

# View Your Trials As Blessings!

## No One Enjoys Painful Trials, But They Work for Good

None of us enjoy the pain of going through trials. We will do whatever we can to avoid pain. We as humans are designed to do so, though the discomfort is given for good reason. Pain and suffering we will discover is for our purification as the children of God, and it is this issue that is the subject of this study.

Notice what Peter says in I Peter 1:6-7.

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise,

honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ ....”

*trial = dokimion*, “a testing or trial.”

*precious = timios*, “valuable, costly, honored, or esteemed.”

Peter paints a picture of trials and testing as being much more valuable than gold, even though the trials may be fiery and painful and cause one considerable grief. The reason? They amplify one’s faith, a profoundly valuable gift of the spirit (Galatians 5:22), that in the end leads to one’s change to eternal, glorious, sinless spirit at the resurrection when Christ returns! James reiterates this truth when he tells us to “... count it all joy when you fall into various trials ...,” since the end result of this testing is greater faith and patience — gifts of the spirit — which lead to perfection and completeness of Christ’s character in you (James 1:2-4).

### Some Examples

Consider Joseph, the son of Jacob by Rachel. We read in Genesis 37, and 39 to 47, about how Joseph was thrown into a pit by his jealous brothers, sold to some Midianite traders who brought him to Egypt, where Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, bought him. There Joseph, because of his righteous character, soon became the trusted, industrious manager over Potiphar’s household. Over the course of time, Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph while her husband was away, but she failed when Joseph strictly adhered to God’s laws forbidding adultery, lessons his father Jacob had carefully taught him from his youth. Potiphar’s wife then falsely accused him of trying to rape her, he was

thrown into the king’s prison, and there he languished for two years—though blessed by God’s intervention and made caretaker over other prisoners even while confined. Finally, when Pharaoh had disturbing dreams about seven plump cows eaten by seven gaunt cows, and seven good heads of grain consumed by



seven blighted heads, Pharaoh’s butler, who had also been in prison with Joseph but freed to return to his post, remembered how Joseph had interpreted a dream predicting the butler’s release from prison. Perhaps Joseph could interpret Pharaoh’s dream. Thus was Joseph taken from prison and brought to Pharaoh, where Joseph revealed the meaning of the dreams, both depicting seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine. Thereupon Pharaoh promoted Joseph to the second most powerful ruler in Egypt, exceeded only by Pharaoh.

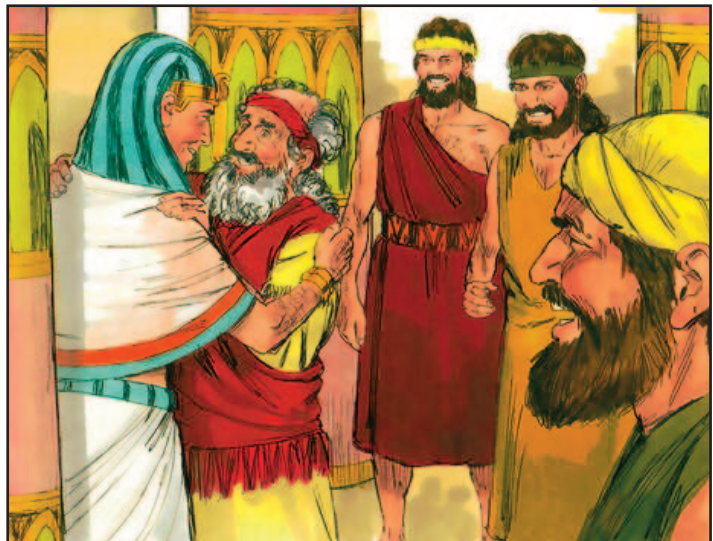
Joseph built granaries to store food from the seven plentiful years, and when the drought arrived Egypt had grain. People from far and wide

came to buy grain in Egypt, including the family of Jacob. Joseph's brother were recognized by Joseph, and he toyed with them to have Benjamin, his only full brother, brought down to Egypt. Finally revealing himself to his brothers in a tearful episode, he arranged for his father Jacob, the brothers, and all of their families — 70 in all (Exodus 1:5) — to settle in Goshen, where they multiplied greatly to form a nation that, by the time of the Exodus, had grown to perhaps three to four million (Exodus 12:37) — about 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children.

The story of Joseph is one of incredible trials, a young man who was nearly murdered by his own brothers, was falsely accused of rape and thrown into prison, but then raised to world prominence by the Pharaoh of Egypt, who then saved the nation of Israel by bringing them to Goshen, where they multiplied abundantly. Trials were turned into rejoicing, captivity into freedom! Joseph's obedience to the laws of God brought freedom and deliverance, not only to himself but to an entire nation!

I can personally attest to the fact that severe trials lead to great blessings in the course of time. As a youth I had always wanted to farm the land on which I grew up. That opportunity came when I had achieved a college degree in 1971. Our family moved back to the home area of southwestern Minnesota, with our young son and also a newfound faith in the Creator who had shown us the importance of keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days. It was a dream come true ... for about one year. Conflicts with my father, a devout Lutheran who would not tolerate a son whom he thought had turned "Jewish," began to erupt, especially when I announced that our family would be attending the Feast of Tabernacles in Missouri just as corn harvest was beginning. That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

The Feast was a fine one, and the corn harvest bountiful, but our economic situation was becoming increasingly severe. Corn sold for only \$0.85 per bushel, and the extended family



***Joseph's reuniting with his brothers and father, to bring them down to Egypt, is one of the most profound stories in all history, an event that changed the entire course of world history.***

refused to help. It was more important for them to please the family's Protestant traditions and their neighbors than their own son and his family. Rejected by the family in the homeland, with a total lack of funds, after one year of farming, we were forced to leave the land of our nativity. It was impossible to compromise the truth of God. However, the Creator had other plans for us.

I was admitted to Ambassador College, where for two years I was immersed in Biblical studies that began to build a foundation of Scriptural truth. After facing some intolerable difficulties at the college, where I became terribly disappointed with the hypocrisy of the leaders, I then went on to work as a farm manager in Wisconsin, and after that moved the family to North Dakota and attained a doctoral degree in soils at North Dakota State University. What followed was quite unexpected as I gained employment in companies that brought me into contact with farmers, ranchers, businessmen, and government personnel in nations across the world. In the end, I was able to help educate countless people over the past 40 years in the ways of biological agriculture in many nations, by being forced off the land I wished to farm. Even then, we have been given a small farm on which to farm biologically, a gift that likely would



not have been possible within the world of modern mega-farm commercial agriculture that would have been my fare had the family remained in the home area. Indeed, the Creator held true to His word:

“Assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house and brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shalt not receive a hundredfold now in this time — homes and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).

### The Purpose of Trials

Our heavenly Father’s design for trials and sufferings in our lives is indeed to build us up, to make us more like Him in character. As gold is refined in fire, so is our character refined in the crucible of human suffering. What do trials do for us to gain this end??

**1. Develop Godly character.** This includes all of the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

“And not only that, but we also glory in *tribulations* [*thlipsis*, “pressure, crowd”] knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, *character*; [*dokime*, test, trial, what is acceptable”] and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4).

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:71-72).

“For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them,

but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:10-11).

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

**2. Prosper you in the end.** Note the afflictions of Job, who was given incredible pain and suffering besides having all that he had taken from



***Suffering and trials reach their apex in the life of Job, who endured painful boils from head to foot, lost all he had, but in the end was doubly blessed.***

him. Yet, having endured the trials he was given twice the wealth he had before, and a much greater understanding of himself and his God, for he concluded after the trials, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). We also read in Jeremiah,

“For thus says the Lord: after seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you.... For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope .... And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:10-11, 13).

**3. Make you aware of your mistakes.** Perhaps more than anyone else in Scripture, Job is an example of someone who considered himself righteous (Job 32:1), and whom the Eternal also called righteous, “... a blameless and upright



***Trials drive us to our Creator so we can grow more dependent on His love and forgiveness.***

man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). Yet, after his trials he realized his errors and abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:5-6). David also recognized the importance of trials and hardships revealing his secret sins.

“Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24).

“Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression” (Psalm 19:12-13).

*presumptuous* = *zed*, “insolent, arrogant, proud, presumptuous, wicked.”

#### **4. Prove the Eternal’s love for us.**

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?.... Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:5-7, 11; see also Proverbs 3:11-12).

#### **5. Increase your dependence on God.**

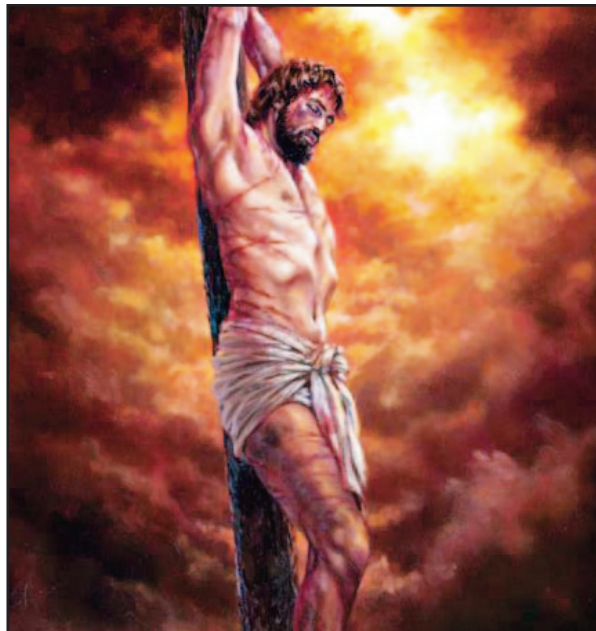
“For innumerable evils have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs on my head; therefore my heart fails me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me!” (Psalm 40:12-13).

**6. Protect you from big problems that are coming.**

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You” (Psalm 9:9-10).

“You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah” (Psalm 32:7; see also Psalm 37:39 and 46:1).

“I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.... Because he has set His love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life You satisfy him, and show him My salvation” (Psalm 91:2-6, 14-16).



***The incredible suffering that our Savior endured on the stake is the same sort of suffering that we are to endure, in its many different forms.***

**7. Share in Christ’s suffering.**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ” (II Corinthians 1:3-5).

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on

our part He is glorified” (I Peter 4:12-14).

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

**8. Enable you to help others who may experience similar trials.**



“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

*comfort = parakaleo, “to call near, invite, invoke.”*

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

**9. Show that God is always in control.** Trials, and God’s deliverance from them, is direct proof that He is always in charge, and will not let us slip from His protective grasp.

“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” (I Corinthians 10:13).

“And David said to his son Solomon, ‘Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God — my God — will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord’” (I Chronicles 28:20).

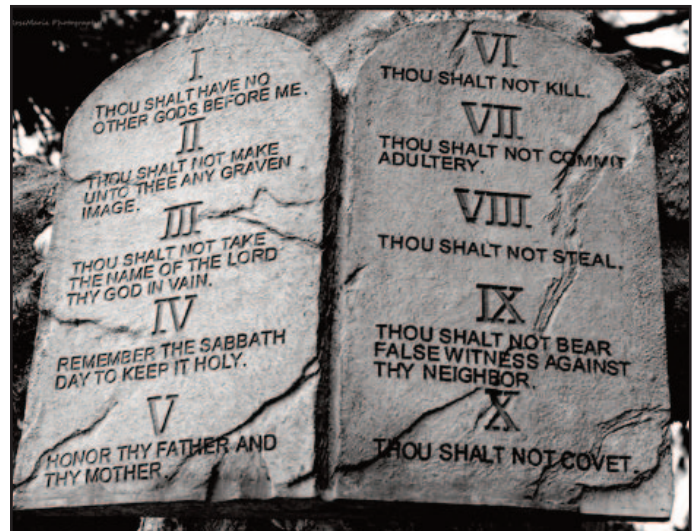
“I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed” (Psalm 37:25-26).

“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake

you.... And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8).

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you” (Genesis 28:15).

## 10. Reveal God’s laws.



***The Ten Commandments form the heart of God’s law, and are revealed more intensively when we experience trials.***

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me, but I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in Your law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:66-72).

## Enduring Trials

What ought we do while going through trials and sufferings? There are some critical understandings you should always keep in mind to put your testing into its proper perspective.

**1. Recognize that the trials are for your own good.** Realize that your Creator will never desert you through them (Hebrews 13:5), and is allowing you to endure them because He loves you, and knows you will be able to come out on the other side of the testing a better person in His eyes. Recall that your trials are far more precious than gold (I Peter 1:7), they are being given through a loving Father who is building righteousness in you (Hebrews 12:5-11), and they are given to lead you in the way of prosperity of home and family (Psalm 25:12-15). Moreover, in the context of our future eternity, the trials and afflictions we experience in the flesh today are termed *light* [*elaphros*, “easy”], existing for but a moment, but they are working toward a “... far more exceeding and eternal



***After a trial the sun comes out, revealing a clearer view of the right pathway to follow, and a better you!***

weight of glory” (II Corinthians 4:17). Recall that Paul said in Romans 8:16-18,

“The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the

sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

**2. Try to understand the reasons you are going through the trial.** Job did not understand why he was being tried with boils from head to foot, and the loss of his children and wealth, while recognizing that he was righteous in his Creator’s eyes (Job 1:1, 8). He did not believe he deserved to be so terribly afflicted ... even to the point of desiring to die (Job 3:1-26). Yet, through all of his perplexity he finally realized he did not really know his Creator face-to-face until having been brought through those terrible trials (Job 42:1-6).

David likewise did not come to grips with his own depravity at having committed adultery with Bathsheba, his subsequent arranging for Uriah’s death, and the resulting death of the child until experiencing the grief forced upon him by God’s hand (II Samuel 11 and 12). People seldom change their thoughts and paths until forced into the valley of decision by some great distress. Old habits are deeply entrenched and hard to change, but with the impetus given by the pain of trials it is much easier to repent from evil. We flee from pain. The afflicted person has little choice but to change to escape the suffering.

**3. Realize that the trial will eventually pass, and you will be better off than before.** The fruits of righteousness will be heaped upon you in due course, maybe months or years after the trial. Joseph’s testing took several years before he was placed second in command in Egypt. Job had to endure many months of painful boils before his health and wealth were restored. Nebuchadnezzar roamed in the wilds like an animal for seven years before he was finally forced to acknowledge that God Almighty reigns supreme over all nations (Daniel 4). Then we can look at the nation of Israel, which promised to follow the Eternal forever (Exodus 19:3-8), but failed Him miserably by forsaking His laws and statutes, beginning with the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-10). Then followed wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, the entrance into Ca-

naan, and throughout the history of Israel the cycling of obedience to God, prosperity, moral decay with disobedience, captivity, and deliverance once again upon repentance. That cycling of obedience — depravity — captivity — deliverance has continued to this very day, not just for Israel but for all nations.

“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a moment, but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).



***Like Israel at the Red Sea, having defeated the Egyptian army through the mighty hand of the Eternal crashing down upon them, so we likewise face monumental challenges in life that threaten to overwhelm us. We can totally rely on the Creator to bring us through these trials safely.***

#### **4. Be thankful for the trials.**

Be thankful that your Creator loves you so very much that he goes to the trouble of sending suffering your way. Remember that James tells us to count it all joy when you fall into various trials, because the end result is the building up of your spiritual gifts and character (James 1:2-4). Be thankful for *all* things (Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18)!

### **Some Final Thoughts**

We tend not to change our behavior until put under pressure, but the fiery heat of a furnace will melt the hard lump of gold that you are, burn up any nonprecious remnants of sinful habits,

and allow you to be molded into a new, more perfect gem (I Peter 1:7; I Corinthians 3:10-15). As lumps of clay, we are being molded by the Master Potter into the vessel of His choosing, and a handsome, righteous one at that (Romans 9:21-23; Isaiah 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1-6). In the process of this refining and molding of us into new creatures — for the former self has passed away (II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15) — we are quite powerless of our own volition to make the proper changes, but “... when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). Through the indwelling

power of God’s spirit we can indeed make the needed changes to a more perfect creature in His sight ... for that spirit grants us the gifts which we must use to serve one another (I Corinthians 12). It is His choice as to which gifts we are given and where He places us in the body: “But now God has set the

members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (I Corinthians 12:18).

Recall the dilemma the Israelites faced when caught between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army. This was the trial of all trials! What did Moses tell the frightened Israelites?

“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today you shall see again no more forever” (Exodus 14:13).

We need to place ourselves in the shoes of the Israelites at the edge of the water as they



were about to cross the Red Sea, pursued by Pharaoh and his army. “Do not be afraid.” Take the trial in stride, place your faith totally in the hands of the Creator, and realize that He will never place a test before you that will exceed your ability to endure, but with the trial will provide a way of *escape* [*ekbasis*, “exit, go out, escape”] so you will be able to *bear* [*hupophero*, “to bear up under”] it (I Corinthians 10:13).

Just as the Israelites were afflicted with the severe trial at the Red Sea crossing — being placed between a rock and a hard place — so we must see that our “light” affliction is for our good, that we might learn the Eternal’s statutes (Psalm 119:71), just as Israel was supposed to. They did not do so well, but we *can* do well since we have God’s spirit within us that enables us to overcome every trial.

It is an integral part of developing God’s character within you that you endure many fiery trials throughout your life. They are given because He loves you. They are given to prepare you for a stupendous role in the coming govern-

ment of Jesus Christ here on earth.

We must not just endure the trials but learn the lessons we are being shown, and not compromise the Eternal’s precepts, like Joseph and Moses in Egypt refused to comply with the corrupt society around them (Genesis 39:7-20; Hebrews 11:24-27). Remember that trials usually come upon us because of our disobedience — “before I was afflicted I went astray” (Psalm 119:67) — but the result of that affliction was, “... but now I keep Your word.” David further states that “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes” (Psalm 119:71).

Let us learn to look upon trials with joy, even though they are grievous to bear, and pray that the trials we *do* encounter will be because of our righteousness ... not our sins. Our Elder Brother was despised and rejected of men, which led to sorrow, grief, and affliction, and ultimately His death through the hands of evil men (Isaiah 53:3-5). As we follow in His footsteps let us view our trials as blessings, designed for our eternal good!