

20 JUNE 2021

# TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS



CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY CENTRE  
Encountering God • Healing Hearts • Empowering Lives





*“My brothers, you will always have your trials but, when they come, try to treat them as a happy privilege; you understand that your faith is only put to the test to make you patient, but patience too is to have its practical results so that you will become fully-developed, complete, with nothing missing” (James 1:2-4).*

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS?

ACCORDING TO A CONCORDANCE, “TRIAL” MEANS “TRIED AND APPROVED”

“SUFFERING” MEANS TO EXPERIENCE A PAINFUL SENSATION OR IMPRESSION

Trial also means affliction, crucible, ordeal, tribulation. These nouns denote distress or suffering that severely tests resiliency and character, no consolation in the hour of trial; the affliction of a bereaved family, the crucible of revolution, the ordeal of being an innocent murder suspect, a time of relentless tribulation ([www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)). Someone who suffers goes through agony, distress, pain, torment, anguish, heartache, sorrow, woe.



**Don't waste your sufferings**



When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, He endured a very painful agony that He sweated blood. The apostle Paul, apart from Christ, suffered considerable terrible trials and sufferings. He went through all sorts of labour, had been beaten with rods countless times, imprisoned frequently, faced death often, was stoned, three times shipwrecked in the stormy seas, encountered robbers, accused and persecuted, weariness and toil, hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, often fasting, sleepless nights, given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, despaired even of life, abandoned by all his friends while imprisoned and besides all these, he was filled with daily concerns for all the churches (See 2 Corinthians 11:23-33).

# When Bad Things Happen to Good People

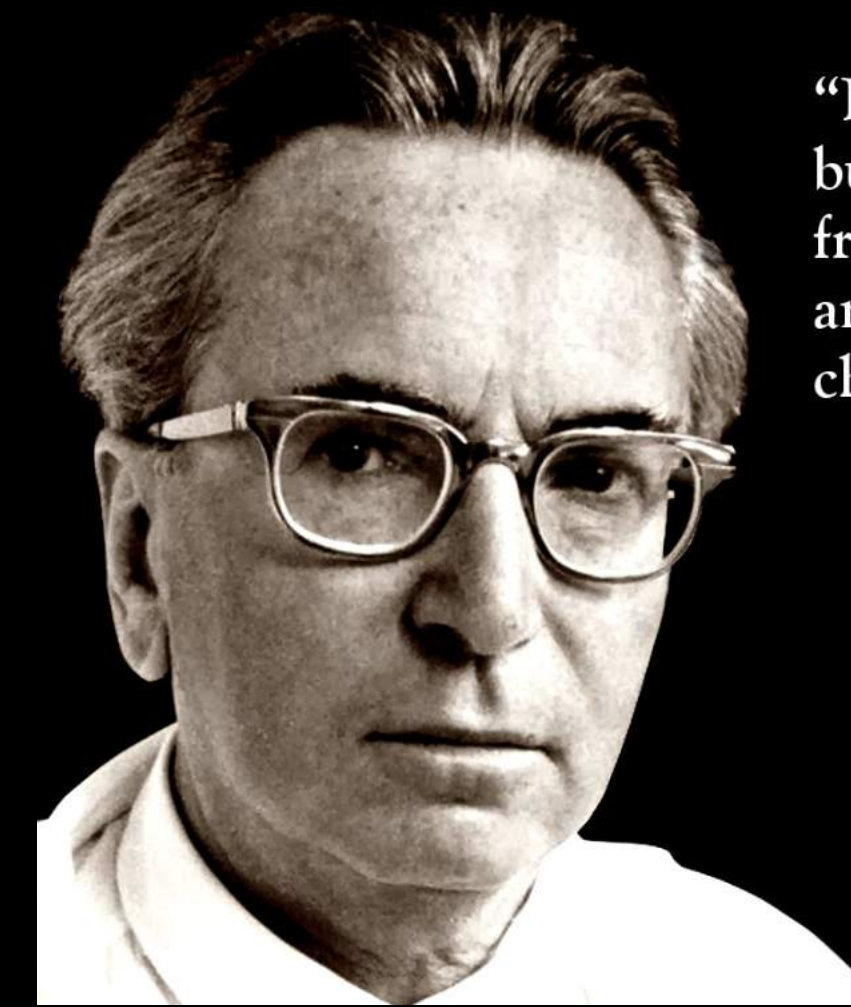
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HAROLD S.  
KUSHNER

What would we do when faced with the **3 Big Ds: Disaster, Despair and Disappointment**? Perhaps the book, *“When Bad Things Happen to Good People”*, by Rabbi Harold Kushner can shed some light when we face trials and go through sufferings. When Rabbi Kushner’s three-year-old son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease that meant his son would only live until his early teens, the Rabbi was faced with one of life’s most difficult questions: **Why, God?** Years later, Rabbi Kushner wrote this straightforward, elegant contemplation of the doubts and fears that arise when tragedy strikes. In this book, he shares his wisdom as a Rabbi, a parent, a reader and a human being. This book is a classic that offers clarity of thought and consolation in times of sorrow.



There is a lot of inevitable in life, suffering, pain, unfairness, disloyalty, tragedy, etc. God has a message intended for us who are tuning in to SD Shares. Our prayers will always be with you, yes you who are reading this now. *“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28). Yet when we encounter trials, we often wonder, **Why me?** Searching for an answer and learning to view, ‘the good, the bad, and the ugly’ are disciplines that God wants us to develop as we mature spiritually (Romans 8:1-7, 1 Corinthians 2:14). *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when His glory is revealed”* (1 Peter 4:12-13). The **trials and sufferings** we encounter in life can come in many shapes and sizes. They can be intense encounters or struggles with anger outbursts, grief, addictions, infirmities such as limited mobility and illnesses. Then, there are the ridicules and rejections we face from our own families, friends, colleagues, church groups when we stand up for truth and righteousness. We are harassed and put down on account of our faith. There is also the daily grind of the necessities of life with the wear and tear of ageing and daily responsibilities. For many today, the distresses caused by the pandemic leading to uncertainties and financial burdens. The disappointments and deep wounds of childhood and broken relationships. The pressures of working as the sole breadwinner. Temptations that come our way when we least expected, dealt with a heavy blow.



“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Viktor E. Frankl



## God's Grace and not Bitterness

The Apostle Paul says that this is, *"to test you and know whether you are obedient in everything"* (2 Corinthians 2:9). Instead of despairing when he encountered trials, God said to him, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

If we choose to trust God to bring about His purposes through the suffering, we can avoid the trap of bitterness and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. (See Peter 3:18; Hebrews 12:14-15, 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Ephesians 4:31). We can be confident that God will not allow anything to happen to us without His permission, and He will not let "bad things" happen that will not ultimately bring us more good than destruction. (See Psalm 12:1, Genesis 50:20, Isaiah 55:8-9, Job 1:6-12, Romans 9:14-24, and 1 Peter 4:12-13).



## Signs of Endurance and Perseverance



**Give thanks:** Often times it is difficult to be thankful when faced with a crisis. Yet Scripture is very clear, *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Regrettably, most of the time, we respond with murmuring or complaining when we face hardships of any kind, physical, mental, spiritual, psychological and emotional. Thanking God in all things does not mean that we thank God for evil. It means that we are thanking God for all the benefits He intends for us when God allows things to happen. When we reflect back on those moments of crisis, we see how God made us stronger and there are **10,000 reasons** (as the song says) to give thanks and bless His Holy Name.

**Rejoice:** Along with giving thanks, we are also instructed to rejoice in all things. *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice”* (Philippians 4:4). Thanking God is an act of the will, but rejoicing is a response of the spirit. Therefore, it is possible to be in pain yet joyful at the same time. We cannot escape the pain of a difficult trial, but we can learn to rejoice in God Himself and in the good things that God will do through our suffering.

**Overcome Evil with Good:** Jesus gave His disciples a clear set of instructions about responding to those who made life miserable for them. These instructions are complete opposite to what we would naturally do (See Matthew 5:44). *Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you.* Such responses would never be a person’s natural tendency, but they do reflect the heart of God: *“Do not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:21). Blessing to those who reward evil with good. Although we cannot fully predict or describe that blessing, we know that it will include the power of genuine love. *“Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called – that you might inherit a blessing”* (1 Peter 3:8-9).



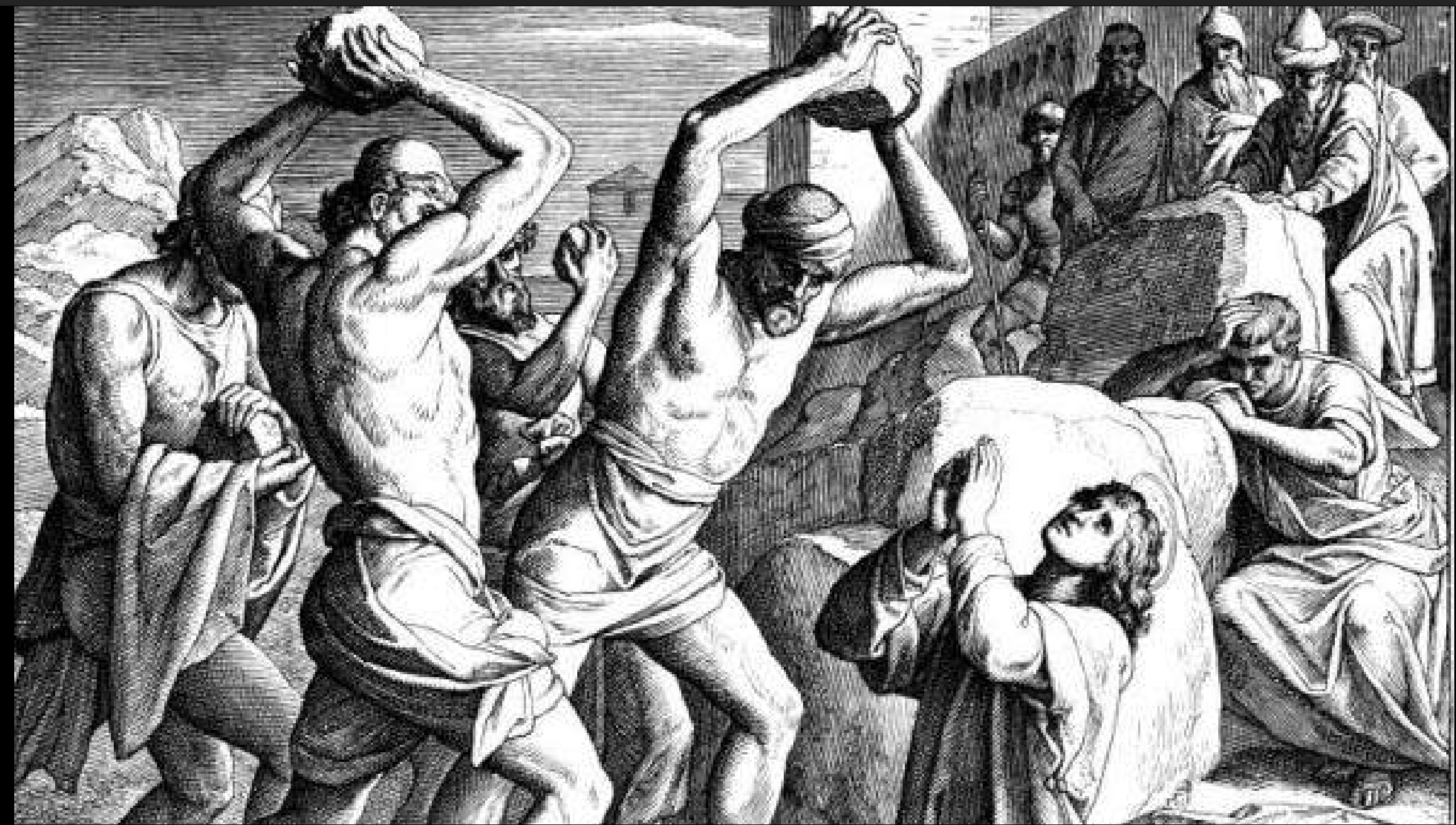
If we react to a person who offends us and become bitter toward him/her, we actually put ourselves in an emotional prison. Bitterness will control our thoughts, our life, our emotions, our free time, and our health. In order to be freed from this prison, we must forgive. Scripture provides many examples of those who forgave offenders, including Job, Stephen, and Jesus Christ.

Job's companions were about to encounter God's wrath, but Job prayed for them and God delivered Job. *"And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before"* (Job 42:10). Stephen prayed to God to forgive his murderers, even as they were stoning him. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, *"Lord, do not hold this sin against them."* When he had said this, he died (Acts 7:59-60).

Jesus was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (See Isaiah 53:5). We are among the group of people Jesus prayed for, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).



*"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."*







## Reward of Responding with Grace

As God faithfully pours out His graces upon us in the midst of each fiery trial, we can endure hardships and overcome the enemy in God's strength. (See 2 Chronicles 20:15). Scripture reveals that there are great rewards for responding to trials with grace.

God has assured us that He will not permit us to be attacked with trials or temptations that are too overwhelming for us to handle. God will grant us grace to be *over-comers*.

The Apostle Paul exhorts us with these words: *“So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. **God is faithful, and He will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.**”* (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).