

Thank God for your trials.

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Trials. We talk about them. To varying degrees and with various intensities, we all go through them. The Lord instructs His people to rejoice at all times. Furthermore, believers are told to give thanks in all circumstances. But to the natural mind, and even to the converted mind while undergoing the trial, thanking God and suffering in trials just don't seem to belong together. They seem opposite. It often feels better to say, "when I come out alright on the other side of this suffering, then I'll give thanks to God." But it's hard for me to thank God *during* the trial. And harder still, how am I supposed to thank God *for* the particular trial that He has put in my life?

Why should you thank God for your trials? I'll provide 5 reasons.

1. Because trials humble you.

The genesis of all sins is pride. Pride is that monster, that mad and baseless thing that exists in every single heart of men. And God most graciously provides trials of various kinds and sufferings in various degrees to wean us off of ourselves and to cause us to go elsewhere for hope. Even still, the problem is that even when these trials come, our *pride* leads us not to trusting in God alone for His grace through the trial but it leads us to find our strength and hope in something — anything! — else. Trials humble us. They unfasten our grip on our control on a situation. They loosen our fixation with self and drive us to be lowly at heart and in mind.

2. Because trials grow you.

God most mercifully gives trials out of the Fatherly hand of love to grow us as His blood-bought children. Let no Christian wrongly receive a trial as God frowning with anger or gleefully punishing His people. Rather, let Christians realize that God graces us with trials to grow us, to refine us, to chisel away remnants of pride, selfishness, self-centeredness, and self-inflation. God loves His people too much to not bring trials as boons for their growth. As a man who works out exercises and stretches his muscles to increase strength and endurance, so God stretches His people to gloriously increase their strength and endurance -- *not* in themselves but deepening in their trust in the good Hand of the One who orchestrated and brings the trials.

3. Because trials refocus you.

Our minds succumb to distractions easily. Without even trying, we are a distracted people and we find ourselves dazzled and gripped by trivialities in this world with no eternal significance. O we are eternal souls! We are citizens of the heavenly kingdom! O the living God calls us "friends" and has secured our eternal inheritance. And yet we can be distracted by earthly items that tug our hearts and woo our hearts away from God. And out of His oceanlike love, God brings trials to refocus His people. Going in the fire of trials can refocus us on the power of God, the sovereignty of God, the goodness of God, the soon-coming reality of heaven, and the sweetness of Christ's promises. O let us, like Paul, receive the thorns that are ordered by heaven's throne as opportunities to manifest God's grace in us and to keep us from exalting

ourselves so that our boasting would be in God and in Him *alone*. Trials refocus us toward dependence on God and pressing close to Christ in ways that trial-less days are unable to do.

4. Because trials form you.

To bend metal, it requires intense heat. To bend us away from ourselves and to form us more into the blessed likeness of Jesus Christ, intense heat comes. And the intense heat may come from innumerable sources and in countless ways (and intensities) and yet the invisible and sovereign Hand behind it all has one ultimate end: to conform us more into the likeness of Christ. The glory of heaven is that Jesus Christ receives the eternal praise from sinners that have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and who have been fully conformed into the image of the Blessed Hero of heaven, the Captain of their salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. God brings trials to form us into Christ's image. Trials cannot, then, drive Christians more into themselves and away from the body of Christ. On the contrary, God's design for trials is for Christians to be weaned *off* of themselves and to tirelessly devote themselves *to* the body of Christ.

5. Because trials encourage you.

Maybe the greatest promise in all the Bible can be read from Matthew 28 when Jesus assures His disciples that he is with them always -- even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20). Just after this, the Lord ascended in a cloud to heaven no longer to see them again. Then, the unstoppable gospel came with power in Jerusalem as the word was heralded and God saved many sinners through repentance and faith. And when the hardships, the persecutions, the threats, the scatterings, and the injustices came, God's people found great encouragement in these times. The church was strengthened, built up, ignited, driven to prayer, and standing solidly on the sovereignty and promises of God. So when the times of suffering come, remember that God is *with you*. As David prayed in Psalm 46 that God is an ever-present help in trouble. O let this so encourage the soul of every child of God no matter how intense or life-threatening the moment may be.