Why do Christians Suffer?

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Distributed by the BICOG

Why do Christians suffer? Didn't Almighty God promise his people that he would bless and protect them from all evil in this world? Yet Christians suffer in this day and in the past. Is there an answer to this question? Are Christians really under God's watch and protection 24/7? And if so, why do they still go through many hardships in this life?

You and I live in a real world with real problems. In this tragic world there are wars, sickness, disease, strife, bigotry, racism, hatred, and religious confusion. It is this world that you and I are born into, readymade for us to live in.

It is this world that God calls us out of. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, *Come out of her, my people*, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev 18:4; John 17:6). Even though God called us out of the world, he also, once repented, baptized and received the Holy Spirit, sent us *back* into the world! Jesus said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so *have I also sent them into the world*." (John 17:18). Yes, we are sent back in, but different, called of God, chosen by God, and faithful. Educated in the doctrines of God, "I have given them thy word;" (John 17:14). It is these words, the bible that makes us separate from everyone else, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17). Now these words are not for the Apostles alone, "Neither pray I for these alone, *but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*;" (v.20). These words are for the church throughout the ages.

We are sent

Jesus Christ gave us a great commission which I think in these last days the church of God really does not take seriously any more. Jesus said, "Go ye" (Matthew 28:19). Yet I see most people in the church of God content just to go to Sabbath services every week, and attend the feasts, but they do not want to engage in the work of God. During the times when they are not in church they just live their lives like everyone else *not* doing the work. Yes we all have jobs to go to, and family to attend to, but this *also* can be incorporated into the work of God; being living examples to our family, friends and co-workers. This leads to preaching the Gospel to them.

Jesus gave the great commission, he said, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
"But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 10:27). Jesus commanded us to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As we go to them with that message he said to preach to them the Gospel. It does not say sit in church, and share the Gospel among ourselves. Think of it, if no one went out to preach the Gospel you would not be in church receiving the very words of life! Did God call you to GET SALVATION? "…Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*." (Acts 20:35). Yes God wants all to be saved (see 1 Timothy 2:4), but he also called you to GIVE SALVATION! Not to sit on our hands and do nothing once we are saved. Think of the parable of the talents. The one who dug the talent into the sand was called, "*Thou* wicked and slothful servant," (Matthew 25:26). He didn't do anything thing with the gift he was given. But those who multiplied the talents were rewarded. This concept I think has been lost in the church of God today.

Jesus also said of this great commission, "freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt 10:8). Gospel was given freely to you, so we must give it freely to all those who ask for it.

Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and *teach all nations, baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
"*Teaching them* to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20); teaching, education of biblical principles and doctrine. Clear easy to understand instruction of Jesus teachings to the masses. We must educate ourselves and this is the whole reason why the church gathers together, to preach and teach and educate the church, so they can in turn teach the nations. Then baptism! Once they understand, and God has opened their minds to the truth, they will make the decision whether to follow Jesus or not.

The Suffering Christian

When the Christian is sent to preach the Gospel, he is sent into the world; a world that is in-charge by Satan the devil. He is called, "the god of this world" (2 Corinth 4:4). He is called the "Prince of this world" (John 12:41; 14:30; 16:11). The word "Prince" is "archon" (Strong's #758). It means, "Chief ruler." He is the one who "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them…*which deceiveth the whole world*" (2 Corinth 4:4; Rev 12:9). He wants to keep this world in that state of deception. ***He is the primary reason why Christians suffer! Also of course by wrong choices we make, some even influenced by the devil.*** Many think its God that inflicts us with sufferings. James writes, ***"****Let no man say* when he is tempted, I am tempted of God*: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*:
"But every man is tempted, when he is *drawn away of his own lust*, and ***enticed [by the devil]***." (James 1:13-14). We are in this world in charge by the Devil, and subject to it.

In 2 Peter 5:8 the Apostle Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because *your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*:" The devil seeks to destroy God's people. Jesus asked the Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]." (John 17:15). Many translations add "evil one" meaning of course Satan the Devil. Jesus asked the Father to protect his people from Satan because of his persecution of the church. In the book of Revelation the great "dragon" Satan, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and *went to make war* with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (12:17). The devil has declared war on the church of God! He is hunting us down, through his institutions and influence on governments to kill the church of God.

Now how are we to approach sufferings? Jesus said, "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
"*Rejoice*, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:10-12). It is men, this world, Satan the devil that persecutes the church of God. But notice what Jesus said, "REJOICE"! Why? Because you have

overcome the world*! In the testimony of a good conscience; for, without this, suffering has nothing but misery in it*. Suffering for the right is worth suffering. Now God says, "…God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to *be tempted above that ye are able*; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it." (1 Corinth 10:13).* God will make sure you are able to handle it any temptation that comes your way via the Devil, men, or even if your old habits seem to creep back up on you.

Suffering for the right is something always worth suffering or as Peter says, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. "Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian***, let him not be ashamed***; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:15-16). But why suffer at all? Why does God even subject us to suffering in the first place? God witnessed the stoning of Stephen. Stephen saw Jesus on his throne in heaven, why at that moment didn't Jesus save him? (see Acts 7:54-60). The Book of Psalms says, "The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry.
"The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
"*The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.
"The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
"***Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all***." (34:15-19).

Three Types of Suffering

There are three basic reasons why peoples suffer. The first and most prevalent reason is our own mistakes. Chances are, you have missed a nail and hit your thumb with a hammer. This suffering was brought on by you. In like manner, suffering is brought on by our own actions.

The second reason for suffering is the action of others. People we love can cause us to suffer. You may feel fine. But if your children and loved ones are sick it brings a mental suffering to you. Thus others peoples sins can bring suffering to us.

The third reason we suffer is little understood by most. It is the least prevalent reason. It is the reason for the people of God like Job, Daniel and Stephen suffered. In order to understand this reason we must look into the Holy Scriptures.

This is one of the biggest reasons why good, sincere people run into serious trials. You need to understand it. In understanding it you will receive encouragement and strength to meet the trials you face in the future. And you will face them!

Righteous People in the Bible Suffered

In the book of Job we read the account of how Job was a, "…man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." (Job 1:1). The words "perfect and upright" should be translated "upright and righteous." Here was a man overcoming the world sincerely trying to serve God as all Christians who are called must do.

We find that he had seven sons and three daughters. He was a rich man. His assets totaled seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses. "So that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east." (Job 1:3). Job was so zealous that he even offered burnt offerings for his children just in case they sinned (v.5). So again Job is like many people that follow God today. He wanted to serve God, please God as best he can.

Now we come behind the scenes in the spiritual realm. We have the privilege of knowing what went on but Job did not!

The Bible says, "Now there was a day when the sons of God [angels] came to present themselves before the LORD, and ***Satan*** [the Adversary] came also among them.
"And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.
"And the LORD said unto Satan, ***Hast thou considered my servant Job***, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (Job 1:6-8). Notice God asked the devil if he "considered" his servant Job. In the Margin the literal translation of the Hebrew is, "Set thine heart on." Gill's Commentary writes, "…not in a way of love and affection to him, to do him any good or service… but rather his heart was set upon him in a way of desire to have him in his hands, to do him all the mischief he could, as the desire of his heart was toward Peter, Luke 22:*31 but the sense of the question is, since thou sayest thou hast been walking up and down in the earth, hast thou not taken notice of Job, and cast an eye upon him, and wished in thine heart to have him in thine hands to do him hurt?*" (Emphasis added). Again it is not God who makes man to suffer but the Devil.

Job was a righteous man who suffered greatly by the hands of the Devil. God allowed it to happen, why?

Satan had a complaint! He said, "Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?
"Hast not thou *made an hedge about him,* and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? *thou hast blessed the work of his hands*, and his substance is increased in the land." (Job 1:9-10). God was taking care of him, blessing him, and protecting him. But Satan said, "Why shouldn't he fear you and serve you? The ONLY reason he does serve you *is because it pays him to do so."* Notice the challenge! "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." (v.11). Satan challenged God to take away Job's riches.

He said Job would not stay on God's side. He said that Job only kept God's commandments because *it paid him to do so*.

Now Satan said to God, "put forth thine hand now." But God doesn't do that to his people who are obeying him. God loves His people. God wants to bless those who serve Him diligently. We see from the Scriptures that almost all men who served God faithfully and well over a period of years were blessed mightily by God. He wants His people to have good things and to enjoy them.

Overcoming repentant Christians God does not punish. Notice what God said to Satan after Satan's assaulted on Job, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, *although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause*." (Job 2:3). God does not punish the overcoming repentant sinner who has chosen the path of righteousness. "…wrath of God cometh on the children of *disobedience*:" (Col 3:6;Eph 5:6).

So God said, "Behold, all that he hath *is* ***in thy power***; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." (v.12). Why? Why did God allow Satan to destroy Job's way of life, his family his riches? Why did God lift his PROTECTION he had around Job?

God our Father

Time and time again the Bible says that God is our "father." We are called the "children of God." We are "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may **grow** thereby…But **grow** in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). We are babes and grow by the knowledge of Jesus in the Bible. God our Father, as we grow, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev 3:19). Chasten means to educate and correct us so we go the right way. Just like any human father. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:
"For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." (see also Hebrews 12:5-10). As we grow we eventually become mature Christians. Paul writes, "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness*: for he is a babe*.
"But strong meat belongeth to *them that are of full age,* even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb 5:13-14). New converts to the faith are babes in Christ. Those who have developed are called those who are "full of age" or mature Christians. Those who have experienced the Christian life, and have gone through trials and overcome. That is study and putting into practice what the Bible says in their lives. Understanding the "strong meat" doctrines, as opposed to the new converts, without experience and learning the basics of the Bible.

The results of growth and correction are, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby*." (Heb 12:11; Eph 5:9; Gal 5:22). God's correction training and education is all to build Godly Character. This is what is important to God, love mercy and obedience etc… God will give you as much as you can handle, as Jeremiah says, "O LORD,

correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." (10:24). God will be kind and loving as he works to produce righteous character in your life. Like a loving parent he will encourage you to grow, and be with you every step of the way.

These essential spiritual traits are produced and then matured. *As a human father when he knows that his son or daughter is ready to face the world and its challenges, lifts his protection and subjects them to the world*. God our father lifts his protection from us because he knows our character is developed to the point where his protection is lifted, and he knows *we can stand the trials that await us*. And even when he does lift the protection off of us, "...but God *is* faithful, who *will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;* but will with the temptation *also make a way to escape*, that ye may be able to bear *it." (1 Corinth 10:13). As quoted from the Psalms above, "*Many *are* the ***afflictions*** of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." (34:19). Yes God will deliver us, but there are "afflictions."

We are children of God. If we are children, Paul said, then we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16). It is a marvelous thing to know. God wants to take care of us, to protect us. Wouldn't He do everything necessary to protect us from our own foolishness? I believe He does. But how far can you go in protecting your own children from their foolishness? You do what you can, *but you can't keep them locked up in a padded room-not if they are to have a life*. They have to live. They have to learn how to climb trees. Sooner or later, they have to cross a road, and there will be cars on the road. You try to teach your children about these things. You tell them that the road is dangerous, that you can get hurt climbing trees. You may teach them safety procedures, to look both ways before crossing a street, or to hold on with both hands while climbing. It is the same in God's training; teaching us his way of life, his law. His law tells us what is right and what is wrong, so when we go into the world we are ready to do the right thing and live the right way, and not stumble and fall and do the wrong things that lead to death, suffering, and poverty. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and *when he is old, he will not depart from it*." (Proverbs 22:6).

Even so, accidents happen. People get hurt. You will do your best to teach your children about those things and you will try to make them behave responsibly. But somewhere, sometime, somehow you have to let them out in the yard and across the street and off to school. Don't you? We know that things happen, and so does God as he says in his word, "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill***; but time and chance happeneth to them all***." (Eccl 9:11).

You see knowledge is not enough; experience is needed to *complete* our character. That is why Paul goes on to say that we are joint heirs with Christ, *"if so be that we suffer with him,* that we may be also glorified together" (verse 17). Paul also says, "And not only *so,* ***but we glory*** in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
"And patience, *experience*; and *experience*, hope:
"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom 5:3-5).

Paul had this to say about suffering: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly*, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" (Romans 8:18).

Now that is the truth. You and I are the creatures that were made subject to "vanity" (read that "futility"). And nobody asked us if we were willing. You and your spouse know that eventually your child has to grow up and face the world, and you expect good results due to your training of your child. God does the same, subjecting us to the world, and He did it with "*hope*." He did it *because He wanted a certain result*. The creature-the creation-was deliberately put at risk. We creatures are thrown out into the world, and placed at risk. For God to subject us to this, He must have high hopes for what we are to become-for what we are to do; small wonder that people don't understand why God allows us to suffer in the world. They haven't a clue what He is doing here (1 Corinth 2:9) and what He intends to do in the time to come. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, *ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*." (Rom 6:22). This is the result that God wants. Perfect righteous character so we can live on in the Kingdom of God forever.

It would seem that God has much more in mind for man than merely going to heaven, dining on milk and honey, and looking up into the Master's face for all eternity. If that were all there were to it, *He could take us now!* Or if we have to stay here, He could protect us from pain, suffering and loss.

But we are to be heirs of God. With that inheritance comes responsibility. We can only understand the hurt and suffering of this world when we understand what God has in store for us. The greater the tragedy, the greater the trial, the greater the pain, the more serious the suffering, *the greater is the responsibility that is ahead of us.*

Is there then any point in praying? Oh, yes. God does hear prayer, and he does protect and bless. But it should be plain that prayer does not totally exempt us from the laws of time and chance. What it does mean is that none of our sufferings are pointless. They are all known to God. They all have meaning. They are part of a plan for our lives and our eternal lives.

The Meaning of "Trial"

What is a trial? What is the definition? Webster's dictionary defines "trial" as "the action or process of trying or putting to the proof; test." A further definition is "the formal examination of the matter in issue in a case before a competent tribunal for the purpose of determining such issue." Do you see? A trial is to find out something yet untested, undetermined.

Christians face trials to test their character - to *add* to their character.

Are trials uncommon? Not at all!

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial WHICH IS TO TRY YOU, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (I Peter 4:12).

Notice further that God wants to bestow upon us His grace, mercy, strength. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His Eternal glory by Christ Jesus, AFTER THAT YE HAVE SUFFERED A WHILE, *make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*" (1 Peter 5:10).

Thus it is revealed that Christians must go through a trial of suffering.

This trial is *not* a punishment. It is a test- and a lesson. Satan the devil has accused God's people. He is the accuser of the brethren. We must disprove Satan's accusations the way Job did! Job passed the test, and in the end God blessed him more than before *because he proved to God what his true intentions were and it wasn't money, but to love and obey God.*

Adam's Test

Adam, on the other hand did not. During the time that Adam spent in the Garden, God was teaching him about Character, obedience to his law. God put the whole earth under his dominion, and Adam needed to be taught the ways of God, then the test. Adam was ready. God offered him a choice, "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen 2:16-17). God offered him the "tree of life" (v.9), and all the others save one, the tree of knowledge of Good and evil. The tree of Life is God's way to live (Rev 22:14). The knowledge of Good and evil is human nature, the way of the flesh, the dictates of our own hearts, the way of Satan, the way of sin and death, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Let's notice Genesis 3:7 "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they KNEW that they were naked: and they sowed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Notice, there wasn't any change in their nature-there wasn't any fall in their nature-it was the very nature that had been originally created in them, and their willing and YIELDING to it was what caused the sin. What happened was that their eyes were opened as a result of it-now the KNOWLEDGE of evil had come. "They KNEW," it says.

Yes, KNOWLEDGE came-they KNEW! To have the knowledge of evil is to know evil--to participate in it-and that means to rebel against God and to break His Commandments. They came to the wrong knowledge. Man's knowledge is mostly a mixture of good and evil. Human nature *now* is a MIXTURE of good and evil. There's good in all people, and there's also evil in every one of us that we need to recognize.

God says about man afterwards, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:" (Gen 3:22). Now this verse has been translated into the English poorly by the King James Translators. Clarke's Commentary writes, "On all hands this text is allowed to be difficult, and the difficulty is increased by our translation, which is opposed to the

original Hebrew and the most authentic versions. The Hebrew has היה hayah, which is the third person preterite tense, and signifies was, not is. The Samaritan text, the Samaritan version, the Syriac, and the Septuagint, have the same tense. These lead us to a very different sense, and indicate that there is an ellipsis of some words which must be supplied in order to make the sense complete. A very learned man has ventured the following paraphrase, which should not be lightly regarded*: 'And the Lord God said, The man who was like one of us in purity and wisdom, is now fallen and robbed of his excellence; he has added לדעת ladaath, to the knowledge of the good, by his transgression the knowledge of the evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever in this miserable state, I will remove him, and guard the place lest he should re-enter. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,'* etc. This seems to be the most natural sense of the place."

The JFB Commentary says the same, "not spoken in irony as is generally supposed, but in deep compassion. The words should be rendered, 'Behold, what has become [by sin] of the man who was as one of us''' The unabridged JFB Commentary adds, "**To know good and evil**- This knowledge, if absolute, is a divine attribute*; but man, who was created with the knowledge of good only, acquired by his transgression the experimental knowledge of evil also*, and thenceforth brought himself, by that attempt at self-exaltation, into a state of sin and misery" (emphasis added). Man acquired evil when he participated in it. Man was made in the image of God, and had only good in him. But God had to see whether by his own choice, would man choose good, and love God as Job did. Afterward when Adam had Seth, it says, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth*:" (Gen 5:3). Man had inherited human nature, the freedom to choose good and evil.

Now Adam was not deceived by Eve was as Paul explains, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam *was not deceived*, but the woman being *deceived* was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:13, 14). Deceived people can be quite sincere—just sincerely *wrong*. Eve allowed her natural physical and emotional appetites (which are vanity, jealousy, lust and greed) to overcome her timidity, and became *deceived.*

Notice what happened to Adam and Eve, "And when the woman saw [she looked, with the eye, and began to lust after the fruit, broke the Tenth Commandment, against *coveting]* that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise [vanity entered in; the desire for superior 'knowledge' and the subtle suggestion that God had been keeping knowledge and information from them had been lodged in her mind by Satan's lie], she took [stealing, as well as breaking the Fifth Commandment, by dishonoring their only Parent] of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6). Many of the laws of God were broken by Eve, and its wages were death. Adam not being deceived but handled the whole thing in the wrong way.

Notice that when he was confronted with his sin he tried to dodge responsibility, tried to shift the blame elsewhere!

"And the man said, The woman *whom thou gavest to be with me, she* gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). Here is human nature as we know it in action! Adam is obliquely

implying the fault is *God's*, since the woman was given him by God! He said, "The woman whom thou [God!] gavest to *be with me. . .*" Adam is *afraid.* He willingly places the blame both on God and on his wife!

God because of Adam's state kicked him out of the Garden. In his current state God did not want him to partake in the tree of life, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, *lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*
"Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." (Gen 3:22-23). Man didn't "fall"; he was pushed. Few understand that God *created* Adam with a choice, which is a *mixture* of both the capacity for good and the capacity for evil. Adam had at work in his very nature the human appetites, the *capacity* for sin. *Before he gave in* to those temptations and *exercised* his innate, latent capacity for sin, he was not directly hostile toward God. He was not "afraid" of God. He was not ashamed of his own physical person. When he gave into sin, and Satan's influence he continually chose evil. He was hostile towards God, and hid himself.

Did God change the nature of man, or did He pronounce some curse upon him?

Genesis 3: 16-17: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception . . . and unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the GROUND for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life''-there was a curse on the GROUND *but not any change in the nature of the man.*

There are five senses, the sense of seeing, of hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. When God created Adam, he put IN Adam the same five senses that are in you! The SAME SENSUAL NATURE that CAUSES Adam to sin is in you! Adam sinned, didn't he? Paul said, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, *even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*" (Rom 5:14). We all have Adam's human nature in us. We are free moral agents and have a choice. When children are born God says, "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, *which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil*, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it." (Deut 1:39). Children are innocent when they are born like Adam. But then choices have to be made. The five senses take over. They have to be taught depending on their upbringing. Adam in his test failed and the throne of the world was left in Satan's hands.

Even Jesus Was Tried

Even Jesus Christ - the very Son of God - was tried. He was allowed to be tempted by Satan the devil after He had fasted 40 days and *40* nights. Jesus was the second Adam. Again the dominion over the earth was at stake. Adam being, "the figure of him that was to come." (Rom 5:14; 1Corinth 15:45). He was put to the same test.

He was *tested* to see whether He would obey God in all circumstances. Jesus Christ qualified to be the ruler in place of Satan the devil because He did obey God completely. He faced the trial recorded in Matthew 4 and passed the test!

The Bible plainly says that Jesus learned through this suffering. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, YET LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS WHICH HE SUFFERED" (Hebrews *5* :7-8).

If Jesus was tried, we must be too. We are told to follow His steps in 1 Peter 2:21.

We are given this admonition in 2 Timothy 2:12, *"If we suffer* ,we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us."

Thus we see that suffering and trials the Bible says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Eternal will deliver him out of them all." We read that it is "through much tribulation that we enter the Kingdom of God." Why?

Again because we must disprove Satan's accusations! We must stand firm in the face of persecution. We must prove that we are faithful to God's commandments - that we believe God's ways with all our hearts! We must believe His way in spite of trials, sufferings, hardships. We must love His ways and continue in it, this is why Stephen died! He was ready to face the world and Satan's persecution. Satan was accusing the church to God that they will not go all the way to the end for you, and Stephen proved him wrong*, if that wasn't the case God would of planned a way of escape for him.* Stephen was ready, Job was ready, the apostles, their character was developed to the point that they were willing to sacrifice their lives for God in this sin sick world.

We do NOT ask for trials, that's like going into the middle of an intersection and asking to be hit by a car, NO thank you! It doesn't mean suicide. *Trials come to you*, you don't look for them, as the Bible says, "…your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, *seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8), that means *when it comes to you, you are ready*. Will you rejoice as the apostles did? "And they departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*." (Acts 5:41). "Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. **"*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad***: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12).

The Great Tribulation

During the time of the Great Tribulation, the church will be under attack by Satan the Devil. Revelation 12 says, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (v.17). The Devil will do this through the beast power and the little horn, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;" (Dan 7:21).

God will only allow the strongest of his people to give a last testimony to the world. The ones who are closest to God and have their hearts ready and convicted with the truth of God will be subject to this. But Jesus also promised, "But there shall not an hair of your head perish." (Luke 21:18). This prophecy given by Christ reveals that some of his people will be persecuted and some protected, "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; *and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.*
"And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake.
"*But there shall not an hair of your head perish.*
"In your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:16-19). Notice "some" not all of the church will be put to death.

Persecution is not just putting people to death. It could be imprisonment, or beaten, and many other things besides death. But those who will be put to death, again they will be the strongest of those who will suffer such a fate.

Revelation 7 reveals the saints, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, ***These are they which came out of great tribulation,*** and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.
"*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat*.
"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: *and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*." (vv.9, 13-17). There are many ways in which the Christian will suffer because of this world. Either by hunger death, imprisonment etc…but they will suffer for his name's sake. Like a soldier who is willing to die for his country, and we today say its "patriotic," and honor those who died and sacrificed for the country. Is it not the same with God? A person willing to die for his King, Christ, and willing sacrifice for the kingdom of God "they loved not their lives unto the death." (Rev 12:11).

We must overcome this world and its temptations. The result of it is eternal life, "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."Stephen did it!

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:" (Rev 2:26). Once converted and baptized we must continue in God's law no matter what trial comes our way, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh **righteousness**, *those that* remember thee **in thy ways**: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: *in those [God's ways] is continuance, and we shall be saved*." (Isaiah 64:5). "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: ***continue ye in my love.***
"***If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love***; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John 15:9-10). "For this is the love of God, that we keep

his commandments:" (1 John 5:3). If we continue keeping God's law and "endure unto the end the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13).

The Wrath of God

On the other hand, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of *disobedience*." (Ephesians 5:6). God's wrath is coming on sinning wretched mankind who refuses to repent, and not the church, "For God hath *not* appointed us to *wrath*, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Thess 5:9). Here God promises us total protection from his wrath. Psalm 91 says,
"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day;
"*Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.
"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.
"***Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.***
"Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the most High, thy habitation;
"***There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."*** (vv.5-10).
God has given us his absolute promise that he will protect us from his wrath if we stay close to him. God is merciful, kind and fair. He lifts his protection when he feels we are ready to live the Christian life in this world. It is the Devil that hates and makes us suffer. We must overcome. Being trained and brought up by God we can, and in the end when we cry out to God for revenge (Rev 6:9-11). God will answer in due time, "Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19).