

Trouble -- a Servant

by John Follette

Trouble is a servant that can be used to build character and faith, and to bring us peace and surrender.

Scripture: Genesis 50:20, Job 5:7, Psalm 34:19, John 16:33, Romans 5:3, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Timothy 3:12, Hebrews 5:8

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Testing"

Description

John Follette emphasizes the importance of understanding and embracing trouble and testing in life as a means for God to prove our faith and shape our character. He highlights that trouble is a part of the divine arrangement and a sign of spirituality and growth, rather than a punishment for sin. Follette challenges the misconception that the Christian life should be void of trouble, emphasizing that tribulation is a word used in relation to saints and is a necessary element for building character and releasing potential power. He encourages believers to use trouble as a servant to bring forth the best in them, leading to a deeper surrender of spirit and the development of Christ-like character.

Transcript

Did you ever test yourself as to how you react to trouble or tragedy? In life's school we often find that God uses trouble or misfortune to prove our faith or to test our character. Trouble has a way of stalking down the road and meeting us so many times when we least expect it.

I am sure we all know that such proving or testing may befall us without our being personally or directly the cause of it. Many, many times it is beyond our control. If it were otherwise we should probably avoid all such testings and keep to an easy, smooth path. But we should remember that trouble, as well as the hours of sunshine and music, is a part of the divine arrangement and has a place in our program. Trouble and severe testings are not necessarily a sign of sin, failure, or lack of spirituality. They are often a sign of spirituality and growth which God must test and prove, for we are His workmanship.

Many people have the notion that the life of the Christian is, or should be somewhat charmed, void of trouble, testing, tribulation and suffering. Such people have shaped up for themselves, or hold as an ideal of real Christian living, an impossible or unscriptural conception as an objective.

Where in the world such people, so bewitched, have been living all these years, or what books they have read, is beyond me! Surely they do not know history, Christian experience or the Bible. For all these keep ever before us the truth that "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). "Many are the

afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivered him out of them all" (Ps 34:19). "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Rom. 5:3).

Surely on the basis of all these Scriptures, we as Christians know better than to pray for exemption from trouble, and since we know that in God's plan it is a part of our inheritance, let us not avoid its peculiar ministry.

History is replete with examples of lives wrecked because of ungraceful reaction to trouble. In spite of the accumulated experiences of the ages, and the wisdom and the philosophy of the seers, many still fail to recognize that behind her mask, trouble is a servant to assist us. Any other view is due to lack of vision and perspective in that range. Too many see the immediate, the local, and interpret life and relative questions from a circumscribed viewpoint. The Scriptures say, "While we look not at the things which are seen."

As Christians, after we are convinced in our hearts that trouble is not designed to defeat us, is not a mere nuisance or cruelty, but is one of the corrective elements in great living, we must needs learn how to use it. How many problems would be solved and shipwrecks of faith be avoided could we take a positive, constructive attitude and see that trouble is one of the agents and mighty instruments placed in our hands for the shaping of character and the releasing of potential power for correct and glorious building!

How do you use trouble ? Naturally, because of physical and fundamental elements in our make-up, we shun pain, discomfort and trouble. But that is because we relate them purely to their action upon the physical or upon the present mood. Many times hours are spent in praying away trouble, the great servant. At times we take long, circuitous journeys to avoid meeting her. Finally, when we are compelled to meet her, we spend a long, long time telling her or God that we do not like her and we wonder and wonder why we ever had to meet her. But trouble is not to be reasoned with; she is utterly unreasonable. She is to be used.

Please disabuse your minds of the erroneous thought that if you are good or a real spiritual Christian, totally yielded and consecrated, your life is therefore to be a charmed one and that God will spare you from trouble or disappointment. No, to reach such a fine place of consecration and yieldedness is only to make you a fit candidate for tribulation.

Tribulation is a word God uses in relation to saints. The etymology of the word means threshing. The farmer does not thresh weeds; he threshes the golden wheat that the grain may be separated from the chaff and the sticks. He is after grain, not trying to pound out some straw. Therefore God says, Tribulation worketh patience; that is, the golden grain of patience, long-suffering and kindness, comes by way of threshing or tribulation. Think of the splendid spiritual grain of character and noble living produced only through the tribulation process. The spiritual tone and quality of the mighty men of God came only through trouble and suffering.

In the world about us, in the fields of fine music, art and literature, the artist never reaches the climax of his labors and gives to the world the best in creative beauty and strength until he has known the poignant touch of personal sorrow or grief or trouble. Oftentimes it is like a divine alchemy turning the ordinary and prosaic life into a glorious display of divine power, fortitude and beauty. It is the use of trouble that

releases the deeper springs of our lives and sets allow the streams of mercy and understanding which a perishing world needs.

Do not misunderstand me; I am not saying that trouble alone makes us strong or noble or that it alone has a transforming power. I am dealing with you as Christians who believe Romans 8:28, and that text, as you see, is never to be applied to lives which are not surrendered. That is why many unsaved people never understand the outworking of the Scriptures in the daily walk, but if the Christian has anything remotely approaching the Spirit of Christ, he can make trouble a servant to bring forth the best in him. This I suggest in my poem, Trouble Is a Servant.

But trouble in itself is neutral or passive; the whole matter depends upon how we use it. One may take an inactive attitude and lose the benefit of the trial; justify himself, and trouble will make him bitter or resentful, or it can make him hard, cruel and cynical. People who have no faith, no perspective of thought or vision, let trouble do all sorts of harmful and cruel things to them, but thanks be to God there are many wonderful people upon whom trouble has fallen who were able to see and to discern behind its mask a servant at their beck and call, to build them lives of strength and beauty.

In a simple study of such lives we find a certain creative power which makes out of their calamity a magnificent privilege. You have noticed in lives a twofold reaction to trouble or tragedy: either it will break us in spirit, melting the hardness and bringing us in our helplessness to God, or it will throw us upon our feeble resources and human reasonings, and this in turn at times hardens us in spirit, makes us critical and often cynical. It robs the heart of the great privilege of trusting God and the developing of the life into rich and helpful avenues.

Trouble will make you either bitter or better. Notice how very much alike these words are, and how very little is needed to change them; just the letter "I." Yes, dear ones. it is the "I" that changes the whole matter. When the "I" keeps out of the question, out of the difficulty, life will be better; but when the "I" is introduced and we get mixed in the trouble, life will become bitter and we hard. Too many times this "I" gets in the way; the poor, little, hurt ego gets a slap and down the street he runs, screaming for attention. The dear little ego sits in his doorway and weeps tears of self-pity until his eyes are so red and inflamed that he just cannot see things as they are or should be.

It takes a quiet heart, peace of spirit, and clear vision (long range, if you please), to interpret trouble in terms of strength and high living. Little souls, small people, are usually hurt all the time; the ego within is unduly important and consequently is easily hurt or flattered. Such souls have too small a world and hence everything relates directly to the self within. They will have a very difficult time, to say the least.

Frequently such souls are persons who are seeking justice, fairness, and a proper adjustment of life. They never seem to learn. We are not here for justice; we are here to live. If you expect to be a spiritual and victorious Christian, you may as well learn here and now to drop justice out of your vocabulary as far as it may relate to your life. We do not get justice now. God's Saturday night of settlement has not yet come.

Some live as though life and the Christian experience were some kind of slot machine: you put in a dime's worth of kindness and pull out three yards of blessing; then five cents' worth of charity and you think God must bless you next Saturday night. Be very good, kind or generous and next week the winds will blow you a fortune. It is true that what we sow that shall we also reap, and bread cast upon the waters shall return, but God is not too clear on the time element. So we shall not always receive our justice here and now.

Jesus never taught His followers to expect justice. Paul did not receive justice. Even great leaders in history did not always receive justice here and now. Do not mistake me; I do not mean that the Christian or the spiritually-minded one is not conscious of the hurt or the trouble of the injustice. Believe me, dear souls, the Holy Spirit makes one all the more sensitive to the pain, the hurt and the wrong, but the victorious soul has found the gift of grace and the love of God sufficient to hinder the trouble from marring his spirit.

The closer one gets to Christ the more sensitive he will be to pain, to little, petty, mean ways and all the train of unkind and unlovely things which would vex the heart and tarnish the spirit. The eyes are now anointed and he sees in them privileges of overcoming and high living. I am sure we have all lived long enough to have had some injustice done us. Yet today God has given us grace not to harbor any resentment or hard feelings. To have trouble or injustice and know the feeling of it, and yet live above and far from its damaging power, is a sign of real spirituality, a sign of Christian character He has wrought in the life.

Someone learned of a real injustice done me in material things one time, and he was horrified to know it came from a Christian source. Such treatment as that," he said, "is absolutely wrong. I would not stand for it."

Of course it was wrong and very unfair, and at times I was amazed and tried, but I kept my heart and life open for justice and the right thing to be done by me; however, I was neglected and seemingly forgotten. But God had taken me quite a long distance on the road and I knew He would take care of the matter; so I took of His grace and love and stood it. It never caused me a resentful spirit, nor did I allow the hurt and the disappointment to fester into a sore. And today I praise God for the realities of His life in my heart to keep it sweet when trouble and unfair dealings would chill it to indifference and hardness.

Had we time we could trace through history, both sacred and secular, scores of noble men and women who were not spared the hard places in life. They were good, moral, kind, noble, and yet came under the disciplinary measures of trouble. Certainly Paul knew trouble or he never could have written, "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck" (2 Cor. 11:23-25). Yet out of it all he comes purified and strengthened, a noble expression of God's grace and an example for the ages to come that trouble may be used to build a Christian character.

In the Old Testament we find Joseph and Job and many others demonstrating the same truth. Surely Joseph might have said, "All these things are against me. Where is God? Why all this confusion and trouble when He promised me great victory and triumph?" Yet listen to him after in faith he comes through, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20). We are following in the steps of Christ, who said that the servant was not above his lord. And we read of Him, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

What are you seeking in your trouble today? Is it deliverance or development? You may have the one and not grow, or you may have both and grow. Get the development first and the deliverance will be yours, too. Let this servant minister to you in a way no other servant can. Take the positive attitude and use your trouble as one of the most skillful and wonderful instruments God ever placed into your hands for the working out of the character of Christ to be duplicated in you.

Trouble, if correctly used, will bring you great peace and a deep surrender of spirit which nothing else can work in you. I have not gone far on the way but I can give as my personal testimony that these deeper revelations of truth and clear understanding of the things of God have come only through suffering. I cannot offer you any other method. May God grant you grace to take your share of trouble. Don't pray for exemption, but may He teach you and use this strange servant to build your life into noble proportions of strength and beauty, and from your life healing streams of understanding and love will flow to broken lives and timid, fearful hearts "For he who suffers most has most to give."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-follette/trouble-a-servant/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net