

## WHERE TO STAND WHEN THE GROUND GIVES WAY

### I. Various Scriptures

A. Though we are still very much in a pandemic, undergoing ugly civil unrest, bitter political division, and economic uncertainties, all the regular trials and woes have still been happening as well. I pray it is well with your souls!

B. God's children have never been left out of tumultuous times and tribulations. The best of the best of God's people have endured much suffering. Suffering, in fact, is a part of the normal Christian life. A couple weeks ago I referenced Hebrews 11 and *The Hall of Faith*. Many of those stalwart saints suffered greatly and died as martyrs.

C. So where do you stand when the ground you're on gives way? Today I want to put forward four men of God whose earth caved in and how they responded. For every one I pick and every Scripture I reference, I could give dozens and dozens more.

D. First up on our list is Job. Job is the poster child of Biblical suffering. God allowed Satan to afflict Job who at the time was the most Godly man on the planet. He was prosperous and happy. But then he lost everything: his 10 children, livestock, and all his stuff. Job's wife tells her hubby, "*curse God and die!*" Then Job was afflicted with sores all over his body. He was inundated with pain. His friends piled on, gave unwise counsel, and zero encouragement. Eventually God restored Job's fortunes, twice what they were before, but before He does, and when Job is still hip-deep in his misery, we have this profession found in Job 13:15-16 (NKJV) *15 Though He (God) slay me, yet will I trust Him. (OVs: Though He slay me, yet will I praise Him! or Yet will I hope in Him!) Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. 16 He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him. (Job refuses to forsake God no matter what and plans to seek Him with honesty and reverence without concealing his pain. How about that?!)*

E. Next we go to David, the man after God's own heart. After David brought down Goliath, the stage was set for him to become Israel's king. But jealous king Saul tried to have David killed multiple times. Then during David's reign, his son Absalom launched a coup to steal his father's throne. The rebellion failed and Absalom dies and David is broken. In Psalms 69:4 (ESV) David cries out: "*More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies.*" Talk about your ground giving way! David's poetic words and laments comprise the worshipful Psalms we sing, read, and pray. David's trust in God remained steadfast through thick and thin. In one of his most famous songs, we read in Psalms 23:4-6 (ESV) *4 Even 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. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (These words not only belong to David, they belong to us!)*

F. Next on our list a prophet named Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a prophet during the downfall of Judah. We know very little about him. His story begins with him complaining to God, questioning God's justice. Inch by inch Babylon is encroaching, preparing to invade and subdue. Despite God's faithfulness and protection, Judah has betrayed Him.

They worship Baal; sacrifice their children to the false god, Molech; and allow God's Temple to fall into ruin. Habakkuk is a musician, a worshiper of Yahweh, and eventually he turns his trust back to God. **Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV) says: 17** *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18* **yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk now finds himself standing on solid ground!)**

**G. Finally we zero in on the Apostle Paul. 2 Corinthians 11 tells of some of Paul's suffering for the sake of Christ: Imprisonments; beatings, 39 lashes five times; three times beaten with rods; stoned once; shipwrecked three times but Malta would be the fourth (see Acts 27-28); endured hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements, wild animals, sleeplessness, plus looming threats from thieves, Jews, and Gentiles. In another place Paul said they'd become 'the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world!' But Paul pressed into God and pressed on with the Gospel and did so until Nero took off his head. And what testimony of Paul's did I choose for us today? **2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (ESV) 7** *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8* *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9* *persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10* *always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11* *For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12* *So death is at work in us, but life in you. (May that also be our profession when our ground is seemingly giving way!)***

**H. How's your ground? Got: Cancer? Heart disease? COVID? Something else? An unexpected loss? An unfaithful spouse? Divorce? Abandonment? Betrayal? Scandal? Robbery? Relational upheaval? Financial ruin? Unfair treatment? Being victimized, lied about, or cheated? What makes you weep? Robs you of hope? Keeps you up all night? But what is our Lord's reputation? To see us through! To make our ground solid!**

**I. No one faced a greater degree of suffering than Jesus Christ our Lord. He went to the cross to restore us to the Father. He took on our sin. He died in our place. He atoned for our sins. **Hebrews 12:2 (NIV) tells us where to fix our eyes and where to stand when the ground gives way: 2** *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (The place where our Lord is enthroned, that ground is solid! As the old hymn goes, "On Christ the Solid Rock we stand; all other ground is sinking sand."* So let's plant our feet upon Christ our Rock, and trust Him who died to make us His own...)**

\* Close with the song, "*Everlasting.*"

## **[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)**

### **[Job 13:15-16 \(NKJV\)](#)**

**15** Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. **16** He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him.

### **Psalm 23:4-6 (ESV)**

**4** Even 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. **5** You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. **6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### **Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV)**

**17** Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, **18** yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

### **2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (ESV)**

**7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. **8** We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10** always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. **11** For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So death is at work in us, but life in you.

### **Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)**

**2** Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

### **Video Clips & Important Articles**

"Though You Slay Me" - Shane & Shane (with John Piper)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyUPz6\\_TciY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyUPz6_TciY)

"Through It All" - Guy Penrod (Song written by Andrae Crouch)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnLbf98NzGE>

"Everlasting" - A2J According to John

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6mpFLRA0s0>

Scars, Cartwheels and God-Given Strength - Ruth Schroeter

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/scars-cartwheels-and-god-given-strength/>

### **Bonus Stuff**

**Psalm 30:5, 11-12 (NKJV)**

**5** For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning... **11** You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, **12** To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

### **Psalm 34:17-19 (ESV)**

**17** When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. **18** The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. **19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

### **Isaiah 12:1-6 (NASB)**

**1** Then you will say on that day, "I will give thanks to You, O LORD; For although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. **2** "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For the LORD God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." **3** Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation. **4** And in that day you will say, "Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; make them remember that His name is exalted." **5** Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things; let this be known throughout the earth. **6** Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

### **Romans 5:1-11 (ESV)**

**1** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **6** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

### **James 1:2-4 (NIV)**

**2** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

### **1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)**

**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. **8** Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### **2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)**

**16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. **17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

### **Revelation 21:1-4 (NLT)**

**1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. **2** And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them. **4** He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

### **Quote by Henry Ward Beecher**

"God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more."

### **Quote by C. S. Lewis**

"The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why some do not."

### **Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon**

"Would you like to be there [heaven] and see yourself pointed at as the one saint who never knew a sorrow? Oh, no! For you would be an alien in the midst of the sacred brotherhood."

### **Quote by Martin Luther**

"If we consider the greatness and the glory of the life we shall have when we have risen from the dead, it would not be difficult at all for us to bear the concerns of this world. If I believe the Word, I shall on the Last Day, after the sentence has been pronounced, not

only gladly have suffered ordinary temptations, insults, and imprisonment, but I shall also say: *"O, that I did not throw myself under the feet of all the godless for the sake of the great glory which I now see revealed and which has come to me through the merit of Christ!"*"

#### **Quote by Malcolm Muggeridge**

"Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my experience, has been through affliction and not through happiness."

- Malcolm Muggeridge, in *Homemade*, July, 1990.

#### **Quote By Vance Havner**

At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

#### **Quote by Samuel Rutherford**

"If your Lord calls you to suffering, do not be dismayed, for He will provide a deeper portion of Christ in your suffering. The softest pillow will be placed under your head though you must set your bare feet among thorns. Do not be afraid at suffering for Christ, for He has a sweet peace for a sufferer. God has called you to Christ's side, and if the wind is now in His face, you cannot expect to rest on the sheltered side of the hill. You cannot be above your Master who received many an innocent stroke. The greatest temptation out of hell is to live without trials. A pool of standing water will turn stagnant. Faith grows more with the sharp winter storm in its face. Grace withers without adversity. You cannot sneak quietly into heaven without a cross. Crosses form us into His image. They cut away the pieces of our corruption. Lord cut, carve, wound; Lord do anything to perfect Your image in us and make us fit for glory! We need winnowing before we enter the kingdom of God. O what I owe to the file, hammer, and furnace! Why should I be surprised at the plough that makes such deep furrows in my soul? Whatever direction the wind blows, it will blow us to the Lord. His hand will direct us safely to the heavenly shore to find the weight of eternal glory. As we look back to our pains and suffering, we shall see that suffering is not worthy to be compared to our first night's welcome home in heaven. If we could smell of heaven and our country above, our crosses would not bite us. Lay all your loads by faith on Christ, ease yourself, and let Him bear all. He can, He does, and He will bear you. Whether God comes with a rod or a crown, He comes with Himself. "Have courage, I am your salvation!" Welcome, welcome Jesus!"

#### **Quote by Samuel Rutherford**

"Whenever I find myself in the cellar of affliction, I always look about for the wine."

#### **Quote by John (Jack) Shea**

*"In the drama of life the need to play the friends of Job is fueled by our fear of playing Job himself."*

### **Things Birthed Out of Difficulties**

Most of the Psalms were born in difficulty. Most of the Epistles were written in prisons. Most of the greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers of all time had to pass through the fire. Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress from jail. Florence Nightingale, too ill to move from her bed, reorganized the hospitals of England. Semi-paralyzed and under the constant menace of apoplexy, Pasteur was tireless in his attack on disease. During the greater part of his life, American historian Francis Parkman suffered so acutely that he could not work for more than five minutes at a time. His eyesight was so wretched that he could scrawl only a few gigantic words on a manuscript, yet he contrived to write twenty magnificent volumes of history. Sometimes it seems that when God is about to make preeminent use of a man, he puts him through the fire.

- Tim Hansel, *You Gotta Keep Dancin'*, David C. Cook, 1985, p. 87.

### **Trusting God in Times of Trouble and Perplexity**

J.I. Packer

Grace is God drawing sinners closer and closer to Him. How does God in grace prosecute this purpose? Not by shielding us from assault by the work, the flesh, and the devil, nor by protecting us from burdensome and frustrating circumstance, not yet by shielding us from troubles created by our own temperament and psychology, but rather by exposing us to all these things, so as to overwhelm us with a sense of our own inadequacy, and to drive us to cling to Him more closely.

This is the ultimate reason, from our standpoint, why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort and another -- it is to ensure that we shall learn to hold Him fast. The reason why the Bible spends so much of its time reiterating that God is a strong rock, a firm defense, and a sure refuge and help for the weak is that God spends so much of His time showing us that we are weak, both mentally and morally, and dare not trust ourselves to find or follow the right road. When we walk along a clear road feeling fine, and someone takes our arm to help us, likely we would impatiently shake him off; but when we are caught in rough country in the dark, with a storm brewing and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we would thankfully lean on him.

And God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing, so that we may learn to lean on Him thankfully. Therefore He takes steps to drive us out of self-confidence to trust in Himself, to -- in the classic scriptural phrase for the secret of the godly man's life -- "wait on the Lord."

- James Packer, *Your Father Loves You*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

### **Joy in the Midst of Trials**

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://gotquestions.org/joy-trials.html>

**Question:** "How can I find joy in the midst of trials?"

**Answer:** [James 1:2-4](#) says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." This is the very first thing James writes in his letter after his salutation. Why? Because of its import. Many Christians think once they've made that decision for Christ that everything will fall into place and life will be that proverbial bowl of cherries. And when trials and tough times come upon them or continue, they begin to question, "why?" Wondering how they could possibly endure horrible circumstances and consider it joy.

Peter also tackles this subject of joy through trials. "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" ([1 Peter 1:6-9](#)).

In both of these passages, we see the instruction of what we *should* do. 'Consider it pure joy...' 'In this you greatly rejoice...' Why? Because trials make us stronger. The James passage clearly states that the testing of our faith produces perseverance. And the Peter passage states that our faith, which is priceless, will be proved genuine and result in praise to God. But how? How can we find joy in the midst of all the junk, hardships, and painful circumstances?

First, we need to understand that joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness comes and goes sometimes as often as waves hitting the shore. Happiness isn't something you can cling to when you've lost a loved one or are facing bankruptcy. Joy, on the other hand can stay with you for the long haul. The reason? Real joy is from God. For the believer, it is like a bottomless well of water—always an abundant supply. Even in the darkest days, when sadness, grief, and loss may threaten to overwhelm you, God's joy is there.

Second, we need to understand that God's joy cannot be taken away. Oh, you might think that it's gone—that the hands of misfortune have snatched it from you—but it's not. As believers, we are promised the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. We are promised His joy. Just as our salvation is assured through Jesus' one-time sacrifice for all. Jesus' words in [John 15:11](#), "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Other examples, [Acts 13:52](#), "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." [Acts 16:34](#), "The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family."

Third, we need to stop wallowing, whining, and complaining and grab onto God's joy. Just like salvation, joy is a free and perfect gift from Him, and we must reach out and accept that gift. Grab onto it. Like a lifeline. Choose joy. Over bitterness, anger, and sorrow. Make a decision to choose joy every day. No matter what. Look at these great examples in Scripture: "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability" ([2 Corinthians 8:2-3](#)). "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit" ([1 Thessalonians 1:6](#)). "Be joyful always" ([1 Thessalonians 5:16](#)). "You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions" ([Hebrews 10:34](#)). And the best illustration of all, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" ([Hebrews 12:2](#)).

All through Scripture we see the persecution of the church, the trials and hardships that believers have faced. The challenge then is to truly learn how to consider each trial joy.

This topic is very near and dear to my heart because it is a lesson I'm relearning each and every day. My daughter has a rare nerve disorder, she's had brain surgery, and we've faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles, mountains of medical bills, bankruptcy, and foreclosure. But you know what I have discovered? God's joy really is there. You can consider each trial joy, you can greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory even when you feel like you are face-first in the mud puddle. You can endure whatever circumstances are making you quake in your boots right now. If you have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ—you have all you need.

Grab onto God's joy.

**Recommended Resource:** [A Shelter in the Time of Storm: Meditations on God and Trouble by Paul David Tripp](#)

- While he is not the author of every article on GotQuestions.org, for citation purposes, you may reference our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann.