

## Trying Times

Luke 22:66-23:25

### There is divine purpose in our trials...

As it relates to our personal afflictions: Some of our afflictions are \_\_\_\_\_-inflicted, the consequences of our own bad choices. Some of our afflictions are inflicted on us by \_\_\_\_\_, the consequence of their bad choices. And, some of our troubles come from living in a fallen world, the consequence of Adam and Eve's bad choice (Genesis 3). But, doesn't the Bible teach us that for Christians there's always divine purpose in our trials, even the self-inflicted ones?

I would like to make a parallel today between *Christ's trials* (His tribunals) and *our trails* (our testings). The divine purpose of Jesus' trials was to get Him to His cross. How does God get the perfectly Innocent One to the place of execution? *Through His trials*. I would like to suggest that the divine purpose of our trials is to get us to our \_\_\_\_\_. Before the crown is the cross, which makes your cross absolutely necessary. But, how does God get you there? *Through your \_\_\_\_\_*. Recall Jesus' words to His disciples: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, (1) he must deny himself, (2) take up his cross, and (3) follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

Isn't it true that we don't typically learn to deny ourselves in the easy times but in the hard times? It's in our trials where we learn to deny ourselves. So, I suggest to you this morning that the divine purpose of Christ's trials was to get Him to His God-ordained cross; and that the divine purpose of our trials is to get us to our God-ordained cross.

### The trials of our Lord:

#### 1. Jesus before the Sanhedrin:

He is not \_\_\_\_\_ (66-71).

"The council of the elders," also known as the Sanhedrin, was the Jewish nation's official judicial body. And, if they find Jesus guilty, in the eyes of the state, He's guilty. Not because they found Him guilty; not because the evidence is stacked up against Him; He's guilty because the

men of the court are biased against Jesus, which makes them intellectually dishonest. They have rejected all evidence, which makes their ruling simply a formality, and a sham. Matthew Henry once said, "None are so blind as those that *will* \_\_\_\_\_ see." And, you can't make them see! But Jesus is determined to go to the cross, and He knows that their blind unbelief is what will get Him there. For the Christ, the throne comes after the cross, so Jesus gives them the ammo they need, saying of Himself, "From now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They understood what He meant, and, of course, they didn't believe Him. But Jesus is sovereign, consequently, He sovereignly manipulates their evil for God's good by moving things along to the next phase and one step closer to His cross.

## **2. Jesus before Pilate:**

**He is falsely \_\_\_\_\_ (1-7).**

Three charges (2): First, He's destabilizing their nation with His teachings. Second, He's forbidding the Jewish people to pay taxes to Caesar. That's a serious offense against Rome, but blatantly false (20:25). Third, He claims to be a king, which could be seen as a huge threat to Roman authority. But, His kingship wasn't a threat to Rome.

The Sanhedrin knows they have no case that will stand up in a Roman court. They also know that their only hope is to put political pressure on a politician who wants no trouble in Jerusalem. So, they continue to press with their false accusations. But, Pilate found a loophole for himself: Jesus is a Galilean, which is Herod's jurisdiction. So off they go for the third phase of trials, and another step closer to the cross.

## **3. Jesus before Herod:**

**He is treated with \_\_\_\_\_ (8-12).**

How contemptible, as the contemptible ones falsely accuse the Innocent One. It's just as Isaiah predicted, the Suffering Servant is calmly silent: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth" (53:7).

And, Herod with his soldiers also treat Jesus with contempt before sending Him back to Pilate, convinced that He's not a threat.

Can you imagine. We know Him as the King of Heaven. And, the King of heaven just stands there, silent before puny, pathetic, despicable, micey men, and calmly takes upon Himself their contemptible treatment without even a word? Of course! because He knows that the \_\_\_\_\_ of His trials is to get Him to His cross.

#### 4. Jesus back before Pilate:

He is \_\_\_\_\_ (13-25).

That strategy required pushing with great haste for a verdict by means of trumped up charges and insufficient evidence. Of course. It's the only way to convict the King of heaven.

Over and over Pilate declares Jesus innocent. But, the Sanhedrin insist on injustice, their insistence prevailed, and Pilate gave into the pressure and granted what they desperately wanted: Jesus *will be* crucified.

And in the next scene, after severely beating Him, Jesus is on His way to the cross... **Now, how in the world does that happen?** Only one way: The Sovereign Son allows it to happen. His divine destination *is* the \_\_\_\_\_, His predetermined goal *is* death, and nothing and no one is going to stop Him from dying. Instead, He will use this shameful sham to be the railroad that gets Him there.

Why? Because this is **the way, the Jesus way**: His cross is before His throne. In like manner, God's divine purpose is to get us to our own cross, which will get us to our own crown. God gets us there *through our trials*. Listen again to Jesus: "If anyone wishes to come after Me [Do you truly want to follow My lead? Then first you] must deny [your]self, and [then you're ready to] take up [your] cross, and [when you take up your cross, then you're truly prepared to] follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

#### Take up your cross...

Jesus took up His cross, and if you're going to be His true follower, you must take up your cross as well! But what is your cross? The death of our children is \_\_\_\_\_ our cross. That's a trial that God meant to use to get us to our cross of crucifixion.

What I'm suggesting is that our trials in life are designed to teach us to deny our selfish selves so that we can finally get to the place of \_\_\_\_\_ to our selfish selves. I can't get to the cross of execution of my selfish self without first learning to deny myself through my trials.

I have come to believe that there is only one thing that my fleshly desires are worthy of: death by crucifixion! So, Jesus, in His amazing grace, comes to me and says, "My son, take up your cross." And by His wonderful but severe mercy, He takes me through one trial after another until I have so denied myself that I am finally dead to myself and fully alive to Him, my Head whom I worship and adore!

That's what **Galatians 2:20** means: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in [this body of] flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." He loved me and gave up His life on the cross for me, and I'm not going to love Him back, and take up my cross and be crucified with Him, so I no longer live but He lives in me?!

If I do, all of a sudden none of my trials are too heavy! How about yours? Are your trials too heavy for you? If they are, may I suggest that you're not \_\_\_\_\_ ready to die. Consequently, you're \_\_\_\_\_ yet ready to receive the fullness of your crown that comes after your cross.

Come, die in Christ with me. It is, by far, the best way to live!