



A V O I C E F R O M T H E W I L D E R N E S S

The Trial of Our Faith

The apostle James tells us that we should "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." James 1:2 & 3.

Does the Lord really mean we should "**count it all joy**" in every kind of trial we find ourselves in? The apostle Paul conveys that same thought when he says, "**In everything give thanks**: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." II Thessalonians 4:18.

In our family worship recently we've been reading about Paul's terrible trials after his arrest by the Jews in the temple and his ordeal that ultimately led him to Rome and death.

Paul could have given up in discouragement as he realized that he had gone too far in taking the Nazarene vow to please the Jews. But he was able to "give thanks" that he was being kept by the power of Christ and his severe trial by land and sea proved to be a great blessing to his own experience and to the furtherance of the Gospel.

As we were discussing the journey and the trials Paul faced we commented on how thankful we were that God asked Paul and Luke - who accompanied Paul through the whole journey - to share these experiences for all of us to be encouraged through the trials and difficulties we face in our present day.

As our ministry has entreated your prayers for the work and travel that we do, we thought it would be an

encouragement to share with you how your prayers helped to sustain us in a series of trials we experienced on our Australia trip last year.

The first trial that we experienced happened before we ever left Kalispell, Montana. Due to weather our first flight of the day was canceled so we were scheduled on another flight which also was canceled just before its departure. We were then rescheduled on another flight which would be our last possibility to make our international connection. We prayed for the Lord to improve the weather and do whatever He needed to do for us to be able to make our flight. It was announced that the flight would go and we were soon on our way to Seattle.

Because of our delay in Kalispell of several hours we missed our original connection from Seattle to L.A., so we had to go to the desk and talk with a supervisor to get us on the next available flight to L.A. It took some time, but the Lord was right there with us reminding us of **our need of Him to overrule our natural inclinations to anxiety or frustration** as this flight was due to land in L.A. 15 minutes after our international flight was to leave. In spite of the trial we had peace and trusted that God's will would be worked out. In addition we did all we could do to work through this situation and requested that we be seated as far forward as possible on this flight so that when it did land we could be out the door as quickly

as possible.

Well, they did get us on the flight and as I was entering the aircraft, I noticed the cockpit door open and the captain was sitting there. I told him of our circumstances and asked him if at all possible, could he try to make up time to get us in early.

We were seated in the middle seat of each row so that we were lined up in a column, myself first, then my wife, then each one of our children - one behind the other. It was on this flight that we began to understand God's providence working. There was a young woman who had apparently noticed that we were together and asked each one of my children if they would like to change places with her so that they could sit by my wife. Later each of the children told us why they felt they should stay in their seats, thus the young woman took the window seat next to my wife. After take off they got into a conversation and the lady shared with my wife how she had been struggling in her Christian life and was questioning whether the Christian life was possible as the Scriptures describe it. She was at a turning point in her life and had been praying that if God was really real, to make Himself and His will known. She shared how she had seen us in the airport and could tell by the length of time at the counter that we were having difficulties in working out flight arrangements, but also noticed that in spite of the difficulties she saw a peace that surpassed her understanding of the situation. She prayed that if God was really real, He would place her by my wife so she could talk. When she boarded the aircraft and looked at her seat next to my wife she could hardly hold back the tears. The flight was almost totally full with more than 150 passengers and my wife was placed right next to her seat. Well, it would be a full article to share the blessings received by both ladies, but what an encouragement to see God's hand amidst the trial. His ways are far beyond our understanding. But what would have happened if we had allowed our natural **self** to rule there at the ticket counter? A lost opportunity to share the love of Jesus to a seeking soul. Friends, I wonder how many unknown opportunities pass because we are not willing to let God have control of our lives in trial?

Well, during the flight while my wife and this lady were talking, I was talking with the head flight attendant about our needs to get into L.A. early in order to make the connection to our international flight. Now if you have ever landed in L.A. it is rare to arrive at the gate early. As we each continued to pray that God would work this out I felt impressed that I must talk with the captain of this flight. I went up to the flight

attendants' work station next to the cockpit door which was shut. I explained our situation again to the head attendant and she said, "Mr. Waters, once the pilots shut the door we cannot open it during flight." She also told me that she would relay the message to him. Just then the door of the cockpit opened and out stepped the captain - isn't God good! As we talked he assured me that he would do everything he could do and I knew that the Lord was going to do a miracle for us. In fact the Lord challenged me to tell the flight attendant that God would get us on our flight to Australia in spite of the fact that we were to arrive 15 minutes after that flight was scheduled to

take off. As by faith I was willing to make this statement to the attendant, she came alive and got excited too and began to work to help us make the ground connections for the terminal changes.

It wasn't long after that that the captain got on the speaker and announced that something unusual - very unusual was happening. Our flight was being pushed by a tail wind of 140 knots making our arrival time into L.A. 30 minutes early. Praise God! He uses simple ways to accomplish great purposes. Then as we landed, the head attendant made an announcement over the intercom that there were 5 passengers needing to make tight connections to an international flight and asked that all passengers, including first class passengers, remain seated until we were off the plane. Now we have heard these types of requests before, but human nature never likes to wait and people jump into the aisles anyway; but this time no one moved except the person on the outside of the row to let each of us get up and off the plane. It was as if there was a restraining power over the people, and there was - God's power.

Well, the next trial we faced was that we needed to change from the domestic terminal to the international terminal - a long way away. So as soon as we got off the plane we started running through the terminal, through the underground passageway into the next terminal to find Air New Zealand which is at the farthest point in the terminal. For lack of space I will not go through all the trials that we had there. We didn't get on our original flight that was routed through New Zealand but on the next flight that left 15 minutes after our original flight, flying directly to Sydney, with connection to Cairns. The Lord's timing is never wrong, our original flight later was delayed in Auckland showing us once again how the providence of God works as we are willing to let Him manage us through the trial.

Another situation we faced was that our luggage

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did not make our flight and would have to be traced to find out where it was. We prayed that it would arrive on the flight the next day so that we could have the tapes and materials for the meetings as well as our clothes. Having left Montana in a blizzard we were dressed warmly and when we finally arrived in Cairns it was very hot and humid so we were looking forward to lighter weight clothing. The family we stayed with shared their clothes with us for which we were very thankful and the next day the airlines delivered all our luggage. We thanked God once again for His tender mercies to us.

The area where the first meetings were held was up in the north east part of Australia in the rain forest.

We learned that in that climate there are a lot of "critters" that we are unaccustomed to. Because of the heat, I wore my sandals to the meetings. As I was sharing with the people I felt something running down between my toes. When I looked down there was a leech and blood running between my toes. My son was kind enough to come up and pick the leech off while I continued sharing the message. Trials come in variety don't they?

But the trials didn't stop there, we continued to be tested throughout the trip. The next situation we faced was when we left for our next destination.

Because the vehicle we were being taken in was small for six people - our family plus the driver - our luggage was being towed behind the car in a small trailer that was covered with a tarp. On the way down out of the rain forest, where they measure rain by feet, we were engulfed in a tempestuous wind and rain storm - coming down so hard we could hardly see. The corner of the tarp blew off our luggage and the rain poured into the trailer. We stopped and tried to tie the tarp, but it was useless. By the time we got to our destination all our luggage was soaked as were its contents. The clothes we could wash and dry, but almost every cover of the tape albums was ruined, and many of the tape albums had water on the inside. There was a temptation to become discouraged, but the Lord reminded us that He would bless if we would trust in Him. The next place we stayed had a washer and dryer so that we could rewash all our clothes, and it had lots of space to open up the tape albums, take out the tapes and dry everything out. Not one tape was ruined - all dried out and were just like new - even the labels on the tapes looked good and we were able to reorder the cover inserts and have them shipped air mail to us at our next location.

The next trial that came was at the next series of meetings where a gentleman, seeking to begin imple-

menting the principles from God's word hurt his back just before the last day of the meetings. He came anyway, lying downstairs on a table to listen but as the day progressed so did his pain until it was so severe that someone had to call an ambulance to take him to the hospital. The devil was doing everything he could to discourage them and keep them from growing in their walk with God, as well as trying to be a distraction for others. We all had special prayer that Satan would be defeated and the man would not have any severe or permanent injury. It is often in trial and difficulty that we recognize **our great need of the One mighty to save** as well as our utter helplessness without Him. These trials never seem to come in the

way or time we would choose, but they are all filtered through our heavenly Father who knows just what we need for our purification and His will to be done.

As our trip progressed so did our realization that the devil would not stop at anything to hamper God's work. It was in the next location that we experienced once again his attempts to put a stop to the work and God's power to keep our hearts to the uttermost. It was during the series of meetings that we learned from one of the men sponsoring the meetings that they had received threats of having the authorities stop the meetings. Australia is known as a Godless

nation - a nation that has rejected God, thus the devil was trying to intimidate us and the sponsors by threats. We had special prayer and continued with the meetings. God has promised, **"Them that honor Me, I will honor."** 1 Samuel 2:30. The meetings continued unmolested.

At the next location our health was hit. It seemed that at every new place there was a new test. Most of my family were able to stay above the sickness, but my wife's voice was going. By God's grace each received the strength needed. Even my wife's voice held out for the meetings. With the Lord's blessing and tender, loving, human hands our health strengthened and we were on our way to the next destination.

Soon after the new meetings began, so did a thunder storm. During one of the meetings the lightning flashed, the thunder cracked, the building shook and the power went out, thus affecting the taping of the meeting, to say nothing of the difficulty hearing without a P.A. system as the rain pounded on the metal roof. It seemed to us that we could not go to any place without some trial to try and cause distraction, doubt or discouragement. I prayed that the Lord would help the storm to pass and the power to come back on and it did, but it went back off again. "Lord, you know why we are here, please don't let this storm

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distract from the meetings or the taping." Soon the storm passed away and only a gentle rain remained. God is greater than the storm, but **He longs to keep us while we're in it.**

By this time I and my family wondered what could possibly happen next. We have had storms, threats, illness and injury, what would the new trial be? With each new experience there was a deeper realization of the need of Christ to be with us and praying more specifically. We had just started into a full week seminar at a school - convention center. A day into these meetings someone came to me privately and said that there was an outbreak of lice and we would have to make some decisions on how to handle it. I came back to the room and told my family, "The old devil hasn't let up yet. Can any of you guess what the new trial is?" No one guessed this one.

Everyone there for the seminar met together to discuss what to do. All were in agreement that Satan would not stop the meetings. We had a special season of prayer and asked the Lord to overrule once again. Then we all worked together on the de-licing program, a very time consuming and intense program, washing everyone's (about 50 people's) bedding, clothing, and towels with two wash machines and two dryers. All this had to be done in a special protocol to avoid recontamination so some had to go to a local laundry for additional facilities. Many hung out their bedding and clothes on the line only to have rain soak them. Then there was the personal de-licing regime, all of it taking much time. There was a wonderful spirit of cooperation and by God's grace not one meeting was canceled although the times for some had to be rearranged. We drew closer to our Saviour and to one another and had a rich week together.

Now we were coming to our last week and anticipating the devils attempt to disturb, distract or frustrate us or others. We looked back over the past five weeks and recognized how God had been there to take us and others through each obstacle the devil put in the way. We were tired and looking forward to a couple of days rest before sharing the closing weekend series. Our dependence upon Christ was real and so was our awareness that Satan would not give up until he had done all he could do with God's permission to bring difficulty.

On the way to our quarters my wife's white sweater slid off the seat of the car and landed in some motor oil that had spilled sometime before on the floor of the car. When she got back in the car and picked up her white sweater it was soaked with oil. She tried washing it out with special soap, soaking it in bleach and scrubbed on it until her knuckles were raw. I told her I would try to get it out and scrubbed until I had raw knuckles too, but to no avail. "That's okay," she

said, "It's a small thing in light of some trials."

On the last Sabbath morning as we were on our way to the meetings, the old car that was providing our transportation made it part way up the hill from the driveway of the home we were staying in and just wouldn't go any more. The man who was driving backed down to the bottom of the hill, put more oil in it and with special prayer once again, tried going up to the top of the hill to the road. Through much prayer - together and silently - we had safe and timely travel and were brought the rest of our way home without any further difficulties.

Friends, while these are only small trials in comparison with what the apostle Paul experienced and many of you are experiencing, they also represent the ones that so often lead us to become impatient, intolerant and irritable. These trials that God allows us to contend with are **His workman** to show us our weakness and our utter need of dependence upon His keeping power. Next time you and I find ourselves in one of these apparently untimely trials lets remember the words of Peter, "That the trial of your faith . . . might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." I Peter 1:7

A Voice From The Wilderness.

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