*

Trial

God uses suffering in his plan for our lives.

Through his suffering, Jesus fully identified with us.

Jesus was willing to obey God even when it meant suffering.

Trials help train us to be more fruitful.

Problems help us mature.

Trials help refine our character.

When we suffer, we share in the suffering of Christ.

Verse

2 Thessalonians 1:1-3 . . . This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. It is written to the church in Thessalonica, you who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. Dear brothers and sisters, we always thank God for you, as is right, for we are thankful that your faith is flourishing and you are all growing in love for each other.

Hebrews 2:18 . . . Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted.

Hebrews 5:8 . . . So even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.

Hebrews 12:11 . . . No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

James 1:2-4 . . . Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

1 Peter 1:6-9 . . . So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him, you trust him; and even now you are happy with a glorious, inexpressible joy. Your reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 4:12-14 . . . Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world. Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God will come upon you.