

# Thanks for Trials on the Journey

Outwardly, our friends' lives might look fine, but we do not always know what they are experiencing. They may have many heavy trials. Each of us experiences things differently; some things weigh more heavily on one than the other. We all have our own trials to bear. When trials beset us, we can become tired and weary. We may ponder what the future will bring. We may wonder how we will have the strength to believe. What are we to do?

Sometimes we do things in this life that have consequences. Perhaps we spend money foolishly or even fall into using illegal substances. These can bring severe consequences and even temporal punishment.

God's Word clearly shows us the right way. Matthew writes these words of Jesus: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (6:33). When we are able to journey in faith, we experience security and joy. God's Word encourages us to trust in God and His guidance.

## **Remember the Life of Job**

There can be blessing and protection in the trials we have been given. God has seen fit for us to experience trials. Many times this is hard to accept. We remember the life of Job, who was given extreme trials. He lost everything: his family, his livelihood and all his possessions. In the end, he acknowledged that God sees everything, even one's innermost thoughts. He found himself to be a sinner and wanted to repent in dust and ashes. After Job's darkest time of loss, sorrow and illness, God blessed him. Job received twice as much as he previously had. Most importantly, he left a testimony of faith (Job 42:1-17).

Our minds can become mired in thoughts such as "Why am I experiencing all these things?" or "It is not fair for me to have all these trials." We are not able to measure the fairness of our own trials. God's ways are so much higher than our ways. He desires that we would make it to the destination of heaven.

When the Israelites were on their journey towards the promised land, God gave them His promise: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared" (Exod. 23:20).

## **God Is with Us Always**

It is yet the same for today's believers. God has promised to be with us all the days of our lives. We are reassured by the thought that God cares for us and protects us. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a good example for us. Her acceptance of God's will teaches us to trust in God and His direction. We hear God's will through His Word that is taught by the Holy Spirit in God's kingdom.

When trials weigh on us, it is good to discuss the way and the journey with other believers. They offer us comfort, guidance and reassurance. Mary went to visit Elizabeth and stayed there for three months before returning home. God took care of Mary even after the death of her son. On the cross, Jesus gave John the duty of taking care of her as his own mother (John 19:26,27).

God's protection is also always with us. God has given us the gift of faith, and He wants to protect us in faith every day. Jesus prays on behalf of His children so that we would be protected from all evil. Before His departure, He asked the Heavenly Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

### **Don't Fear the Future**

A believer needn't fear the future. Jesus asks us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all necessary needs will be given to us. He prays on our behalf without ceasing. He does not forget that His children are yet on the journey, travel-weary and tried.

What refreshes us most amidst our trials is the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. When a fellow believer forgives all our sins, we are given strength to carry on. We can continue with joy on our pathway to heaven.

**Hannu Janhunen**

## Little Glimpses of Heaven

On a quiet evening, I find myself lighting candles. I sit in the semi-darkness, the room illuminated by softly glowing candlelight.

My thoughts drift here and there, thinking upon this day, upon bygone days and moments. I ponder this life—this gift of existing here on this Earth, this gift of faith in my heart, this gift of hope that shows me the way to heaven.

How has it been for you, my friend? Has your life been full of only joy-filled moments, full of carefree, sunny days? Or have you also had difficult times: cloud-filled, heavy days, when your faith has been tried—when you have wondered how you can keep on?

On difficult, often wearying days, have fears and doubts come? Did they start as a tiny snowball that began to roll downhill, gathering momentum, along with more snow and more size?

In such moments, has it been easy to believe, to trust? Or, buried under that ever-growing snowball, have you found yourself crying out: Dear Father, am I yet in Your care?

What is it that can stop that snowball short in its tracks? What can cause it to melt into nothing and make it disappear?

*I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me (Ps. 77:1).*

What a relief it has been when I have been able to unburden my heart to a trusted escort! What a relief it has been to hear the words: All sins, all doubts, all fears, ALL are forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus! In times when life has heavily pressed me down, my heart from its very base, has been lifted up! Such is the power of the gospel, this love of our heavenly Father!

Peace comes, and a soothing joy, that reaches beyond, and deeper, than the heartaches and hardships of this temporary earthly existence. Strength and courage also come—to take a forward footstep, and then another.

May my heart always remember to turn to this gospel message. It renews my trust and my hope. It gives to me little glimpses of heaven.

God knows me through and through. He balances everything just so for me.

*Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Ps. 139:3,5,6).*

On this peaceful candle-lit evening, in these moments of reflection, my heart nods and quiet thankfulness seeps in: I have needed my trials! When all has seemed helpless and hopeless, I have had great need to turn to God. He lovingly pulls me closer. God gives me moments to stop and consider, moments to remind me what is truly most important in my life.

How has it been for you? Have difficulties caused you also to look upward, toward the everlasting?

Let us help each other on this journey! My friend, let us carry each other, in love and in prayer! May God help us to shield and shelter our own little candles, and help us shield and shelter one another's flickering flames.

Let us remind each other often where we are going. Our days, each and every one, have been given to us as gifts. God knows best. He wants to help us home.

Life is short. Heaven is forever.

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him (Ps. 28:7).*

**Krista Simonson**

# The Gospel Is Our Strength

Every believer—married or single—experiences trials on the journey of faith. We look back on our forty-four years of marriage and remember how the Heavenly Father has always taken care of us. When we made our wedding vows we had the youthful trust that God will certainly bless our marriage and keep us in His kingdom.

“We asked Thee, heavenly Lord, to our wedding; Thou hast arrived in our midst to abide. Thou wilt not leave us alone nor forsake us; this we believe for Thy Word is our guide” (SHZ 250:3).

We started our life together in a small apartment. We couldn't even afford a telephone. Soon we were expecting our first child. When we needed help or advice we walked to the corner store to use the pay phone. As a husband, I sometimes wondered how I would be able to support a growing family. It seemed so difficult. We were often reassured by the believers that God will provide our temporal needs with each additional child. He has surely provided for us abundantly.

We were blessed with eleven children. We still marvel how God provided all. As the years passed our trials changed and God was always with us despite doubts and weaknesses. In the space of ten months we lost three loved ones, and both of us had health issues that involved surgery. The hardest was when our oldest son died in Phoenix. He did not die in faith—he left no testimony. On the weekend we held a memorial for the young man who was to be our son-in-law, the sheriff came to say that our son was found dead in his apartment. Our son's ashes were sent to us, which was traumatic too.

A daughter who's had drug problems is also not in faith. Sometimes it looks like she's good and going to rehab; other times we don't hear anything. She's out there somewhere, and also in our hearts. We fear that we'll get a call about her someday. As a father, the enemy taunts me that I have failed as a parent. So many thoughts have gone through my mind when I realize all my weaknesses. Yet, eventually we've been able to accept that faith isn't for everybody; it's a gift from God. We remember that most of our children are believing, for which we are so thankful.

Other life-changing events have also happened. At times we could only sigh to the Heavenly Father; life on earth is at times a vale of tears. Our brothers and sisters in faith comforted us, prayed for us and preached the gospel. This was our source of strength. We comforted each other with the knowledge that God will never give us more than we can bear. God gives trials to draw us closer to Him. We didn't choose our trials—they were given to us, and God knows what He wants to give. Even in writing this we are hesitant to speak too much of our own trials because we look around and see others with much greater trials.

We are thankful for the joys and sorrows that God has given us. We want to continue to travel in God's kingdom believing, day by day, sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious blood. We want to

remember our brothers and sisters in faith in our prayers. We ask to also be enclosed in the prayers of God's children.

“Thank You, Lord, for all your blessings; thanks for joy and thanks for tears; You are always walking with us; You know all our hopes and fears” (SHZ 351:1).

**Doug and Arja Lever**

## “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

The psalmist writes, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord” (Ps. 92:1). There was a difficult time in my life when it was not so easy to give thanks. I had, as I often told my wife, the best job in the world. I worked for the University of Minnesota in agricultural research, which was exciting and rewarding. Then I received unfortunate news. Research funding was gone, and so was my job. I was laid off.

To me, this was the worst time for this to happen. Our family life was at its busiest point, when we had the most children at home and they needed the most care. As a father, I felt the weight of responsibility to provide for my family squarely on my shoulders. I was consumed with the everyday cares and burdens of this life. Life was stressful. The future was uncertain. How would we pay the bills and buy groceries on a very limited budget? How would we get through this difficult time?

We found part-time jobs and in one way or another we came up with just enough money to keep ourselves afloat. This continued for three years until I received a full-time position with benefits. Shortly after we were blessed with the possibility to fulfill our dream of a hobby farm.

When I look back at the experiences my wife and I went through, I see clearly how God provides for His own. We pray in the Lord's Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This life lesson taught me where my daily bread truly comes from. For this I thank my Heavenly Father.

**Brian Johnson**

### **Discussion Points:**

1. How can you be an escort to one in difficult trials?
2. How have you been helped when you have had trials or difficulties?
3. What other examples can you give from the Bible in which God helped in severe trials?
4. What kinds of things does living faith protect us from? Share examples from your own life.