



October 13, 2023

Our Time of Testing and Trials

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

My Friday night letter had a hiatus for the last couple of weeks as I had eye surgery, and then the next week we were in Orange Beach for the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

So now, most of us have returned home, back to the “norm” whatever normal is these days.

Often before the Holy Days many of us in the Body of Christ experience difficult tests and/or trials. This year, as we came up to the Feast of Trumpets, Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day it was again the case.

Some had serious injuries. Some have serious health issues and diseases. Some have been the victim of unjust and false accusations. Some have lost loved ones who died way too young. Some have lost jobs because of their commitment to honoring God's Sabbath. The list goes on.

Now that we are home, this year's fall Feast Days on the books and over, and it appears these challenges are continuing for some.

Might we ponder, muse, think, and reexamine again, why do you and I experience trials, troubles, and painful experiences?

These events come our way in spite of trying to exercise wisdom, caution, and common sense in how we conduct ourselves. We are imperfect. We can sometimes inadvertently make mistakes and errors. Some of them can cause harm and pain and trouble. Life is imperfect. We can be a victim of someone else's bad judgment and mistakes. Some become victims of inattentive driving by

others. Violence is often perpetrated on innocent victims. This world is not getting any safer to live in as time marches on.

God allows free moral agency and permits humans to make decisions that bring painful and hurtful consequences upon themselves and others. The very real fact is, God does not shield us from all of this.

My wife and I seek God's protection and guidance in our life and activities, and I believe you do too. But, in spite of that there are still accidents, disease, and losses which affect us all.

If we are not careful, we can soon find ourselves in a pretty negative, perhaps even despondent way. In some cases we can become miserable losing hope in what God promises.

We may claim and insist that life is too often unfair! Or, we blame Satan immediately for any circumstance that is not comfortable. In a way that is sometimes true. However, bad things happen to good people. The best laid plans can go astray.

Notice this comment from Solomon: *"I returned and saw under the sun that-The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them."* (Eccl. 9:11-12)

God is not orchestrating all the exact details of our lives. He intervenes when He decides, and in the way He decides. For those of us called to be disciples, we live by faith and trust in God's working in our lives. He is working out a purpose that has a long range impact. Thankfully He is able to bring good out of our tests and trials. (Rom. 8:28)

The apostle Peter wrote to the members who were part of the scattered tribes of Israel. *"who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if*

need be, you have been grieved by various trials." (1 Pet. 1:5-6)

I don't know for sure what the trials were to which that Peter is referring. He addresses the "diaspora", (the scattered Jews and other Israelites in the areas far from Jerusalem). They may have faced harassment by the military and local leaders appointed by the Roman Empire. There may have been societal unrest and upheaval that created instability and other challenges. The true disciples living in a society influenced by the god of this world and corrupted by carnal human beings experience trials and tests related to these imperfections.

As time marches on, you and I are facing these things too, and life is definitely not getting any simpler. We had a short rest for the most part during His Feast this year, but even then not all was perfect was it?

The apostle James makes similar comments and instructions. "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*" (James 1:2-4)

Usually the joy, cheerfulness, or calm delight comes later, after one has endured and persevered through the test or trial. By holding on to our faith and trust and obedience in our loving God through tests and trials we demonstrate and strengthen our faith.

Yes, ultimately, that faith comes from Jesus Christ living in us, but we too have our part, and it is very real. (Gal. 2:20).

God will bless us as we do. God gives His Spirit to those who obey and trust Him. (Acts 5:32) This abiding faith will enhance trust and confidence as well as peace of mind as we accept and persevere through trials and tests.

Continuing with Peter's comments, "*that the genuineness 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.*" (1 Pet. 1:7)

Our goal is to be prepared and achieve entrance into the kingdom of God at Christ's return to serve with Him. The value of that is beyond that of gold, silver or

anything else we can acquire or wish for. God wants us to cement our trust, confidence and loyalty in and to Him. The apostle James also points us to the future. "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*" (James 1:12)

We might recall, that the ancient Israelites experienced some of the plagues that were sent to the Egyptians. But God used these plagues and trials to work out their deliverance from Pharaoh and Egypt. God worked out good in the end! God wants us to put our trust in Him and positively look to the future and the final outcome. These reminders are brought out in Deuteronomy 4, 7, 29, etc. Continuing with Peter's encouragement, ". . . *Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*" (1 Pet. 1:7-9)

This subject deserves a sermon message, but we'll end our discussion for now. May our gracious God encourage us all in whatever circumstances this finds us experiencing.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



Scott Hoefker

Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)

(*Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios*)

tshoefker@cogministries.org / www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Office