

New Covenant Lifestyle: Lesson 4 – God’s Role in Trials

Our New Covenant lifestyle is: living free from the curse. Yet we are still in this natural world where the curse operates. Accordingly there will be a clash between our freedom and the bondage of the world that we live in. We have already covered much revelation about God’s will: what he did for us through Jesus, what he wants for us in this world and the gift of righteousness and the abundance of grace to enable us to rule in this world. So, what is God’s role in the trials, temptations, tribulations and persecutions (TTTP) that are present in our lives?

Firstly, you already know and must be established in the truth that God is not behind the TTTPs and he does not use them to mature you. We looked at this truth in New Covenant Principles Lesson 4 – God is Good. Let me restate the summary of that Lesson as it is the basis for understanding God’s role in trials.

“Since God has no evil in Him and actually has nothing to do with evil, it is impossible for Him to use it. The source of all evil is Satan, the father of lies whose only goals are to steal, to kill and to destroy (John 10:10). The reality is that Satan is self-employed. God does not employ Satan (evil) to correct or discipline anybody. Everything bad in the earth (the curse) originates from Satan and has nothing of God involved in it. God knows that since His Word was enough to create everything, His word is enough to teach and correct His children. He does not use accidents, mistakes, disasters, sickness, lack or anything else bad; He uses His Word.”

Since there are no TTTPs in heaven, we need to get God’s view of why these are present on the earth and what he has done about them for us. God provided me insight into this in an experience I had on June 2nd, 2018. A good friend had highly recommended I read a certain book. It was written by a well known pastor from one of the best known churches in the USA. He travels the world speaking and ministering and is highly respected as a teacher. When I got to his chapter on trials and tribulations I read the following statements that did not agree with what I understood of God’s view of TTTPs. He stated, *“The devil always stations giants right in the middle of our God-given purposes, and the Lord often endorses them.”* And *“...where our souls are being tested to the limits, we ask whether it was God or the devil who led us there. The answer is yes – God and the devil both have a plan for us ... but they intend entirely different outcomes.”* The author goes on to say that God’s plan is to prove us before he can trust us with any kind of public promotion. These beliefs are totally opposite to what the Lord has given me to teach – that God has nothing to do with evil, is not behind any TTTPs, and doesn’t lead us into them. However, because of the reputation of the author, I said to the Lord “Can you please confirm to me that what I am teaching is correct? Am I teaching the truth or have I missed it?” I asked this question in mid May of 2018 and then left it with the Lord.

On June 2nd I was at the local Farmer’s Market in Waco, Texas sitting in my business’s booth reading the last part of this book when a male customer came to the booth. I put the book down while I talked to the customer and we ended up in a discussion about the New Covenant of Grace. During this conversation I noticed two black ladies come into the booth. They looked like mother and daughter, with one appearing to be in her forties and the other in her twenties. I turned to them and said I would be with them shortly, then turned back and finished the conversation with the man. After saying goodbye, I turned back to the ladies and was surprised to see that the older one had gone behind my table and sat down in my chair. Anyway, I said “How can I help you ladies?” The one seated in my chair simply picked up the subject book, looked me in the eye and asked “What do you think of this book?” After a rather surprised second of thought I replied, “well it has some good things in it but it also has some things that I disagree with.” Then she asked me “What specifically do you disagree with?” Now that’s being put on the spot! I responded, “Well the author says that God allows bad things to happen to us, and I believe that is wrong.” She replied, “You are absolutely correct; God has nothing to do with evil.” She stood up

to leave and I commented that the author says God used evil things to prove us; but, I believe bad things happen because of Satan and the curse that's in the earth. She looked directly at me and said "**Men make choices!!**". Then she proceeded to walk past me out of the booth. I thought on that statement for a few seconds and then turned to watch them leave, but they had disappeared into the crowd. I got busy with other customers and it wasn't until later that afternoon during a run in our local park that the event came back to mind. I asked the Lord what it was all about. I clearly heard Holy Spirit say, "It is so important that you know that what you are teaching is correct that I sent two angels to confirm it for you". Oh how important it is to God that you realize he has nothing to do with the TTTPs that come against you; they are from Satan, the curse and men's choices.

With that clear foundation, now let's explore the origins of TTTPs, and then we will look at God's role in them.

Since God is not the origin and has nothing to do with the arrival of TTTPs, it follows that they originate from the evil that is in this world. Adam's treason brought evil into the world and everything bad is a result of Adam's choice. So the cause of all TTTPs is the devil's desire and plans to destroy us because we are made in the image of God. None of these bad things are found in heaven; they are only found here in this natural world. So part of "God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven" is living in the place where TTTPs do not destroy our lives here on earth. Write out **James 1:14**. _____

What causes a man to be tempted? _____.

Give some examples of what a person can lust for. _____.

This lust is a consequence of the curse. Temptation is flesh based and is designed by the curse to get us to operate in self effort. When we choose that path, it opens the way for the operation of the curse in our lives.

Write out **2 Timothy 3:12** _____.

What causes persecution? _____.

Where does persecution come from? _____.

The last statement the angel made to me, "**Men make choices**", lines up with the above two scriptures and reveals why TTTPs happen to us. Understanding that TTTPs are the result of men making choices is key to knowing what God's role in trials is. It underlines the importance of choosing to follow the leading of Holy Spirit. Doing this is the only way we can avoid the bad stuff. Holy Spirit will never lead you into TTTPs; rather His role is to enable us to exercise of our covenant rights to avoid, change or prevent the TTTPs from destroying our lives.

Back in BCT Lesson 16 when we dug into **1 Corinthians 10:13**, we got the translation that says: "*None of the temptations and trials you face are unique to you. But God is faithful and does not permit you to be tried; they are a violation of his will for you. Instead, oh what power you have! For with every trial God has already made a way out (Jesus did it at the cross) that you may be able to go through it [without it touching you]*". This verse is a simple summary of God's role in trials. He wants you to avoid them, but if ours or other's choices cause us to go into TTTPs, then His plan is to lead us out of them without them affecting us.

Let's look at the context of this verse to see God's role in the trials that the Israelites went through. The theme of the context is found in **1 Corinthians 9:24**. What does Paul say we should do? _____.

According to **Philippians 3:13-14**, what is the prize? _____.

According to **Romans 8:29**, what is our high calling? _____.

1 Corinthians 9:25 says that to win you must be temperate in all things. The Greek word for temperate means controlled. The only control that wins in our lives is denying self-performance and resting in the completed work of Jesus. The next two verses continue this theme by saying that our race must be run with certainty and subjection. Jesus showed us how this works; he stated it as “I only say what I hear my Father say and do what I see my Father do” (**John 5:19&30; 8:29; 12:49**). The context is talking about living in this world in the power and will of God.

Then Paul goes on to give examples of how the Israelites were a type for us as Christians and how their choices resulted in them missing living in the power and will of God.

In **1 Corinthians 10:1**, what were the children of Israel under and in? _____.

What were they baptized into (v2)? _____.

What did they eat (v3)? _____.

What did they drink from (v4)? _____.

For us the cloud is a picture of our being seated with Jesus in heavenly places (**Ephesians 2:6**) and the sea is a picture of the curse in this world. According to **Romans 6:3-4**, “in the sea” can also be seen as our being buried with Jesus in his death (to the curse) and being raised “in the cloud” with him into heavenly places. According to **Romans 6:11**, we are dead to the sea (curse of sin) and alive to Jesus (the cloud of God himself).

In spite of their relationship with the Rock (Jesus), the Israelites died in the wilderness because of unbelief (**1 Corinthians 10:5**). Paul then gives 5 specific examples of why they suffered the consequences of the curse.

What did they do in **1 Corinthians 10:6**? _____. The word evil means ‘worthless’ which implies things of this natural world; i.e. carnal things. They should have desired the rock (Jesus).

What did they do in **1 Corinthians 10:7**? _____. The root of idolatry is pride in self effort. Their egos drove them to worship their own efforts rather than resting in God’s grace.

What did they do in **1 Corinthians 10:8**? _____. This refers to self gratification through self performance rather than intimacy with Jesus.

What did they do in **1 Corinthians 10:9**? _____. The root of this tempting (Numbers 21:6) was ungratefulness for the provision of God. We are told to give thanks in everything – the antidote to this curse.

What did they do in **1 Corinthians 10:10**? _____. This reflects their self-centered (human) judgment and reasoning. They should have been listening to and following God’s directions.

According to **1 Corinthians 10:11**, why does Paul give these examples? _____.

In **1 Corinthians 10:12** we are given the instructions to avoid self effort and human confidence (“he that thinks he stands”) because if we don’t avoid them, we will fall. **Galatians 5:4** calls this self effort “falling from grace”. So the whole context of **1 Corinthians 10:13** is to avoid self performance and live in the leading of Holy Spirit. That is what enables the power that is in us to take us through the TTTPs of the curse without them touching us.

Now read **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**. Here Paul addresses a trial he went through in order to show us God’s role in the trial. What does Paul say was given to him (v7)? _____.

How does he identify the trial? _____.

What did Paul do about it? _____.

What was God’s response (v9)? _____.

What did Paul choose to glory in and why (v9)? _____.

What benefit did Paul see from trials and tribulations (v10)? _____.

The term “thorn in the flesh” in today’s colloquial English would be “pain in the neck”. Paul is not talking about physical sickness, pain, disease or poverty; he is talking about the persecutions of other people, motivated by Satan. Paul understood his covenant rights to live healthy, blessed and protected, but the challenges he faced were from Godless men who went about to make his life difficult (e.g. **1 Corinthians 16:9**, **1 Timothy 4:14**).

God’s response is the same to all of us – My grace is sufficient for you. God is letting us know that whatever TTTPs come, when we rest in him and let him work, then his super abounding grace goes to work for us.

This revelation of God’s grace in his life enabled Paul to deny self effort and follow Holy Spirit. He expands on this in **2 Corinthians 4:16-17**. He chooses not to give up because even though the outward man (our ego and self effort) perishes (dies daily to self), our inner man (our spirit, the real us) is renewed (strengthened, empowered by grace) every day. What does Paul call these trials (v17)? _____.

What do these produce in us (v17) _____.

God’s role in trials is his continual, exceeding abundant and far surpassing supply of grace. His favor, protection and provision are ours. The curse in this earth will attack (that’s Satan’s mantra) and our response is to receive grace and reject the attack. If it is persecution, our response is to receive grace and pour out God’s heart of love. That’s why **1 Corinthians 10:13** says “Oh what power you have (God’s grace in us), for God has already made a way out”; Jesus has purchased it and sealed it in blood. When we deny self and rest in Jesus, God leads us through the TTTPs without them touching us.

Read **1 Peter 4:12-14**. What should we not get surprised about? _____.

How should we respond to them (v13)? _____.

What rests on us when we rejoice (v14)? _____.

With the correct understanding that God doesn’t cause the TTTPs, and that they are not part of his will or plan for us, we need to study the verses that seem to imply the opposite and find out what is really being said. This requires us to look at the meanings of specific Greek words and translate them based on God’s thinking and not on human reasoning and experience. (Note – Greek words can have a range of meanings and the mind-set of the translators determined which ones they used). The first one to look at is **1 Peter 4:19**. The KJV uses the words “suffer according to the will of God”. This implies it is God’s will for you to go through suffering, but that is opposite to the New Covenant. The Greek word translated “according to” is “katah”. Strong’s states this means “down in place or time”. The synonyms he gives include “about, according as (to), after, against, (even, like) as (concerning), pertaining to, touching, at, before, beyond, by, to the charge of, concerning, down, every, (+ far more) exceeding, X more excellent, for, from, over against, so, through, where (-by), with”. The best fit from this range is “as concerning” which in modern English mean “for doing”. So the better translation says “Wherefore let them that suffer for doing the will of God....” It is not God’s will that you suffer persecution, but God knows it will come because we live in the midst of the curse and evil men’s choices. So when it comes, we commit our souls to him - which means we rest in his love and receive his grace. When we do this, he deals with the circumstances and leads us through them in a powerful testimony of his glory.

Next verse is **1 Peter 5:10**. The KJV uses the phrase “*having suffered a while*” and the implication is that you will be established and strengthened after “*having suffered*”. This contradicts the New Covenant where God swore in blood to bless, protect and prosper us in a life free from the curse. So we need to see the correct translation from the Greek. The literal Greek says “... *his glory in Christ Jesus a little while having suffered himself may perfect you ...*”.

Who is the suffering referring to? _____.

How long did he suffer? _____.

What happens to you because he suffered? _____.

How good the right translation is!! Peter is underlining the reality that because Jesus suffered for us, we get to live in the abundance of grace and gift of righteousness.

How about **Psalm 23:4** – write out this verse: _____

Who does this verse say walks through the valley of death? _____

Does it say God led you into this valley? _____.

So how did you end up in it (remember the visiting angel’s last words to me)? _____

What is God’s role in the valley? _____

What does God do about the valley? _____.

Let’s look at some examples of men who went through trials that are recorded for our instruction.

Read **Genesis 20:2-13**. What trial happened to Abraham (v2)? _____.

What did God call Abimelech because he took Sarah (v3)? _____.

What did God command Abimelech to do (v7)? _____.

Why did Abraham call Sarah his sister (v11)? _____.

So this trial was caused by Abraham’s fear based choice; God intervened to fix the jam Abraham put himself in.

How about Jacob? The full story is in **Genesis chapters 27 and 28**. The key points are in the following questions:

What did Jacob do to his father (**27:18-24**)? _____.

What was Esau’s response and plan for revenge (**27:41**)? _____.

What did Rebecca tell Jacob to do (**27:42-45**)? _____.

What did God promise to give Isaac (**28:13**)? _____.

What covenant promise did God reiterate about Jacob’s seed (**28:14**)? _____

What promises did God give Jacob in **Genesis 28:15**? _____

Again, we see that Jacob went through these trials because of men's decisions. His greed and self performance, encouraged by his mother, caused a major rift in the family and sent Jacob into exile for 20 years. Yet, God turned these trials into good and blessed Jacob the usurper.

There are many examples of trials in the life of Joseph (**Genesis 37 to 50**). Let's look at the reasons for these.

What caused Joseph's brothers to hate him (**37:3-4**)? _____

What did Joseph do to increase this hatred (**37:5-11**)? _____

What did the brothers do to Joseph (**37:28**)? _____

What did the Lord do for Joseph (**39:23**)? _____

In spite of all that had happened to him, Joseph understood that God had not caused the problems but had delivered him out of them and made him the number 2 man in Egypt. This is stated in **Genesis 50:20**. The context is that after Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would punish them for selling him into slavery. So they sent a false message to Joseph claiming that their father had said Joseph must forgive them (**Genesis 50:17**). This caused Joseph to weep because his brothers were still living with the guilt of their actions when Joseph had already totally forgiven them. Sounds like the unfortunate state of many believers today, living in guilt and condemnation because they don't understand that God has already totally forgiven them.

Joseph sums up God's role in trials in **Genesis 50:20**. The key Hebrew word in this verse is 'Chashab" (Chat, Shin, Bet) which Strong's defines as "A primitive root; properly to plait or interpenetrate, that is, (literally) to weave or (generally) to fabricate". Joseph correctly states that where men choose to do evil (anything that's not of God) against each other or for themselves, God weaves or fabricates the consequences into something that will bless and edify the wronged person when they "let go". God is about getting you out of TTTPs and blessing you.

There are so many other examples, like David going through trials because of King Saul's jealousy. But the final one we will look at is the apostle Paul. Paul suffered many trials and persecutions because of preaching the gospel and God delivered him and blessed him. However, his final state as a prisoner of Rome was because of his own decisions. Notice in **Acts 20:16**, Paul was on a mission to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost. Why? Because as a Jew, attendance was mandatory and Paul's Pharisaical mindset reasserted itself. It appears that regardless of his admonitions to Christians not to go back to the bondage of observing days, months, times and years (**Galatians 4:9-11**), he ended up doing just that. It was his choice to go to Jerusalem and once there he proceeded to put himself back under the law (**Acts 21:20-24**) "by purifying himself and being at charges with them" (the four men under a vow). Interestingly, Holy Spirit had tried to stop Paul going to Jerusalem (**Acts 20:23, 21:4, 21:11-12**), but Paul refused to listen (**Acts 20:24, 21:13**). He had made up his mind and was going to do it anyway. The result was his imprisonment for most of the remainder of his life. His travelling ministry was cut short, yet God turned Paul's error into something good. In **Acts 23:11** Jesus tells Paul to "cheer up" because there is still a lot of ministry to do. The remaining chapters of Acts chronicle the preaching, salvations, miracles, deliverances and blessings of God. That is how good our God is. He is the one that turns the TTTPs of the curse and men into blessings for us. That is God's role in TTTPs. So rest in Jesus and receive his abundant grace.