

What Causes Hard Times

Christ's response to sin is consistent - John 8:7-11 - 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. **"GO NOW AND LEAVE YOUR LIFE OF SIN."**

Christ implies that sin MAY be the cause of many problems and can be avoided if we stop - John 5:13-14 - 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. 14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. STOP SINNING or something worse MAY happen to you."

One thing is for sure, the level of the sin DOES NOT mandate the severity of the consequence that may happen but all of us MUST REPENT - Luke 13:1-5 - Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, **"Do you think that these Galileans were WORSE SINNERS than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I TELL YOU, NO! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them — do you think they were MORE GUILTY than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I TELL YOU, NO! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."**

Consequently, some issues exist in our lives for God to be displayed - John 9:1-3 - As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

Some issues are from God to get us out the way to be totally used by Him - 2 Cor 1:8-9 - 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But **THIS HAPPENED THAT WE MIGHT NOT RELY ON OURSELVES BUT ON GOD,** who raises the dead.

We must embrace the benefits of trials and sufferings in our lives and look forward to them —

...Trials - James 1:2-4 - 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because **YOU KNOW that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.** 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

...sufferings - Rom 5:1-5 - Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but **we also rejoice in our sufferings, because WE KNOW** that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Proving our faith - 1 Peter 1:3-7 - 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, 5 who **THROUGH FAITH** are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 **In this you greatly rejoice, THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE YOU MAY HAVE HAD TO SUFFER GRIEF IN ALL KINDS OF TRIALS.** 7 **These have come SO THAT YOUR FAITH — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — MAY BE PROVED GENUINE and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

We have to recognize, true strength in God is NOT FROM US but IN SPITE OF US. Certain issues that seem to weaken are actually strengthening 2 Cor 12:7-10 - 7 **TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING CONCEITED** because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For **when I am weak, THEN I am strong.**

What happens to Job is an example of how God allows trials. It also shows how God at times recommends us for them

Job was as righteous as they come - Job 1:1- In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

He lost everything that humans value. Job's response is so important

Job 1:13-22 —

- His cattle & workforce was taken and killed

- His wealth was taken
- His Children were killed

...20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship 21 and said: "**Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; MAY THE NAME OF THE LORD BE PRAISED.**" 22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Job 2:7-10 – His health was greatly affected

...9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" 10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. **Shall we accept good FROM GOD, and not trouble?**" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

We must realize God is the one that offered him to these disasters

Job 1:8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "**Have you considered my servant Job?** There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

Job 2:3 Then the Lord said to Satan, "**Have you considered my servant Job?** There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And **he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.**"

With all that has been heard, the answer to the question, is, it does not matter what the cause is, but that we must live in reverence in order to avoid the issues due to sin today and to benefit from God's strengthening trials - Phil 2:12-13 - 12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — **CONTINUE TO WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING,** 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.