

## In the Hour of Trial

- I. Introduction
  - a. Our congregation is experiencing a great amount of trial
    - i. Nearly every household is enduring some kind of affliction
    - ii. If you are not, you're probably looking over your shoulder for what may be coming
  - b. If Satan loves to see the people of God suffer, then he must be pleased with the current state of things
- II. KEY THOUGHT: Joseph is an example of what to expect when going through a great trial
- III. What to Expect
  - a. Expect to experience great loss
    - i. Loss of loving father
    - ii. Loss of home
    - iii. Loss of liberty
    - iv. It is hard to imagine a young man losing more than this in one day
  - b. Expect to be greatly disappointed by those close to us
    - i. Betrayed by brothers
    - ii. Acting in ways that could not be imagined
    - iii. They were having their own hour of trial, and they did not pass this test
  - c. Expect for reality to mock our desires and dreams
    - i. In Canaan he had dreamed of having power and importance (Gen. 37)
    - ii. Now he rules Potiphar's house, but he is a slave and a stranger (Gen. 39:2-5)
  - d. Expect to undergo extreme temptation to sin
    - i. It is hard to imagine a more flattering inducement to sin than what Joseph faced (Gen. 39:7-10)
    - ii. Temptation while enduring suffering is the test within the trial
      - 1. It determines whether we will suffer with integrity
      - 2. Or suffer in guilt
    - iii. Joseph passed the test
  - e. Expect any unrighteousness on your part to only multiply your misery
    - i. "How could I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
    - ii. Joseph knew that seeking consolation in his suffering through sin was the worst thing he could do
    - iii. Compare Job (Job 2:7-10)
      - 1. Curse God and die!
      - 2. "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"
    - iv. And David
      - 1. He knew his suffering was due to sin
  - f. Expect any righteousness on your part to be punished
    - i. He did not sin with Potiphar's wife

- ii. But he gets thrown in jail (Gen 39:17-20)
- g. Expect to make progress, only to be knocked down again
- h. Expect to only have control of your words and deeds
  - i. In the hour of trial, we have no control over our circumstances
    - 1. If we were in control of our circumstances, it wouldn't be a trial
  - ii. Sometimes we have only limited control over our thoughts and emotions
    - 1. We have to think about many things that are unpleasant
    - 2. We naturally feel horrible about our losses and disappointment
  - iii. We are not told almost nothing about Joseph's thoughts and feelings only about his words and deeds
- i. Expect to suffer alone
  - i. Who was with Joseph? No one
  - ii. He was totally isolated from human sympathy
- j. Expect to not be suffering alone, but to wish you were
  - i. What's worse than suffering alone?
  - ii. To be comforted by companions that only make the suffering worse
  - iii. That was the situation with Job
    - 1. Job 16:1-3
    - 2. His helpers weren't helping!
- k. Expect to be afflicted in body, spirit and mind
  - i. When one member suffers, all members suffer with it
    - 1. A health crisis can lead to a crisis of faith
    - 2. A great disappointment in a personal relationship can lead to physical illness
    - 3. About as soon as we say "At least I still can do this..." or "At least I still have this..." we may experience additional loss
  - ii. Joseph suffered
    - 1. Extreme physical hardship
      - a. Young slaves were not treated gently or fed well by slave traders
      - b. Prison conditions have never been placed of health and comfort
    - 2. Extreme mental anguish
      - a. Betrayal
      - b. Disappointment
      - c. Loss
    - 3. Extreme spiritual testing
      - a. His faith in God was being put to the test
      - b. His faithfulness to God was being put to the test
- l. Expect for others to have much more concern for their own problems than for yours

- i. The butler and the baker
  - 1. He noticed their troubles
    - a. Why are you sad?
    - b. But they didn't notice his
  - 2. He heard them and helped them
    - a. But they didn't ask to hear his story of suffering
- ii. It can comfort us in our trials to be of help and comfort to others
  - 1. But sometimes that is not appreciated or reciprocated
  - 2. That might add to our burden
- m. Expect to have promised help fall through
  - i. The butler immediately forgot who had helped him in his time of suffering
  - ii. The butler was restored in days
  - iii. Joseph remained in prison for years (Gen. 40:14-23)
- n. Expect your hour of trial to last a long, long time
  - i. Even a short trial can be excruciatingly severe
    - 1. But when day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year the burden of suffering continues and is not relieved
    - 2. That is indeed a severe trial
    - 3. That is the type of trial that Joseph suffered
  - ii. Joseph
    - 1. He was a young man (17 years old) when he was sold into slavery (Gen 37:2)
    - 2. He is thirty years old when he gets out of prison (Gen. 41:46)
    - 3. And it is another nine years before he gets to see his family (Gen. 45:6)
    - 4. His hour of trial was about 23 years
  - iii. We need to be prepare to suffer long so that we do not faint and lose heart if our trial lasts a long time
- o. Expect your help to come from God
  - i. God had been helping all along
    - 1. Preserving Joseph's life from the hand of his brothers
    - 2. In Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:2-5)
    - 3. In prison (Gen. 39:21-23)
    - 4. The Lord was with him!
  - ii. Now, Joseph was brought before Pharaoh, interpreted his dream and became the second ruler of the land in one day (Gen. 41:14-16, 39-41)
  - iii. God's help arrives
    - 1. By His power
    - 2. According to His wisdom
    - 3. In His time
- p. Expect to have to forgive the undeserving

- i. His brothers end up groveling at his feet begging for mercy (44:18ff)
    - ii. If Joseph had been harboring resentment and bitterness toward them, it would have been nearly impossible to forgive them
    - iii. But on the contrary he was eager to forgive them
    - iv. He was ready for them to change
  - q. Expect to be changed by trial
    - i. Joseph learned some things
      - 1. About himself
        - a. He could never have known what he was capable of enduring
        - b. He found out that there are things more important than wielding great power and influence
      - 2. About God
        - a. He can comfort us in our suffering (Gen.
        - b. He can use the worst circumstances to bring about great good for many (Gen. 45:5-8!!)
        - c. He can make a time of great trial to change me for the better
        - d. He never leaves us or forsakes us
    - ii. His greatest desires had changed
      - 1. Before he may have wanted rule and authority
      - 2. Now he only wants to have his family restored to him
  - r. Expect to discover that you are not alone in your suffering
    - i. Jacob had been severely grieved (Gen. 37:32-35; 42:36-38; 47:9) “few and evil have been the days of the years of my life”
    - ii. His brothers were suffering severe guilt (Gen. 42:21-23; 50:15-18)
    - iii. The world was suffering famine
    - iv. We are not alone either (1 Pet 5:6-11)

#### IV. Conclusion

- a. A time of trial is a time of testing
  - i. Not of God
    - 1. It is not a test of God’s love
    - 2. It is not a test of God’s wisdom
    - 3. It is not a test of God’s power
    - 4. God will always pass the test
  - ii. Of us
    - 1. of our faith
    - 2. and our faithfulness
    - 3. Do we trust in God’s love, wisdom and power enough to make it through?
- b. A time of testing has two conflicting purposes
  - i. Satan wants to defeat, weaken and destroy us
  - ii. God wants to perfect, establish, strengthen, settle and exalt us
  - iii. The result depends on our response to the trial
- c. All the trial in our congregation

d. INVITATION