**Faith And Trials**

So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is much more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong, through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. I Peter 1:6-7 NLT

Trials--not fun, especially if we are talking about legal proceedings, but we aren't. These trials Peter is talking about are a test of our faith, patience, or our stamina. Do we have what it takes to really run our race. We all have this type of trial. So many people I meet lately are going through their own "something". It could be health-wise, financial, relationship, grief—they come in various forms and they are things that we have to "endure" as the above scripture says. Endure: suffer (something painful or difficult) patiently. The word endure, to me, implicates something that is difficult or painful, lasting longer than I would like! Although our actions might have led to our "trial, " it then becomes something out of our control. Normally, we don't have control when they stop. The good news is that they can serve a good purpose if we approach it right! Instead of moaning and groaning, can we count it all joy when they come? And they come.

Peter is honest when he uses another word that is also difficult: many. It's not a one and done kind of thing. Trials appear often and regularly in this life. The good news is they are, according to Peter, "a little while". Our definition of a "little while" may differ from our wonderful Heavenly Father's. If we keep our eye on the trial or on the clock, I find it just makes them harder to endure.

So if we are going to experience them, how are we encouraged to get through them? Peter clarifies that they have a purpose. The purpose is to test our faith. They are part of God's process to purify us. God desires us to reflect His beauty and image. We can only do that if the impurities are removed. Not easy. Have you ever met someone who has endured their set of trials--but were full of joy and grace? Those are the disciples who allowed the Holy Spirit to work the process. Although, I never met Corrie Ten Boom, reading about her life is so inspiring. They arrested her and her sister after the Nazis discovered they were hiding Jews during World War 11. After their arrest in February 1944, they were transferred to the Ravensbruck concentration camp. They ministered to their fellow prisoners, sharing the gospel as they could. It was a sad day, December 16, when her sister Betsy died. Miraculously, Corrie was released on Christmas day, 1944. She later discovered it was because of a clerical error. When she was freed, she became a "tramp for the Lord", and shared her story. It is inspiring and amazing. By God's grace, she forgave the guards who mistreated them. Her story is real and transparent. The lessons learned were genuine. Her faith came shining through Testimonies like hers help me keep perspective on my own trials. If you haven't heard of her, it's worth the read.

So, how do we successfully endure our trials? By looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2 KJV Our Savior endured his painful execution on the cross, and the separation of His Father for our benefit. He took on himself the sins of this world (including yours and mine) so it would restore our relationship with God. So much more painful that what we must go through here on earth. My friends, when going through your trials, do not become bitter, weary, or quit. Lean into Him, lean onto Him and trust Him. Choose to allow your trials to make you better rather than bitter. As it is a "trial of your faith, "choose to grow in your faith. Take the time to follow Jesus' words in Matthew 11:29; Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. Seek Him during your trials, knowing He wants to teach us how to walk through them. This is where the fellowship of our suffering can come into play.

This is a perfect time to remind us. We ought not compare ourselves among ourselves as 2 Corinthians 10:12 exhorts us. We are not to judge the whys or the wherefores of other's trials, our job is to pray for those going through them. We can't rate the severity of one another's trials (she has it worse than I do, or nobody has it worse that me); but we need to stand together interceding for them. Trials are here to stay as long as we draw breath, let us allow the Holy Spirit to make the most of them, right?

Father, I thank you that we can trust you to bring us through any trial that comes our way. I thank you that you use these trials for our good--that the trying of our faith is more precious than gold. Remind us, when we want to quit, just how you endured the cross, for our sakes. Teach us your ways, for we want to not only learn of you, but to know you more. In Jesus' Name, amen.