



One Lifetime, Limited Resources, Eternal Priorities

“STEWARDING TRIALS”

Text: II Corinthians 12:1-10

INTRODUCTION: We don’t often think of **trials** as *gifts to steward*, but rather as circumstances to avoid. In this study, we will consider the testimonies of two men in the scriptures (*Paul and Job*), and we will examine the wonderful workings of God through their trials.

Have you ever tried to estimate the value of the gifts that God sends your way? Some gifts we quickly/promptly recognize as **personally profitable** – *time, relationships, finances*. These kinds of gifts, we eagerly receive and diligently work to steward so as to gain their fullest potential. Other gifts, not so much. For instance, *unemployment*. Or *chronic illness*. Or the *death of a loved one*. These kinds of “*gifts*” we would rather pass over, wouldn’t we? If we could, we’d send them back with a short “**No Thanks**”.

Stewarding trials is a unique aspect of stewardship. How do you steward something over which you have absolutely no control over? No one chooses trials. Do they? Trials have a way of invading our lives without _____. When we speak of **Stewarding Trials**, we are speaking to exercising an ability to receive life’s trials with a level of acceptance and yieldedness to God, so that He is free to work in our lives and bring _____ from the trials. When we receive trials as from the Father’s hand and, rather than resisting Him, we trust Him, we then have the ability to steward the trials of life with God’s _____. This is a process. God works marvelous growth and blessing in our lives in at least three areas:

I. _____ (12:2-4)

Which of us does not have a propensity towards pride?

Paul – allowed to peer into the third heaven, had cause to boast and to profit – or at least garner great recognition and respect – but he didn’t.

It was **14 years** after the event that Paul mentioned it and even then, it was in the third person. True humility is a grace developed through the process of seeing our frailty and trusting in God’s _____.

1. The Presence of the Trial - (“Thorn” – Persecution? Incurable Eye Disease?) (12:8 – 3 x’s)

2. The _____ of the Trial (II Cor. 11:24-28, 12:7-10)

Paul’s effectiveness in his life/ministry came from a lingering *mysterious difficulty*.

3. The Pathway of the Trial – “....the messenger of Satan to buffet me.”

“**Buffet**” = to strike with the fist, to give one a blow. (Mark 14:65/Job 1:9-11)

The two stories of Job and Paul remind each of us that Satan can go no further than what God

allows. Everything that comes our way is _____ through the Hands of God.
Romans 8:28 – “All things”

II. STABILITY (12:9-10)

Have you ever felt like you were going to collapse under the weight of suffering?
In these times, have you felt God providing you with a stability that is beyond human comprehension?

We are

1. _____ by the Grace of God (9)

Effective ministry is the result of _____, not wealth, talent, knowledge or wisdom.

2. Purified by the Grace of God (“Made perfect” = to complete, nothing wanting)

In our times of weakness, God’s grace purifies us and matures our faith! (Job 23:10/I Peter 1:7)

III. _____

God allows trials in our lives to introduce us to His *supernatural ability*.

1. Through His _____ (I Corinthians 10:13)

Our Christian confidence is bolstered when we know that God is working through us.

We are foolish to think that **God’s work** depends on **our ability**.

God can and will provide what we need to face the trials that He allows in our lives.

2. Through His Precepts

Knowing that God gives grace and experiencing the reality of His power are worlds apart.

How is it that we in times of difficulty, appropriate the grace that God has given to us?

- **TRUST GOD’S** _____. (James 1:3-4, Psalm 31:15)

We can’t just say ‘*God’s Ways Are Perfect*’ we must believe that His ways are!

In times when we can’t *trace His hand*, we must be willing to *trust His heart*.

- **SEEK GOD’S** _____. (James 1:5)

Anytime the pains of life direct our attention back to God, it is of great benefit!

- **REST IN GOD’S LOVE** (Romans 5:3-5)

Most of us are a “fix it” kind of people. We want to make God’s ways work - _____.

We want to see His wisdom and get answers immediately. But there comes a time when we must choose to simply *rest in His love*.

CONCLUSION: It has been said that “*the peace of God has its foundation in the fact that God does all things well.*” There are many questions that will not be answered this side of heaven and on the other side, these “*problems*” will fail to be recalled; but until then, let our resting be that God is good and that He loves us greatly! His strength remains perfect, even when our faith is small. With a long-term perspective, God’s ways are immeasurably higher than our immediate desires. It tends to be a *fresh experience of our weakness* that finds us seeking a *fresh surge of God’s* _____. May God help us, as we find dark moments in our lives, bleak circumstances and painful times, that we endure all being gloriously transformed into our greatest blessings and the fullest sources of our joy!