

Anxiety (Worry) and Trials

Smooth sailing is not what we can expect here on Earth, but it is what we are promised in Heaven. The thing to do is to get there from here. It is important to rise above the world and set our sites on eternity. This helps make our relatively short life bearable regardless of current circumstances.

Sometimes trials are brought on us to test us, and are not of our own doing.

Job 1:6-12 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan did lots of very bad things to Job, but only what God allowed. In the end, Job was blessed with more than he had before all these trials started, all because he persevered and would not blame God for his troubles. His anxiety turned to humble repentance.

Other times our trials are the product of our own doing and are used to correct us or point us in the right direction. In effect, we are doing bad instead of good works. This adds to anxiety. We are supposed to do good works.

Hebrews 12:5-11 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

So as we see, either way God loves us, and there is a reason these trials happen. Anxiety usually accompanies things we go through that we don't like. It can also show up because we anticipate something bad will happen.

The Bible tells us not to be anxious (worried). This will come within other context telling us what we need to do or think to replace this anxiety.

Matthew 6:25-33 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well

If faith alleviates anxiety, we can conclude that when we are anxious we are not fully exercising our faith. This can be a real struggle, but we can do it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Here we must realize that faith does not keep us from going through trials. In fact, it is tested through trials. So, if we are in the middle of this without anxiety, our faith has replaced it with joy.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Patience is not something most of us come by naturally, so God helps us get some.

When we bring things on ourselves we need to repent. When we do, God is faithful to forgive.

1 John: 8-10 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

When we repent, we may still face some punishment for what we do, but not lose our promise of eternal life. This happened to David. The best plan is not to do bad things in the first place to avoid this.

2 Samuel 12:9-13 Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never

depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.' Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

Jesus says not to fear men who can only kill our physical body, but instead to fear God who can both kill us and send our Souls to Hell.

Matthew 10:28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

We have the promise that if we persevere to the end we can be with Jesus in Heaven for eternity.

*Matthew 24:3-14 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, **but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.** (Emphasis added) And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*

With this in mind, our trials are still there, but our faith in this promise can go a long way toward minimizing our anxiety and actually allow us to face our trials with an attitude of Joy and Hope.

With appreciation for conversations with Bill K.

Thoughts by John Oliver
a grateful and unworthy servant