Trials Essential

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." —James 1:2

ALL THOSE WHO HAVE been called of the LORD during this present Gospel Age are called with what the Apostle Paul styles the "high calling," the "heavenly calling," which is a call to share with Jesus in his "glory and honour and immortality." But the call is not the decision in the matter; it is merely an invitation with certain definite conditions.—Phil. 3:14; Heb. 3:1; Rom. 2:7

We are called not only to righteousness, but to walk in the Master's footsteps of suffering and self-sacrifice. Those are the only terms on which any are received as disciples of Christ. We understand the Scriptures to teach that during the future Millennial Age there will be other terms of acceptance that God will offer to the world. But there are no conditions offered now other than those of becoming followers and disciples of Jesus, to walk "in newness of life" as he walked.—Rom. 6:4

The Apostle James intimates that temptations may overtake these followers of Christ, into which they will fall as into a snare. As for an army, traps are set by the enemy, so the great Adversary sets

traps and snares for us. He endeavors to misguide our minds and to lead us away from proper conceptions of Truth and righteousness. We should be very careful to avoid his snares.

Temptation is not sin, but every temptation, persecution, and difficulty in life, permitted to come upon us who have made the covenant of sacrifice with the LORD, is intended to prove us, to test our love, to see whether or not our characters are fixed, rooted, and grounded in righteousness and being built up in love. To realize this should put all these trials, difficulties, and temptations in a new light before us, and greatly assist us in fighting a good fight, and in overcoming.

When we find ourselves suddenly in trials, we should say: If by these trials the LORD is proving my love and devotion to him, then, however trifling they may be, or however severe, I will diligently use them as favorable opportunities to demonstrate to my LORD the fullness of my love and devotion to him and his cause. I must fight a good fight against this thing—the world, the flesh, or the Adversary—whatever it might be that brought the trials.

We can rejoice because we know that if we overcome under such trials our characters will make advancement towards crystallization. We can rejoice also because we know that the LORD would not let us fall into any temptation which he would not cause to work out for us a blessing if we are wholly loyal.

Let us dwell often upon the words of the apostles: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." "Greatly rejoice, though now

for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—if we are rightly exercised by these trials.—James 1:2; I Pet. 1:6,7; James 1:12; II Cor. 4:17

"HE THAT ENDURETH"

We are assured that those who love the LORD, and who because of this will receive the kingdom, will be those whose love will have been tested by trials and temptations. Those who do not love the LORD with all their heart—in whom self, or some other idol, has first place—will be seduced by the world, the flesh, or the Adversary into some form of rebellion against the Divine Word, or Divine providence.

They will have schemes and theories that they will prefer to the LORD's plan. These, when analyzed, will usually be found to be based either upon selfishness, or ambition, or an evil spirit of envy or hatred. The LORD's leading and words lose their attraction to such, and they lose their interest correspondingly. Like those who turned away from the Lord at the First Advent, declaring, "This is an hard saying," they walk no more with him.—John 6:60

As there are some substances that are weak and brittle, so are there some that have fiber, strength, and endurance. The LORD chooses for himself such characters as have the strong, enduring qualities—fortitude, patience, and long-suffering. Some there are who walk close to the LORD, who will not be driven from him by any of the arts and wiles of the Adversary. They are such as are at heart fully the LORD's—not their own; they follow wherever the LORD may lead, because they have no will except the will of God. These will follow the Lord in the narrow way of trial, discipline, and testings during the present life, and by and by, as he has declared, "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."—Rev. 3:4

He who escapes all trials, temptations, and difficulties has every reason to doubt that he is really in relationship with God as a son. If he were a son, the LORD would surely find it necessary to give him trials and difficulties. If he does not have these, he should go to the Father and make sure that there is no impediment on his part—make sure that he has put himself in the proper place where he can be prepared for the kingdom. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."—Heb. 12:6

All of us will rejoice when the testings are over and we are accepted as overcomers, to share with the Lord in his throne. But patience, trust, and love must first do a refining work in our hearts, making us mellow, submissive, and obedient to God. Let the good work go on! Let us rejoice if our trials have made us stronger in character, more humble and Christlike, more aware of our

blemishes and imperfections, more watchful and earnest in our endeavors to correct them as far as possible.

"STEPPING STONES"

Even the conflicts in which we have had only partial victory may have resulted in blessings to us. Even in those experiences where we have suffered absolute failure, there may be, through the humiliation and the pain of defeat, a strengthening of our character, a firm determination for greater watchfulness, and a more fervent prayer for the Lord's sustaining grace, the need of which has been more deeply impressed upon our hearts. Thus even failures may become 'stepping stones' by which we rise toward God and heaven. Only through much tribulation shall we enter the kingdom of heaven at all.

If, therefore, the LORD's people find themselves involved in temptations, tribulations, instead of feeling downcast they are to rejoice and say, "These are evidences that the LORD is preparing me for a place in the kingdom." This should give one courage to fight the good fight against the world, the flesh and the Adversary. The flesh is suffering; but the new mind, the new will, has the joy of the end result and, therefore, the New Creature can rejoice, knowing that these trials are not for his harm, but for his good.—I Pet. 4:12,13

A WAY OF ESCAPE

The Heavenly Father will, with every temptation provide a way of escape. Hence, when we find ourselves in difficulty, we are to say, The Heavenly Father is permitting this trial—the Lord Jesus will

help me, and so I will rejoice in the fact that the Lord will not allow me to be overthrown; for he has promised that all things shall work out for my good, because I love God and seek to know and do his will.

As our text expressly says, we are to count it all joy when we 'fall' into temptation. But if we fall into temptation we are to say, I have been striving against this trial, and the LORD has permitted it, and there must, therefore, come some blessing out of it for me.

Our joy is largely dependent upon our study of the Word, and our knowledge of the precious promises contained therein for those who overcome. The LORD wants those who will endure a great fight of afflictions, who will endure patiently, though the temptations continue long, and the tribulations become more and more severe. But if we should lose our faith, all our previous good resolutions and standing for what is right would not make us overcomers.

A WORD OF WARNING

To those who are of this anointed company, and who are striving to attain the glory promised to the faithful followers of Christ, the Apostle Peter issues a very definite word of warning. In the opening chapter of his second epistle, he urges the church to add quality after quality of character that thus they may be fitted for the glorious things that God has promised to the faithful. He specifies faith as the primary qualification. To this he says that we are to add fortitude, knowledge, patience, self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness, and a

broad, generous love for all mankind. The reason the Scriptures declare that our judgment will be according to our faith is that while in the flesh we shall never be able to perform works such as God could approve.—II Pet. 1:4-7

What God approves is the New Creature. By exercising faith, and by demonstrating loyalty, these New Creatures will be able to please him, and to work out the proper character as enjoined in his Word, developing the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. "If ye do these things," says the apostle, "ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—vss. 10,11

Faith is necessary all along the line. Without it we could not have courage to go on. If we did not have faith what would be our source of encouragement? The 'fall' mentioned in the text above quoted is evidently a fall from the position to which we have been invited. We were called to be joint-heirs with our Lord. If we are obedient to the Word of the LORD, and are properly exercised by the experiences which are given us in the school of Christ, we shall gain his approval; for faithful is he that hath called us. (I Thess. 5:24) If there is a fall in our case it will be due to failure to do our part. If we fail to cultivate character, we shall fail to gain the kingdom.

Among those who fall it will be more serious with some than others. Those who fail to go on will receive certain tests that will determine whether they will turn back to the world or will continue in the narrow way. Some will fail in that they will not

manifest sufficient zeal. These will come through great tribulations. If, by these experiences, they are brought to a full loyalty to the LORD, they will be granted everlasting life; but not on so high a plane as if they had not failed in their manifestation of zeal for the LORD, and of faith, energy, and perseverance in doing the LORD's will.

Again, from lack of zeal in the LORD's service, or from cultivating a spirit of bitterness, one may deteriorate until he becomes an enemy of the LORD, loving sin rather than righteousness. As an opponent of God, such a one would suffer a complete fall; but those who have a temporary fall, and who afterwards overcome in the trials which the LORD allows to come upon them, thus showing their loyalty to him, will be fully recovered. Those who fall utterly can never be recovered. Such will lose everything. They had sacrificed their human hopes before they could be accepted, therefore their falling away from this condition as New Creatures will be hopeless.

The fall of such will be far worse than the fall of Adam, which resulted from having only limited knowledge, and from lack of experience in the results of evil; for these have come to a clear knowledge of the Truth and have experienced a share in the redemption. The falling away of such would mean a "fearful looking for of judgment"—destruction as enemies of God. (Heb. 10:27) Adam had only a small knowledge of the grace of God, and therefore is redeemed and will ultimately be restored if he will come into harmony with God. Let us take heed to our ways, and earnestly cultivate the fruits of the Spirit. ■