

# Why Trials?

#0279

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—September 6, 1974

[Singing]

In Herod's dungeon all alone  
Brave John the Baptist lay,  
While kings and nobles wine and dined  
And watched Salome play;  
And then was John the Baptist slain,  
A sacrifice to wine,  
One of earth's nobility,  
Part of the royal line.

Nobility, earth's royalty,  
It's not the kings and queens and popes  
That are its majesty;  
It's those who follow Christ  
In love and pure humility,  
And even torture, chains, and death  
Can't break their loyalty.

The Savior suffered on the cross  
An agony divine;  
Such pain as His we'll never know,  
The sun refused to shine.  
An earthquake marked His dying hour—  
The sins He bore were mine.  
The greatest of earth's royalty  
Head of the royal line.

Nobility, earth's royalty,  
It's not the kings and queens and popes  
That are its majesty;  
It's those who follow Christ  
In love and pure humility,  
And even torture, chains, and death  
Can't break their loyalty.

Some day His hand will swing the gates  
To Zion in the sky,  
And bid the remnant enter in  
Where they will never die.  
They'll follow Him where e'er He goes,  
With stars their crowns will shine,  
Last of earth's nobility,

Last of the royal line.

And now, oh friend, will you be there,  
Among the blood-bought throng?  
And will you eat the fruit of life  
And sing the ransomed song?  
And wing your flight to worlds afar,  
Ambassador divine,  
And tell the wondrous love of Christ,  
Head of the royal line.

Nobility, earth's royalty,  
It's not the kings and queens and popes  
That are its majesty;  
It's those who follow Christ  
In love and pure humility,  
And even torture, chains, and death  
Can't break their loyalty.

I invite you all to turn to Hebrews, the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter. Hebrews, the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, beginning with the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse. In the preceding verses, the apostle has told us that we have not come to Mount Sinai. We've not come to that time of thunder and lightning and darkness and the great fear that filled the hearts of the Israelites as they listened to the voice of God speaking His law.

Then in the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse, He says:

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" Hebrews 12:22.

How have you and I come to that? By faith, in our imagination.

You know, imagination is a wonderful gift. I can speak a word here tonight, and at once, a picture will come on the screen of your memory. It may be the word, "Home," it may be the word, "Mother," it may be the word, "Mountain" or "Ocean." Whenever I speak any of those words, some picture comes to your mind—the memory, the imagination, what wonderful gifts those are.

And in our imagination, by faith, you and I have *come* to Mount Zion. Our feet aren't there yet, but our *minds* are there—our hearts. Are you agreed? Thank God.

I read on:

"...To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" Hebrews 12:23–24.

Here we come, Paul says, to this New Jerusalem, and by faith, we see the temple there. We see the names inscribed in the Book of Life, the members of God's universal church. The church in Heaven and the church on earth are one.

He says we've come, you and I, by faith, in our imagination, to Jesus:

“...the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh...” Hebrews 12:24.

Does the blood speak? Oh, yes. The sprinkled blood is speaking before the Father's throne. Do you hear it speak? It speaks *for* us in Heaven. It speaks *to* us here on earth. What is its message?

Paul says:

“...that speaketh better things than that of Abel” Hebrews 12:24.

The blood of Abel cried for vengeance. The blood of Jesus cries for mercy.

Oh, I'm so thankful for that message of the sprinkled blood. What do you say, friend? Thank God. It's speaking to our hearts tonight, the message of pardon, of mercy, and the promise of overcoming power. Thank God, for the message of the sprinkled blood.

Reading on:

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” Hebrews 12:25–27.

That's the remnant. That's the remnant. The remnant church, when it has gone through the shaking time, will be composed of those who have been shaken, but weren't shaken where? They weren't shaken out. Instead, they're shaken together. They are the remnant, I repeat, that which remains. The chaff blows out, the wheat remains. The gold remains and the dross is separated.

Oh friends, I pray that every one of us here may be able to endure the shaking, testing time.

I hope every one of you will get the blessing of reading the leading editorial in this week's *Review and Herald*. Some of you have read it already, haven't you? Elder Wood has been blessed of the Lord in giving the trumpet a certain sound. Don't forget. This week's *Review*. Just turn to page 2, just inside the cover, and read the whole page. Don't miss a word. And do that with next week's editorial, too.

Now, coming back to our text—and you'll see why I've associated his editorial with this text when you read the editorial—the things that cannot be shaken are going to do what? Remain.

What is it that shakes? Well, an earthquake shakes, winds may shake. As you know, this week there have been some terrifying hurricane winds south of us. Various forces can shake.

A friend of mine told me a number of years ago about an experience in the Long Beach earthquake. He said that you could go through those streets the day before the earthquake, and you couldn't tell one building from another. But the day after the earthquake, you could go along those streets, and you'd see here and there a building standing, while the others were down.

Do you know why those buildings were up when the others were down? They were built to withstand the shock of the earthquake. What kind of building is going up in your character? Is it earthquake-proof? Can it stand the shaking? That's what we want to think about tonight.

Now, in order that we may develop these characters that can stand the coming shaking, and we're already entering into it, God has given various trials, tests, temptations, problems, which we may think of as the experiences of life. These experiences constitute a laboratory course, and none of us can miss these experiences. The choice we have is how we relate ourselves to them.

I've been meditating today on three things that trial does. First, trial *develops*. Second, trial *reveals*. Third, trial *perfects*. We'll notice a few thoughts on each of these. Trial develops, trial reveals, trial perfects.

But, before we look at these points, let me ask you this question. What do you think of when you think of trial? "Well," somebody says, "I think of something painful." That is a trial, isn't it? Pain is a trial. Somebody says, "I think of disappointing experiences." Yes, disappointments are trials. Somebody says, "I think of bereavement." Yes, that's a trial. Somebody else says, "I think of poverty." That can be a trial.

But had you ever thought of *prosperity* being a trial? Prosperity of any kind, my dear friends, is as much a trial as is adversity.

What is a trial? Well, look it up in the dictionary. A trial is a test. It's an examination if you please. It's something that proves. It shows what manner of person you are, and there are those who can stand the test of adversity that don't stand the test of prosperity at all.

So, every day, you're having trials, whether they're trials of disappointment, sorrow, pain, or whether they are the trials of favor, sunshiny days, moonlit nights, spring-time zephyrs. Whatever it is, friend, these experiences of life are the tests that are developing in you the character which will at last meet the great test, just before Jesus comes, in what we call the time of trouble.

Who arranges these experiences? If we're willing for God to arrange our lives, He's planning them. But many people are making experiences for themselves. They're making trials for themselves, trouble for themselves.

How many people do you suppose the Lord plans should get lung cancer? How many? Or does anybody have that problem? Oh, yes. Thousands are dying every year from lung cancer, and it's not a painless death, friend. Just one example of hundreds and thousands of examples that could be mentioned of the trials and problems we make for ourselves.

But does God sometimes allow, permit, trials to come even to His children that haven't done anything, shall I say, to produce those? What man do you think of in the Bible that went through some great trials? Job. The Bible says you've heard about him. And James, in mentioning it, says you have seen the end, that is, the purpose, the object, of the Lord.

So, some of our trials are caused by ourselves, our wrong actions, some of them are permitted by providence, but all of them have their lessons. The thief on the cross was suffering *justly* as he hung there, he and his fellow, one on the right hand of Jesus, the other on the left. They richly deserved all they were receiving. One of them got a *lesson* out of it, and the other didn't.

One was converted, and he'll sing the praises of Jesus through eternal ages. It was worth it, wasn't it? Did his suffering bring blessing? Oh, yes. Think of it, friends. I suppose in eternity a thousand times he'll say, "Thank God, I was crucified on that cross at Calvary by the Son of God." Won't he? Yes.

But the other poor fellow—he did not let the Spirit of God teach him the lesson of that trial. Do you see? He just got more bitter, he got harder, till he was actually blaspheming, and his life went out in that awful darkness. He wakes up to meet the judgment of God and the second death.

So, I repeat, that whether our trials are manufactured by ourselves, or come through circumstance, or through the direct working of providence, every trial has its lesson. And remember, the trials include not the things merely we associate with pain, disaster, defeat, but trials, oh, how they come in prosperity.

Think of Solomon. How beautifully he started off in his reign as king of Israel. How he sought the Lord, and how God answered his prayer. And year after year went by of glorious success. No alien armies invaded his country. No pain and sorrow surrounded him. Glorious was his reign, and he went down into the darkness of apostasy. Why? He didn't meet the test. The trial of prosperity developed in him, not *strength* of character, but weakness of character. True, thank God, he finally turned in his closing days and sought to undo as far as he could the awful influence of his wicked life. But my point is this. *Prosperity* for him was his great trial. What's your trial?

Now, as I've said, I want to notice these three points of what trial does: it develops, it reveals, it perfects.

Turn to, the first chapter, verses 2 and 3:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations...” James 1:2.

Now, this word “temptation” is another interesting word that means test, trial. It isn’t just temptation in the sense of the Devil coming to you and trying to get you to do something wrong. *Divers* temptations—that means different kinds.

“...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;  
Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience”  
James 1:1–2.

The testing of your faith develops—develops patience. That’s what it’s *meant* to do. Now, it can develop impatience. Can’t it? It does with some people. But every test and trial develops one way or the other a character more like Jesus or an experience *less* like Him.

So the apostle says count it what? All joy. Now, you notice, he does not say it *is* joy when you fall into diverse temptation. He says, what? *Count* it that way, account it that way, reckon it that way. Children might say, “Play like.” Play like it’s all joy. Now, it’s more than play like, but that’ll give somebody the idea. Count it that way.

How can you count it joy when it’s the kind of a test that is sorrowful, painful, full of grief? Why, he says, you can count it that way, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But Lord, I’d rather have less patience, and not so many trials. No. The Lord says, “I’m getting you ready to enjoy eternal life. I want you with me through the eternal ages, and you’ll have to have a character that can endure the test.”

Speaking of a test, was there a test even in the Garden of Eden? Was there a trial there? If we define the word “trial,” as we have tonight, there was a trial there, wasn’t there? There was a trial to give them an opportunity to choose.

But under conditions of sin, of course, we have these trials that are painful and sorrowful. All right.

“...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;  
Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience”  
James 1:1–2.

It *works* patience, and it develops patience.

Besides *developing* character, trials, as I have mentioned, *reveal* character. Let’s go over to Luke’s Gospel, and notice Christ’s words of warning to the apostle Peter. The 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Luke, verses 31 and 32:

“And the Lord said, Simon [that’s Peter] behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”  
Luke 22:31–32.

What did Satan want to do? He wanted to *sift* the disciples. Did he? He surely did. Who let him do it? God. But Jesus said, Listen, Simon, you had better be careful. In another verse, he tells Peter, You’d better watch and pray. But here, He not only tells Peter to be careful, He says, “Simon... I have prayed for you.”

Isn’t it wonderful to have Jesus praying for us? Do you think there’s anybody here tonight Jesus is praying for? Is He praying for you? Do you know that? Oh, I hope you do, my friend. There is nothing more strengthening, more solidifying, more steadying in its influence than the consciousness that you are precious to God. And you are. And this is what Jesus was trying to help Peter to understand. He said, “Peter, I love you. But Peter, I can’t prevent your being tested.

Oh, I hope everybody here will stand the testing of God. I hope we’ll stand it tonight, tomorrow, the next day. These hours into which we’re entering are going to be quite a test to some people here tonight, my friends. Some of you may have some idea of it, but there may be others, like Peter, that have no idea of it at all.

Peter hadn’t the slightest idea that the great test of his life was coming to him within hours. Correct? Who tried to awaken him to it? Jesus. But his only response was to feel rather offended, irritated a bit, that Jesus would indicate that there could be any *question* about his loyalty and fidelity and stability.

Thirty-third verse:

“And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death” Luke 22:33.

You don’t need to worry about me, Jesus. Thank you for your prayers, but maybe—maybe John needs them worse than I do. Maybe Judas could stand a few. Thank you for your prayers, Lord, but I’m ready. I’m ready to go with you into prison and to death.

Did he mean it? Every word of it. And Jesus answered:

“...I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me”  
Luke 22:34.

And all that accomplished in Peter, for the moment, was to just make him feel bad. Now, later on, after it all happened, he remembered what Jesus had said. And the thought that Christ had assured him of His prayers helped to hold him from going the way of Judas and committing suicide. It’s a wonderful thing to have, I repeat, that lifeline of the assurance of Christ’s interest in us. What do you say?

So, if there's somebody here tonight that's about to go into a real test of your character, remember, Jesus is praying for you. Oh, that we may reveal the spirit of Jesus instead of the spirit of selfishness. What do you say?

Now, trial perfects—not only develops and reveals, but it perfects.

You say, “Well, Brother Frazee, isn't that just the same thing as develop?” In a sense, it is. But I've separated them for a purpose. You know, after the saints are numbered and sealed, and probation closes and every character is fixed for time and for eternity, it might seem that no further trial would be necessary.

But the truth of the matter is, and don't miss it, the greatest trials of all our lives will come *after* probation closes. Is that right? What for? For the *perfecting* of the saints—the perfecting. And when I say perfecting, I do not mean quitting sinning.

Jesus never sinned. Do you agree with me? But the Bible says that He learned obedience through the things which He suffered, and was made perfect. You'll read that in Hebrews 5. He's made perfect. He perfected a fully mature character in our humanity through the things He suffered. So trial is not merely to develop character and reveal character. It is to *perfect* character.

And when we remember that Heaven assures us that no trial is suffered to come upon God's children except that which is essential for their present and eternal good, we can know that the tremendous ordeal of Jacob's trouble is absolutely essential for the perfection of character.

God doesn't allow His children to go through that awful ordeal for any other reason than this: the blessing it can bring to them, and the glory it can bring to His name throughout the universe.

As the assembled inhabitants of other worlds look down upon this little planet and behold the 144,000 witnessing for God in that dark hour, what glory it'll bring to His name. But what development, further development, final development, it will bring to the 144,000.

We're told that Jacob's trouble is the crucible that's to try God's people. But remember, no one who goes into that crucible will fail. They won't be like Peter. They have already developed the characters. The close of probation is the point of no return. Is that right?

Will any wicked person be converted during the time of trouble? Not one. Will any one of the saints change and switch his allegiance during that time? Not one. The close of probation is the point of no return.

But, nevertheless, all through Jacob's trouble, the wicked will be getting more blasphemous, more like the Devil, and the people of God will be becoming more and more like Jesus, developing a firmer faith, a truer loyalty, a clearer perception of the character of God.



Oh friends, *these* are some of the trials that are ahead of us. God is testing us now with little trials, and don't forget, as I say, they're not all painful. Not all. Not all.

If you were asked to take an assignment where you might be put in prison if you went there and preached the Gospel that would be quite a test for you. But suppose you're asked to take an assignment, and everything seems lovely. The prospects are bright. Are you being tested? Indeed, you are my friend.

Do not be too ready to grab what looks like the easy chair. Do not be too ready to suppose that it's a providence when you're asked to do the thing that you like to do. You just may be being tested.

Don't misunderstand me. It isn't wrong to do what we're asked to do just because we like to do it. I don't mean that at all. I just mean in every experience of life we're being tested.

Think of the Savior's temptations there in the desert immediately after His baptism. And you remember, in preparation for those terrible temptations, the Spirit of God led Him to fast 40 days. He had that time for earnest prayer and meditation. Then the Devil came to him. You can read the story there in Matthew 4 and others of the Gospels.

I want you to think briefly about these temptations. What was the first? Was He tempted to do something wrong? Well, it all depends on how you define wrong. Was that test a painful test? The fasting had been quite an ordeal, but He was merely invited to do what? To satisfy His hunger. That's all.

Take the second test—temptation. Where was He for this one? Up on the pinnacle of the temple. Who put Him there? Satan. Just because you land on some pinnacle doesn't mean the Lord put you there, my friend. Don't forget it.

But, you say, how would the Father allow the Devil to carry Jesus up there? To be *tested*, to be tried, to be tempted. And the test was not a painful one. He was merely given an opportunity to glorify self. That's all. Wasn't it?

"Sure," he said, "you're the Son of God. Throw yourself down. The angels will pick you up, and all the people will say, 'Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that marvelous?' Show off." And don't forget, friends, it was in the temple. And there's a lot of showing off going on in the temple today.

People are being tempted to display their talents, their training, and some of it's being done in the name of Christian witnessing. I warn you—you're being tested. All these experiences are opportunities to *reveal* what is in your heart, to develop loyalty on the one hand, or disloyalty and selfishness on the other.

And there was that third temptation. Was that painful? No. No, it wasn't painful. Here Satan carried Him not on a pinnacle on the temple but on a great mountain, and he showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory in a moment of time, and he offered it all to Jesus.

Think of all the places He could have established His centers for His work if He'd accepted that offer. Think of the opportunities He could have had to extend His influence. And He could have had it all without the cross. Now, mark you, that was the test.

The test was this: Would He take the easy road or deliberately choose the hard road? Would He accept the opportunity to gratify ambition, or would He accept His Father's way?

Three great tests—to satisfy hunger, to glorify self, to gratify ambition. But Jesus met every one of them and passed 100 percent the examination. Didn't He? You know why? He used the Word of God. That's the weapon we're to use. We're to fill our minds with the Scriptures, fill our hearts with a *love* for the inspired words.

God is training men today for the shaking, the earthquake, that's coming very, very soon. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken so that those things that cannot be shaken will remain.

What does it take to shake you? If *anything* can shake you, that will happen. If coming to church and nobody's speaking to you will shake you, that will happen. Takes more than that to shake some people. Do you know what it takes to shake some people? They have to have lies told about them, scandalous lies, and that shakes them. If that will shake you, that will happen.

And seriously, friends, the thing that shakes some people is to have not lies told about them, but the truth told about them. That shakes them hard. Whatever it takes to shake you, my friend, that will come. Oh, that those things which cannot be shaken may, what? Remain. And, as I said, that's the remnant.

Jesus went down into the dark night of woe in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Did all He could to prepare His disciples for that terrible test. That same Jesus is seeking tonight to prepare His church for a similar test. We too, are going into the dark shadows of Gethsemane and Calvary, as the remnant church follows her Lord wherever He has gone.

Oh, brethren and sisters, I thank God for the little moment of respite we still have to get ready. What do you say?

May we bow our heads? Precious Lord, we thank Thee with all our hearts tonight that you've told us how to get ready and stay ready so that we'll be ready when the test comes. Teach us to discern in the changing circumstances of life, in the sunshine as well as the shadows, the happy things as well as the sad things, to discern in all these the tests and trials that can, if we choose to work with Thee, develop in us Thy character and reveal Thy lovely likeness.

Forbid that by selfish choice, we should develop the other image and become like the enemy. Grant to each one here tonight the joy of counting it all joy, the experiences of daily life, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. For Jesus' sake, amen.

Somebody here has a word of witness. Come forward and share it with the congregation, to the glory of God, and the joy of your Heavenly Father.

[Testimony meeting follows.]

[Comments made by W. D. Frazee during the testimony meeting.]

The sprinkled blood is speaking before the Father's throne. The sprinkled blood is speaking forgiveness full and free. Hear that sprinkled blood speaking, as we think of our failures and mistakes. There's a ransom been provided. Forgiveness is offered. Aren't we glad?

Long before a single star in heaven had its birth,  
Long before the misty dawn had lighted this fair earth,  
And even e'er all time began, before eternity,  
Before an angel, God had made, His heart had planned for me.

He rolled the shining stars in place, His word stretched out the sky,  
His thunders roared, and one by one, the planets soared on high.  
And then at last He made the earth, the dry land and the sea.  
But long before He made them all, His heart had planned for me.

Yes, long before He made the world or hung the stars in place,  
He knew my feet would slip and fall in evil and disgrace.  
And, lo, He pledged His only Son, that He might my ransom be.  
Oh, wondrous love, the love of God, that He should plan for me.

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