



temptations, tribulations and tribulations

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All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

The Bible describes three different types of challenges in life a Christian may experience: temptations, trials and tribulations (which are listed in the order of severity). All Christians experience temptations and trials, and a growing percentage of Christians are experiencing tribulations in various parts of the world. Unfortunately, some do not clearly understand the difference between a temptation, trial and tribulation. As such, the objective of this Bible study is to define each from a biblical perspective, compare and contrast the differences, and provide spiritual insight into how to persevere.

Temptation

Jesus said, **“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Matthew 26:41

From a biblical perspective, temptation may be defined as a scenario where a person finds themselves in a situation where they are compelled by an “opportunity” to sin, and to do something they know is wrong. **“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”** James 1:14

This situation may have occurred as a result of the desires of our sinful nature (flesh), and may have been facilitated by an evil influence. Meanwhile, an internal struggle ensues between the flesh and the spirit. However, it is important to know when we are tempted God will:

1. Make sure we are able to overcome the temptation.
2. Provide a way to escape.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

Because of our sinful nature (our flesh) we are not perfect. If we fail, it is because we have made a conscious decision to sin, decided to not listen to the Holy Spirit, and not follow the prescribed way to escape the temptation. In addition, as a consequence, a Christian will experience guilt, shame, and an indescribable bad feeling deep on the inside—which is a good thing, for this is spiritual chastisement.

However, praise God in that His Son, Jesus Christ, has eternally paid the price for when we fail and provided us with a means to recover from the consequences of sin. **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** 1 John 1:9

When we confess our sins, the darkness begins to lift and we quickly recover our relationship with our Savior and Lord. It is by God’s grace and mercy that we are compelled to listen and obey the next time we encounter the temptation. In addition, our motivation to overcome temptation will transition from doing the “right thing” to doing those things that are pleasing God—because our love for Him exceeds the desires of our flesh.

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” James 1:12, 2-4

For more detailed information on different stages of temptation and how to overcome temptation, read “6 Stages of Temptation, Men’s Battle with Lust.” This lesson is available for free on UniqueBibleStudies.com. This is a must read if you are struggling with temptation and sin.



Trial

A trial is not based upon temptation nor sinful desires. But rather, it is a test of our faith, patience and stamina as we experience negative situations in life. Trials may involve struggles with family and business relationships, a temporary sickness, constraining circumstances or “walls” that hinders our progress, financial hardship, a job loss, an accident, and so forth. In addition, the length of trials can vary from short to long, have a beginning and an end, may have an effect upon our emotions, may cause undesired physical responses such as stress, and may have varying degrees of difficulty to persevere.

A parent will seek various ways to modify inappropriate behavior of their children. In a similar manner, God will use trials to facilitate behavioral changes within the hearts of His children.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

Here are additional aspects of trials:

- They are usually uncontrollable.
- They are a means for God to lovingly discipline His children.
- They reveal our weaknesses.
- They facilitate character transformation.
- A Christian will eventually realize all they can do is trust God to get them through.
- God is in control, regardless of what the circumstances seem like.

“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

When we reach the end of a trial and the “dust settles,” it becomes easier to spiritually see the overall influence of the trial, how we have changed internally, and how our love for God has grown stronger.

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:6-9

Note: One may accurately perceive a temptation is also a trial (because both test our faith). However, temptations are primarily “internally focused” because they attempt to magnify the sinful desires of our flesh. Whereas, trials are more “externally focused” because they seek to change our heart, our character and our behavior (that we express towards others) via negative situations in life.

Tribulation

Tribulation is much worse than a temptation or trial. Tribulation comprises severe hardship, adversity, distress, and even death—due to oppression and persecution—because of a faith in Jesus Christ.

Biblical examples of tribulation are segmented into past, present, last days, and after death.

Tribulation Past

There are multiple examples of tribulation in the New Testament—experienced by those who believed in Jesus Christ.

- John the Baptist was beheaded. (Mark 6:21-29)
- Stephen was stoned to death. (Acts 7:58)
- James was murdered with a sword. (Acts 12:1-2)
- Historical accounts (non-biblically referenceable) of some Apostles reveal:
 - Paul was beheaded.
 - Peter was crucified.
 - Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross.
 - Thomas was speared to death.
 - James (the son of Alphaeus) died by being stoned.
 - Simon was crucified.

Tribulation Present

Many are not aware that Christians are oppressed and persecuted in multiple countries. What's more, the degree of oppression and persecution is continuing to increase over time. To gain a greater understanding of Christian persecution that is occurring in the world today, Google "Christian persecution."

Here are two websites you should visit:

- <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians

Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." John 15:18-20

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4

Tribulation During the Last Days

Jesus said, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Matthew 24:21

During the last seven years—prior to the return of Jesus Christ—there will be a time of tribulation that is unprecedented throughout time. The severity of hardships, adversities, distress, oppression, persecution, and death that will occur is far beyond anyone’s perceived worst-case scenario. This is when God’s chosen will be segmented from the eternally damned, and when God’s wrath will be poured out upon the earth.

As we enter into the last days, it will be similar to what occurs at dusk: as the light of day transitions into the darkness of night. As the sun disappears on the horizon, we are soon unable to discern that which is around us. We are able to move about, but with increased difficulty and caution as darkness increases. Familiar shapes—which once provided points of reference and direction—change into unfamiliar silhouettes. Meanwhile, as we continue to walk, we do so with greater caution, taking smaller steps and even shuffling our feet. Once the light is completely gone, we may find ourselves going in a different direction than planned—with outstretched arms and grasping hands attempting to make sense of where we are and where we are going. That which we knew, that which we understood, that which provided reference points and direction in our lives are no longer visible. So shall it be during the Tribulation—for this analogous scenario of the transition from light into darkness provides a chilling insight into the last days—as the darkness of Satan prevails, and as God’s wrath is poured out upon the earth. (Revelation 16)

For additional information on the events leading up to the last days and the Tribulation, read “21 Signs of the Last Days,” “The Covenant,” and “Revelation’s Blessings.” All three are available for free on UniqueBibleStudies.com.



Tribulation After Death

The Bible declares those who reject Jesus Christ, do not seek the truth, and prefer unrighteousness—will experience God’s indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil.”
Romans 2:5-9

Jesus said, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:47-50

The words of Jesus define the unimaginable worst-case of all worst-case scenarios anyone could ever experience. Because our souls will never die, this torment is eternal.

Fortunately, God has provided us with a way to escape eternal torment. Jesus said:

- “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6
- “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” John 11:25-26

If you do not know Jesus (or if you have turned away from Him), take a serious look at who you are, where you’re at, where you’re headed, and what motivates you. Read Romans 2:5-9 again (above) and ask yourself if the scripture speaks to your behavior. Do you have a hard heart that lacks a desire to repent? Is it possible your past actions and present behavior will result in God’s wrath in the future? When you look into your soul...are you self-seeking, do you disregard truth, and do you seek to fulfill your fleshly desires of unrighteousness? If yes, are you satisfied with your life, or do you want more and desire to change from within?

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 3:20-21

All for His Glory!
Harold D. Thomas

Can you think of someone who may benefit from this lesson? If yes, pass it on!