

Pastor Ray's Bible School #8

“Pressing Through Tribulation”

(And Paul and Silas were...) Confirming the souls of the disciples,
and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that
we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.
Acts 14:22 KJV

I. God's Will Regarding Tribulation

A. The Problem: Rational Questions Facing Believers

1. If God is all-good and all-powerful, why does He allow evil?
2. Why does God permit the Devil to operate?
3. Why do bad things happen to good people?
4. Can I ever “arrive” (spiritually) to a place of total victory and get beyond the warfare so common to me now?

B. What is the proper Christian response to these important questions?

1. Don't talk about it
2. Triumphalism
3. Find a few promises about victory and just believe them

C. A prophetic view of scripture will reveal:

*It is not God's will to keep us out of trouble and tribulation,
but that we glorify Him by pressing through tribulation by faith.*

1. God is totally sovereign over all things and all events.
2. God has allowed evil to enter His universe.
3. His ultimate good purpose is revealed in Christ.

II. The Origin of Evil

A. Facts to Be Considered

1. Only God is “infinite”. (He got here first).
2. Time began at creation.
3. At some point prior to the creation of Adam, God created Lucifer.
4. At some point prior to Genesis 3, Lucifer “became” Satan.
5. By the time Adam was placed in the Garden (Genesis 2:8), an Enemy was already there. (Genesis 2:15-17)
6. The possibility of moral choices already existed, represented by the “two trees”.
7. The presence of a “choice” outside of God’s will (the “tree” of the knowledge of good and evil), as well as an “Enemy” (the serpent obliquely referenced by the term “keep” or “guard” in Adam’s assigned responsibility), indicate that God had *sovereignly allowed these realities to be in place prior to the creation of man.*
8. *From the beginning*, God’s will was not to keep man *from* being tested, but that man prove his faithfulness to God and glorify God *by passing his test* and defeating God’s enemy by faith.

B. The Prophetic View of the Origin of Evil

1. To see the Bible prophetically, we must learn the habit of “pulling back” out of the text to grasp the context of the matter. Finding the origin of evil, therefore, takes us back to a time *after* the creation, but *before* the creation of Adam.
2. While the creation account omits the origin of evil (evil is already present when Adam is created), the Bible is not silent on the subject.
3. God gives three witnesses regarding the origin of evil, two in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament.

- a. The origin of evil centers upon the “serpent”, also identified as the Devil:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And *the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan*, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Revelation 12:7-9 KJV

b. The origin of evil is described in the fall of Lucifer, the one “cast out” of heaven:

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”

Isaiah 14:12

1) Lucifer, one of the three high-ranking angels mentioned in the Bible (along with Michael and Gabriel), “falls” into rebellion against God and is cast out of heaven because of the sin of willful rebellion against (the will of) God. (*Sin is, essentially, a second “will” opposed to God’s will*).

“For thou hast said in thine heart, *I will* ascend into heaven, *I will* exalt my throne above the stars of God: *I will* sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; *I will* be like the most High.”

Isaiah 14:13

2) Sin transformed “Lucifer” into “Satan”.

*Many Bible scholars agree that this prophecy, addressed to the “king of Tyrus”, actually has a “double fulfillment”. It is obvious from the text that no human being fulfills the details attributed to this “person”. God is not only addressing this wicked king, but the spirit that is controlling him, even the “anointed cherub” who fell!

“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

‘Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.” Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror...”

Ezekiel 28:11-18 KJV

3) This pre-Adamic event included the fall of a third of the angels, probably those under Lucifer’s command.

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth...”
Revelation 12:3-4 KJV

c. The origin of evil is rooted in the desire to be God. (Note how the serpent’s temptation of Adam mirrored the very same sin that brought about his own downfall...*the desire to be God!!!* The essence of God’s nature is to define “good and evil”...for whoever has authority to do that *is God!!!*)

“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened,
and ye shall be *as god, knowing good and evil.*”
Genesis 3:5 KJV

d. God did not destroy Lucifer, but cast him (and his fellows) into the earth, where he would be allowed to test Adam and his descendents, proving that:

It is not God’s will, nor has it been from the beginning, to keep man out of testing, trial and tribulation, but that we glorify God in pressing through tribulations by faith.

C. The Biblical Pattern Confirming the Principle

1. When we re-read the Bible with a prophetic understanding, we can clearly see this principle in operation.

a. Old Testament

1) Noah

2) Abraham

3) Joseph

4) Moses survived the slaying of the male infants and the wilderness

5) Joshua and Israel on the banks of the Promised Land

6) David, stirred by Satan, numbered Israel apart from a command from God (1 Chronicles 21:1)

b. New Testament

1) Pilate slays the male children.

2) Jesus, filled with the Spirit, is driven into the wilderness to be tested 40 days and 40 nights.

- 3) Satan fills the heart of Judas to betray the Lord.
 - 4) Satan desires to “sift” Peter as wheat.
 - c. Paul’s method for confirming the souls of the disciples was to assure them that “pressing through tribulation” was the way into the Kingdom!
- “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”
Acts 14:22 KJV
- d. From Genesis through the New Testament, the pattern is clear. God has ordained us, not to avoid trials and troubles, but to press through them in faith to victory.

D. Promise- Problem- Provision

1. Every promise of God presents a problem for our faith; pressing through problems always brings provision. Notice the pattern of Promise- Problem- Provision:
 - a. Dominion- Serpent- Life in Paradise
 - b. Deliverance from Egypt- Pharaoh- Inheritance
 - c. Promised Land- Giants & Walled Cities- Possession
 - d. Windows of Heaven Opened- Tithing- Financial Prosperity
 - e. Reap- Sow- Harvest

(Powerful prophecies and promises regarding churches and personal situations eventually came to pass only after problems of fear, insecurity and pride are overcome!)
2. Power is guarded by problems. God surrounds power with problems so that those who can solve problems end up “in charge”.
3. Within every pattern (Promise-Problem-Provision), is a *principle* to be learned!
 - a. Dominion comes through serving others. (Phil.2:7-9)
 - b. Greater is He Who is in me than he who is in the world. (I John 4:4)

- c. Every place I tread upon, in faith, is mine! (Joshua 1:3)
- d. Honoring God first in my finances brings prosperity and provision.
(Prov.3:9, 10)

(Of the four immutable laws God established in Genesis 8:22, the only one that we play a part in is sowing and reaping, and it works just as surely as spring and summer, heat and cold and day and night!)

4. The pattern includes:

- a. Physical Health- Sickness- Healing and Health
- b. “I Can Do All Things”- Fear and Insecurity- Overcoming
- c. Joseph’s Dream of Promotion- Betrayal, Bondage and Injustice-The Throne
- d. David’s Crown- Saul- Kingdom

5. The great rule of prayer and faith is:

“For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith *shall come* to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye *shall have* them.”
Mark 11:23-24 KJV

- a. Praying by faith means we *believe* we receive *now*...and it *shall* come.
- b. The implication is that between the “believing we receive” and the actual “receiving” is a time gap...this is where we press through to victory in faith!
- c. The call of Abraham:

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I *will shew* thee...”
Genesis 12:1 KJV

6. So in Adam, in Abraham, in the Old Testament heroes, in Christ, in Paul and the early disciples, pressing through tribulation becomes the revealed will of God for His people in this life!

III. Conclusion

A. Overcoming Modern Mindsets

1. Common misconceptions keeping Christians out of maturity
 - a. God wants you comfortable.
 - b. We can grow up without taking on responsibility.
 - c. We can make disciples without hard work.
2. Adam was told to “take dominion” and “subdue” the earth through “cultivation”, a term which means “to improve through diligent effort”.

B. Foundational Benefits of Pressing Through Tribulation

1. Delivers us from delusional thinking.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

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.”

1 Peter 4:12-13 KJV

2. Re-centers our focus on God rather than men as we seek to glorify Him and defeat His enemies by faith. When Peter attempted to dissuade Christ from going to the Cross, he received one of the sternest rebukes in the Bible.

“But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Matthew 16:23 NKJV

3. Produces maturity as we take responsibility for God’s creation and extend His kingdom through the obedience of faith.

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33 KJV

4. Strengthens our souls as we find assurance that we’re walking the same way Christ and His people have always walked!

“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...”

John 15:20 KJV

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”
Matthew 5:11-12 KJV

5. Delivers us from the torment of feeling like a failure.

“Yea, and *all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”
2 Timothy 3:12 KJV

6. Sets us up for a life of joy, no matter what comes our way.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,
knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.
But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”
James 1:2-4 NKJV

7. We realize that God, Who has allowed the Devil and Evil to continue even until now, has given us all we need to be overcomers in every trouble and test of life in this present world.

8. Teaching us to cling to one of the greatest promises in the Bible:

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man;
but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.
1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV