

## Spiritual Maturity (5)

Ponder: Enduring trials patiently

Scripture: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4, NKJV).

I know very little about Angelina Jolie other than that she is a celebrity; but I agree with this quote which is attributed to her: “I do believe in the old saying, ‘What does not kill you makes you stronger.’ Our experiences, good or bad, make us who we are. By overcoming difficulties, we gain strength and maturity” (via brainyquote.com). Her comment is in line with what James wrote. Trials may not be pleasant, but we benefit from them when we endure them patiently.

Some trials come our way because we are Christians. I knew a sister in Christ whose employer told her she would have to lie for him in certain cases. She told him, “No way!” He fired her. She found a better job. Most who read this devotional have never suffered persecution even close to what the apostles of Christ endured, yet even when they were beaten, they were “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name” (Acts 5:41).

Other trials come upon Christians and non-Christians alike. Accidents, illness, financial downturns, etc., affect people regardless of faith or lack of it. But those ordeals, too, can help us grow if we will bear them as we ought.

A spiritually immature person may react to trials by becoming angry with God, with other people, or with themselves. James cautions: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone” (1:13). Not all trials involve temptation to sin, but some do. In any case, becoming angry and blaming God helps nothing.

Nor is it profitable to point the finger of blame at other people, or even at yourself. Sometimes trials just happen; they don’t have to be anybody’s fault. You didn’t necessarily do anything to “deserve it.” Remember two key things:

1) Trials are temporary. One who endures, when he has been approved, will receive the crown of life (James 1:12).

2) God is good. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him (James 1:17).

Adversity will help you to mature if you’ll let it!

Song: “In The Hour Of Trial”

Prayer: Gracious Father, we thank you for the trials that help us to grow up into the people You want us to be. Help us to endure and not to become discouraged. Thank You for the wonderful examples of Jesus, the apostles, and so many others of Your faithful servants down through the ages. May we gain determination from their faithfulness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.