

In the Day of Trouble---definition, nature, causes, and preparation

Nahum 1:7 (New American Standard Bible)

*The Lord is good,
A stronghold **in the day of trouble**,
And He knows those who take refuge in Him.*

Introduction

When I was growing up in Korea, I heard an adage saying, "Life is all about four things; birth, death, troubles, and pleasures." "Man is born for trouble," Eliphaz said (Job 5:7).

Welcome to the world. Human history is stained with troubles. Lots of troubles. Many of them are personal and others are corporate. Some are caused by us, and others by total strangers. Some troubles are recorded in the Bible. To name a few: *temptation, blame game, murder, running away, lying, cheating, favoritism, adultery, exploiting, betrayal, war, death, slavery, orgy, drunkenness,*

This morning, I invite you to think with me about troubles in life, causes thereof, and how we can overcome troubles.

Content

The Word 'Trouble': appears 131 times in the Scripture (NASB). 36 books out of 66 books in the Bible talk about it. That is, more than half of the time, God's Word addresses the problem of trouble in life. The Book of Psalms has the most references (44 times). No wonder people love Psalms!

Definition: This is what I mean by trouble. *An unnecessary, unfortunate, and unforeseen event that causes stress. Anything that causes distress and pain.* Synonyms are difficulties, adversities, hardships, afflictions, tribulations, trials, worries and anxieties.

Nature of Trouble: First, *no one is trouble free.* We all go through life's troubles, don't we? Whether it is physical, mental, emotional, financial, or even in relationships. As long as we live in body, we will experience troubles in life.

Next, *only God can fully understand or explain the cause of trouble*. Obviously, some troubles are easy to explain because we ourselves caused them. For instance, we pay the consequences of our foolish mistakes and decisions (e.g. in debt due to gambling). However, when troubles surround us even though we are innocent, it baffles us. A good example is Job in the Old Testament. He lost all his flock and ten children in one day. Later, he came up with a terrible skin disease (as a reaction to his troubles). Mind you that Job caused none of those troubles. His troubles had nothing to do with what he had done or hadn't done. He lived a blameless life. He was a righteous man before God. Yet, all these troubles still came upon him. If you go through such unexplainable troubles in life right now, consider Job.

Thirdly, *God doesn't remove troubles from our life once and for all*. Why can't our life be stress-free and tears-free? You may wonder. I don't know the answer. Ask God. By the way, such a life only exists in Heaven (Revelation 21:4), not in this life on earth. Like temptation is here to stay with us, so are troubles in our lives. If you ever wonder that your life ought to be trouble free and pain free, consider Jesus our Lord, God's perfect Son. He too was distressed and troubled in His heart at times and suffered (Mark 14:33, John 12:27, 13:21).

Causes of Trouble: In God's Word, I have identified four sources of trouble. Not limited to but including the following. 1. *Self*: our own doing, sometimes by own stupidity. Lust. Greed. Nobody but self to blame. 2. *Others*: evil people make our lives hard and difficult. Enemies oppress us. 3. *Evil spirits* oppress and harass people. Jesus cured "*those who were troubled by unclean spirits*" (Luke 6:18).

4. *The LORD Himself*: When people of God followed idols, God's heart burned with jealousy and anger. To bring them back to Him, He first sent His prophets to no avail. The last resort He referred to was suffering and trouble. Remember the Exodus generation who wandered in the wilderness for forty years?! Remember the days of Judges?! Remember also the Babylonian Captivity for 70 years?! In those times, the LORD Himself had 'troubled His people' for only one reason: *to bring them back to Him*. To gain their hearts back by delivering them from troubles. 2 Chronicles 15:3-6 talks about this.

During the reign of King Asa (Solomon's great grandson in the 9th century B.C.) in Jerusalem, the Lord sent Azariah the prophet and spoke to the king, saying, "³*For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without the Law.* ⁴*But in their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find*

Him.⁵ *In those times there was no peace for him who went out or him who came in, because many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands.* ⁶ *Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for **God troubled them with every kind of distress***" (2 Chronicles 15:3-6). I want you to know that there is

A Pattern of Trouble and Deliverance in the Bible: To understand this pattern, we must begin with the LORD God who is no stranger to troubles in heart. From the very beginning, He was troubled and grieved by sins. His grief started with Adam and Eve when they disobeyed Him. His heart was broken again when He saw Cain kill his younger brother Abel. Cain's descendants kept breaking God's heart and made Him regret creating humans. The Lord wanted to start anew with Noah's family, but before long He was disappointed again. Later, He chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. Were they any better? Not really. So, the same Lord made another covenant with Moses and the people of Israel by giving them the Ten Commandments.

After they entered the Promised Land, God's people enjoyed peace and prosperity at first. Then, they turned away from the Lord. To have their hearts back, the Lord let them undergo persecution by enemies. They cried out unto the Lord for help. God, out of His compassion, rescued them. Peace and prosperity were restored. When things were well, they fell away from faith again. Another trouble fell upon them. People cried out to God for help. God rescued them. They enjoyed peace until they turned away from God. So on and so forth. A pattern of Prosperity, Apostasy, Trouble, Cry out, Rescue and Prosperity. Such a cycle of disobedience and deliverance continued in the history of Israel.

For the rest of my sermon, I will focus on things that we ought to do and not to do in the day of trouble.

Things Not to Do: 1. *Fix your eyes on the problem:* The more you do it, the worse you become, either upset or overwhelmed with the situation. Peter, as he was walking on the water, began to sink when he got frightened with the winds around him (Matthew 14:29). Keep your eyes on the Lord and you will not be shaken: "*I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken*" (Psalm 16:8, NIV).

2. *Rely on and trust in treacherous people.* Listen to God's Word. "*Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a treacherous person in time of trouble*" (Proverbs 25:19).

3. *Call unto idols* (Jeremiah 2:26-28). Through the mouth of Prophet Jeremiah, the LORD spoke to the house of Israel, saying "*Like the shame of a thief when he is discovered, so the*

house of Israel is shamed; They, their kings, their leaders, their priests, and their prophets,²⁷ who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.' For they have turned their backs to Me, and not their faces; But **in the time of their trouble they will say, 'Arise and save us!'**²⁸ But where are your gods which you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble! For **as many as the number of your cities are your gods, Judah.**"

This reminds me of things many people do today. In times of peace and prosperity, they follow many idols such as power, status, money, pleasure, and so forth. In the time of their trouble, though, they turn to God and say, Arise and save us! Although God, out of His compassions, still rescues them, I almost hear Him saying, *Well, why don't you go to your idols and ask them to arise and save you, people!*

4. **Grumble:** Consider the Exodus generation. For forty years, they would grumble against God and Moses for food, water, hard life in the wilderness. In fact, they wanted to return to the life of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 15-17, Number 14 and 16, Deuteronomy 1:27, Psalm 106:25). This is what they did: "And all the sons of Israel **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron; and the entire congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or even if we had died in this wilderness!" (Numbers 14:2). Hearing their complaint, the Lord declares, 'As I live, just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you;' (Numbers 14:28). So, they perished in the wilderness. The lesson? Although our life is hard at times, do not complain or grumble, because grumbling is a direct expression of distrust of God.

Things to Do: 1. *Remember what the Lord has done.* King David had his own share of trouble throughout his life. When he was in a life's tough spot, he remembered what the Lord has done for him in the past. So, he praised God saying, "For **He has saved me from all trouble,...**" (Psalm 54:7). I too can testify that indeed the Lord has done great things for me and my family in the days of trouble. He revived my brother from a comatose. The Lord miraculously turned around my family's finances in a couple of years. He made the worst enemy to my best friend. More than once. In the days of trouble, remember what the Lord has done for you so that you will ask Him to deliver you again from your distress.

2. *Remember His promises.* There are scores of God's promises in the Bible concerning the day of trouble. Listen to Romans 8:35: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or trouble, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" The answer is a resounding "NO." Listen to another promise of God in Isaiah 43:2. "When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you;** And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn

you." Please note here: the LORD our God never promises a trouble-free life to us. However, He assures us that in the days of trouble He will be with us. He will see us through.

3. *Call on Him.* "Is anyone in trouble?" the Bible says, "Let them pray" (James 5:13). Are you in trouble right now? Then, pray. The same Lord commands, "**Call upon Me on the day of trouble; I will rescue you, and you will honor Me**" (Psalm 50:15). Question: why does the Lord wait until we cry unto Him before He rescues us from trouble? Why doesn't He deliver us without being asked? Because He wants us to experience His deliverance first and then give glory and honor to Him. *Trouble – Cry – Rescue – Glory* in that order.

Furthermore, if God rescues us automatically without us calling onto Him first, we might take credit to ourselves. For such an inclination, God warns the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 8:11-18. " ¹¹ **Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God by failing to keep His commandments, His ordinances, and His statutes which I am commanding you today;**¹² otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, and you build good houses and live in them,¹³ and when your herds and your flocks increase, and your silver and gold increase, and everything that you have increases,¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ... you may say in your heart, '**My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.**'¹⁸ But you are to **remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth**, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." Call unto Him.

4. *Trust in the LORD.* Do you want peace in the day of trouble? Then, trust in the Lord and He will keep your heart and mind in perfect peace. Listen to God's promise for you: "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). Remind yourself with the following promise: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, **You will revive me; You will reach out with Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me**" (Psalm 138:7). Expect that some good will come out of your trouble.

Speaking of some good out of your trouble, consider Joseph the son of Jacob. As you might know, he was sold into slavery by his own brothers for money. It was a great evil done to young Joseph, which caused him a great anguish and pain for the next 13 years. Joseph wanted to erase such a bad memory from his heart, so he named his first son 'Manasseh' which means 'to forget' (Genesis 41:51).

Yet, life's twist and turn brought the brothers to their knees before Joseph the prime minister of Egypt. He could've punished them for their evil against him, yet this is what he said to them: *"⁵ Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me ahead of you to save lives.** ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.⁷ So **God sent me ahead of you** to ensure for you a remnant on the earth, and **to keep you alive by a great deliverance.** ⁸ Now, therefore, **it was not you who sent me here, but God;** and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt"* (Genesis 45:5-8).

When Joseph trusted in the Lord, he was able to see some good in his trouble. Let us trust in the Lord who *"**causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28). Ecclesiastes 2:24 says, *"There is **nothing better** for a person **than to eat and drink, and show himself some good in his trouble.** This too I have seen, that it is from the hand of God."* Such a thing is possible only when we trust in the Lord.

The Best Strategy for the days of trouble is to be prepared with God's Word. God's Word is not for the good days alone. It is especially useful on the day of distress: *"Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight"* (Psalm 119:143). Train your heart and mind with God's Word to persevere and overcome the evil days. Not just keeping a Bible copy in your room but stocking up the Word of God in your heart. Daily. Wise ones treat God's Word as daily bread for their soul and vice versa. Listen to Jesus who says, *'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God.'*" Do you agree with Him? Then, ask yourself what you have done with God's Word. The Psalmist says: *I have treasured Your word in my heart, So that I may not sin against You* (Psalm 119:11). Only those who treasured up God's Word in peace time in their hearts will be able to overcome troubles in the evil days without panic.

Conclusion

You are never alone in the day of trouble. God is with you. *Fear no evil even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, for the Lord is with you* (Psalm 23:4).

Cry unto Him in the day of trouble, then the Lord will deliver you, and you will glorify His name. Amen.