

Trials & Temptations

James 1:2-18

Remember from our introductory study that James is written by Jesus' brother and he is writing to believers who have been scattered by persecution. How appropriate then that James begins his book with teaching about trials.

We will see in the first half of chapter one that James draws a distinction between trials and temptation. They are not the same thing nor do they have the same root cause. Trials and temptation are also different in what they produce. It is an interesting comparison especially as sometimes we can call something a 'trial' that is really made up of our own choices and decisions. Likewise, we can be facing a true trial and blame it on ourselves, feeling that we 'must have done something to deserve this'. Let's look at what James teaches about trials together.

READ James 1:2

Consider it pure joy to face these trials! Imagine James' readers receiving these words. They had been driven from their homes under threat of arrest or even death. Probably most of them had left behind beloved family and friends. They were now trying to make their way in a new city, a new culture and learning to live life with a new faith. I can just picture their weekly gathering. One of the elders of the meeting stands up and announces that he has received a letter from James that he will now share with everyone gathered. The people feel happy. James is a pillar, a father figure to the church. Surely he will be able to give them some encouragement, some understanding about what they should conclude about their circumstances. The elder clears his throat and glances around a bit nervously. Then reads the first two verses. Imagine the ripples of amazement, perplexity and confusion that ripple through the audience. He wants us to consider these trials, these circumstances as a joy? To quote that famous classic TV icon from Diff'rent Strokes, "What you talkin' bout James!"

Why does James want his readers to consider a life altering, painful, confusing trial as a joyful experience? Because trials are crafted by God, allowed in our lives by God and used by God to grow us up in our faith. Trials may feel like punishment or rejection. They certainly do not feel like a loving process sent to us by a concerned parent. But that's what they are. Consider these verses from Hebrews 12:7-11:

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more

should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

ASK: Why do parents discipline their children? Why do parents fail to discipline their children?

Let's stick with this parent/child image for a minute. The Bible tells us that parents who discipline their children love them (Prov. 13:24). Often when we think of discipline we think of punishment. When we talk about disciplining children we usually mean facing consequences for doing wrong. The word discipline though contains another meaning; training. We see Paul use this idea in this passage from I Corinthians:

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Trials are God's training process for the children that he loves. God does not allow trials into our lives as punishment; they are his recipe for success.

READ: James 1:3 & 4

Don't these verses read like a formula? First trial, then perseverance finally maturity. God is telling us that he has a plan to mature us as followers of Christ.

When we are brought to faith in Christ we are definitely forgiven of our sins and made a full heir to all God has to offer. However, that does not mean we are mature. Think again about your own children. When they are born you consider them fully a part of your family. There is no question that for the rest of your lives you are bound together. But, were your children born mature? Mine weren't! No one's are. There are many processes that a child will need to go through to bring them to maturity. Each process from learning to sit up, using the bathroom, riding a bike, making friends, losing a game, navigating a difficult teacher, compromising with a sibling, obeying a rule even when they don't like it, etc., etc. is useful in creating a person who is capable of directing a successful and productive life.

The same is true spiritually. Each trial God brings to us serves a purpose in maturing our faith. And there will not be one trial in our lives either. Verse 2 assures us there will be all kinds. Just like healthy children learn from all kinds of processes when they are growing up, we grow up through all kinds of spiritual processes called trials.

No parent sets out to raise a child who will be unable to succeed in the adult world. Loving parents train their children so they mature into productive adults. God intends

the same for us. He sets our lives on a course for success. He has plans for us from the very beginning. James is telling us that God uses the process of a trial to raise us into mature and complete followers.

Let's look at the three parts of the process of a trial.

First, the trial itself. Apart from realizing that a trial is a God-ordained process it is valuable to keep two other things in mind. One, you do not bring a trial upon yourself. A trial is not sin, temptation or weakness of your flesh. These may also cause unpleasant circumstances in our lives but they are brought about by our own choices. This is not true of a trial. Secondly, a trial is not punishment. God has not turned his face against you, abandoned you, rejected you or decided that he just does not like you anymore. However, you will feel all of those things during a trial! I think that is why James begins his teaching with an encouragement toward joy. Joy that God has loved you enough to decide to mature you.

If a trial is God's process and brought about for his purposes, then what is our role in it? This is where the perseverance part of the formula comes in. Perseverance means this:

Perseverance: steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose; especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles or discouragements.

Our role during a trial is perseverance. We cooperate with God's process by staying steady, faithful and persistent. This sounds so much easier than it really is! Let me share what persistence in the face of trial looks like from my own personal experience.

In 2009, Scott and I went through a very painful trial. The church we had planted 10 years before was struggling. People that had been dear friends and a part of Pathway's ministry began to abandon us. Many of them leaving behind the taste of their hurtful, demeaning words. Others just left without an explanation or chance for us to talk. Let me be clear, there was no Biblical reason for this. There was no secret sin going on behind the scenes. We were the same people then that we had always been. But, due to the influence of some, the church was wounded and we were bleeding. Because of this year long exodus of people, the church began to suffer financially. This was terrifying to me as there were weeks that we were unsure whether we would be paid or not. I am a saver by nature and thinking that I might not have enough money to pay the bills pushes all my insecurity buttons. This part of our trial lasted about a year.

Meanwhile, at home, we had added our third child. She was a much wanted baby but nothing of her birth or infancy could be called a joy. I had pre-term labor and was on forced bed-rest for about 4 weeks. I had given birth through cesarean section and for some reason that never was figured out; I bled extensively during the surgery. A normal person's hemoglobin levels are around 14, mine were 7! This left me very

anemic, weak and tired. This also caused a great deal of problems with my incision. It refused to close and I spent the first two weeks after her birth visiting my Dr's office daily so he could drain the accumulating fluid and weeping nightly in my bathroom as my husband rewrapped the bandage that held me together. Needless to say, my physical condition was not good. (I do want to insert a note of hope here, though. The Dr's told me it would take 6 mos – 1 year for me to fully recover from the anemia. We asked the Lord to heal me and within 6 weeks my blood levels were normal again!)

Add to this that my sweet newborn daughter was a terror! She screamed constantly. For the first four months of her life, and I do not exaggerate this though it sounds like I am, if she was awake, she was screaming. Finally her case of severe colic settled into a more predictable routine of only screaming nightly from 7 pm – 11 pm like clockwork. This lasted until she was about a year old.

2009 also happened to be the terror of the swine flu pandemic. Our middle daughter ended up coming down with that which was a harrowing experience with a colicky newborn to try and protect from it. (If you recall from that year, the always helpful news media announced daily death tolls from that flu.) Thankfully, God protected the rest of the family and our daughter recovered but fear began to grow in me. A couple of months later, our baby got a cough which ended up with her having difficulty breathing and developing RSV. This illness was another prolonged two week, round the clock vigil for me. Fear and anxiety blossomed. Finally, our oldest daughter rounded out the season of sickness by coming down with either a sinus infection or strep throat three months in a row!

Then at about this same time I noticed that I had lost some weight. I was nursing and obviously under a lot of stress but I just didn't think it was normal. I went to the Dr. who ran blood tests. The results showed that my thyroid was hyper. This put me at about the end of my rope emotionally. I was raw and hurting in every way you can imagine. Rejected by friends, struggling with sickness in myself and my kids, physically tired, overwhelmed by a sense of failure and doom. I did not feel spiritual in any way. I felt like God was punishing me. I felt sure God must be somehow disappointed in me to allow so much all at once.

During all of this time, unbelievably, and laughably to me now, I continued to serve and minister in kid's ministries. Sometimes I showed up on Sunday morning and I didn't feel like I liked myself, the kids or anyone I was teaching with! But I showed up. Often I prepared in bits and pieces on Saturday because I literally had no other time. But, I prepared. Most of the time during that year, I taught with my baby strapped to the front of me in her Baby Bjorn. Oh, and did I mention we were in two services at the time so I taught for four hours on a Sunday? Yep, baby strapped on me and nursing her in between classes. But, I showed up and taught week after week.

Now I never during that time had a dramatic, spiritual moment where I gritted my teeth into the wind and declared that come hell or high water I was going to go on with God! I wish I could report to you that during this year of my life I continually cried out to God for help and had him answer me with tender encouragements and kindness. Have you heard the expression, 'the heavens were brass'? They were for me that year. What I want to get across is this. My circumstances were heavy. My feelings were ugly. My spiritual life was dry as a desert. But I persevered. I kept showing up. I showed up when I didn't want to. I showed up when it literally hurt me to do so. I made dinner. I did the laundry. I read my kids books and helped with their homework. I stayed married to my husband. I stayed faithful even though every part of me was feeble.

I don't write all of this to glorify myself or my experience because surely it is mild compared to the trials others have faced. But I write it to illustrate that when we cooperate with God in the trial process perseverance is our role. It took me a long time to even recognize that year as a trial. It wasn't until the worst of it had passed that I heard the whispering voice of the Holy Spirit begin to reveal it to me. And I certainly did not understand that I had cooperated with the process because in my mind I had failed. I didn't welcome the trial. I didn't rejoice in it. I didn't even 'get it' until it was mostly over. But somehow in spite of my stupidity, God's grace enabled me to persevere through it, thereby allowing the process to work.

Here are some other words that the dictionary uses as synonyms for persevere. Maybe you'll find them inspiring:

doggedness, steadfastness, tenacity, resolute, unyielding, endurance

ASK: Can you think of a time when you persevered through a trial? What was it like for you? Or, can you think of someone you observed persevering through a trial? How did observing them encourage your faith?

One final thought about perseverance. It is not fashionable. Our celebrity culture does not admire perseverance. Even though in most cases perseverance brings outstanding results, almost everywhere you look in our culture fixes that require minimal effort for maximum result are touted. For example: Marriage strained? Maybe you need a break, even a permanent one? After all, why should you stay in something that is causing you so much pain and unhappiness? Or consider your relationships you're your parents, siblings, friends. Are these costly to you? Annoying? Hard to manage? Our culture does not value sticking with someone through thick and thin. If it's getting a little thick for you, then it's probably time to move on. Think about your commitments. Culture encourages us to keep only those commitments that are fulfilling to us. After all, why would you even make a commitment where much would be demanded of you with very little given back? If things are starting to get hard, it might be best to back away and take some time for yourself.

None of these thought processes are Biblical. I do not think that Biblical thought process is only about staying where we are in pain or hurting. But I know that a Biblical thought process does not start with, "How do I feel about...?" Instead a Biblical thought process starts with "What does God want me to do in this situation?" What God wants us to do may not be the easiest thing. He may be asking us to do what is uncomfortable. By obeying him in perseverance we are allowing him to work. Think about this: If you were in the middle of an operation and suddenly decided that you didn't really want to do this after all, would you jump up off of the OR table and go home? Why not? Because it would be very detrimental to your health! It is the same spiritually. If God is allowing a trial and we decide we don't really like the process anymore, jumping up and running away will be detrimental to our spiritual health. Persevering is the only way to see a good result.

ASK: Where do you see this lack of perseverance in our culture? Why do you think persevering through hardship is seen as so unnecessary?

Finally, let's visit the third leg of the trial process stool, maturity. It is imperative that we understand something about Christianity. Developing more of God's character is a major objective for every believer. Many people like Jesus. Many people might even believe in him. Few people actually mold their lives to him. Our culture would like to convince us that being a fan of Jesus is enough. The Bible teaches us that there is no value in just being a fan. The value is found in becoming a disciple.

At his ascension, Jesus leaves his final instructions with his followers. He instructs them to take the gospel into all the world starting in their hometown and then going across the globe (Matthew 28:19-20). The church around the world is still actively doing this and has been since that commission. What I want to point out is that Jesus instructs that his followers make disciples not just fans. You even see this thought process in Jesus when he calls his first 12 followers. He asks them to leave everything familiar and spend their lives following him (Matthew 16:24-26). His call to us today is no different. The process of trial enables us to truly become Jesus' disciples.

Job in the midst of his deepest trial when he is feeling abandoned by God tells us why cooperating in a trial is worth it.

Job 23:8-10

But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

Our faith; matured until it is as valuable as gold, is God's goal. Gold is an amazing element with many unique properties. Of course, we understand it is valuable monetarily and has been probably since the beginning of time. But gold is also highly

prized for is malleability. A small amount of gold can be spun into miles of thread. It can be hammered so thinly that you can see through it yet it retains its heat reflective properties making it a perfect heat shield for space vehicles. It does not corrode when exposed to caustic elements. All of this strength in an element that in its purest form is bendable by hand.

This is the kind-of faith God is working to build in each of us. A useful faith. A life-giving faith. A faith strong enough to withstand the most corrosive of environments yet pure enough to be directed, shaped, molded by his hands. Put that picture in your mind the next time you are facing a trial. Though you may feel like Job, that you are looking for God and cannot find him, remember He knows where you are. He has not lost sight of you. And the trial he is allowing is bringing about gold.

ASK: What examples can you think of in Scripture where the process of trial is walked out in someone's life and it resulted in the person taking on more of God's character?

Today, we have looked into the reasons that God brings trials and the process of a trial. Next time James will teach us what response we should have when we find ourselves being tried.

Trials & Temptations cont...

James 1:5-18

We have discovered that the process of a trial has a purpose and that we have a role to play. The process is set in motion by God with our maturity as the goal. Our role is to persevere in the midst of hard, painful circumstances. This is how we grow.

Now James is going to turn to responding to a trial. Okay, you've recognized that you're in one, what now? What else should I be doing? Should I be doing anything? When will this make sense to me? How do I know it ever will? Let's look together at what James has to say.

READ: James 1:5-8

Trials are inherently filled with doubts. In fact, I think a strong case could be made that the root of every trial is really a struggle with some remaining doubt. Some secret fear and lack of trust that we have harbored. Trials push all of our buttons and bruise our tender places. The squeezing pain of a trial causes many questions to surface in our hearts. Questions like: 'What did I do to deserve this?', 'Why is this happening? Did I fail God in some way?'. The strongest sense that often accompanies a trial is not dedication but an instinctive desire to run away.

James seems to understand that trials bring questions and doubts. He wants to encourage those in a trial not to ignore, push down or feel guilty for needing help. Instead he instructs us to turn to God and ask for his wisdom. And just in case you feel nervous about asking for some insight, James wants to reassure us that not only does God offer his wisdom but offers it generously and without finding fault. God's wisdom is full of mercy! Attaining it does not require of us strange rites of passage or sacrifices at religious sites. It is ours for the asking!

The original word that James uses here is *haplos*. Not only does this carry a meaning of generosity but it also conveys a meaning of unwavering, single-minded intent. Scientists have shown us that electromagnetic waves capable of carrying sound exist in our atmosphere. Apparently these have existed since creation, containing the same capabilities of transmitting sound that we now use them for. But it wasn't until someone discovered a way to use these waves to carry sound that they became useful to us. It is the same with God's wisdom. It exists already and it is available. God already offers it to us with the intent of our good. Yet, we must ask for it in order for it to become useful to us.

This generosity is a hallmark of God's character. Think for a minute about the other mythological and mystic religions prevalent at this time. If you needed something from a god or goddess, you must undertake some kind-of sacrifice in order to attain help. No god or goddess would deem you worthy of help just because you happen to ask! Even today in other religions or life philosophies some kind-of performance is usually required in order for the deity, power, universe or whatever to intervene on your behalf. But not with God! He gives to all who come to him and ask.

ASK: Why do you think we resist asking for God's wisdom at times?

Okay, so you've asked for some wisdom but it just doesn't seem to be coming. Nothing has really changed. Some things have even gotten worse. Doubt, which is already shadowing your every thought, raises the volume. So, what is James thinking when he tells us to ask and not doubt because doubting will get us nowhere with nothing fast?

Doubt will be your biggest enemy during a trial. Doubt is the voice of your emotions. Doubt is something we all feel to varying degrees from time to time. I think it would be hard to prove that God does not allow any feelings of doubt in his children. One of the fascinating examples of doubt in the Bible is Jesus' disciple Thomas. We know he was a faithful follower of Jesus yet he probably has the worst reputation after Judas. He has earned the nickname 'doubting Thomas' because he expressed his need for physical proof of Jesus' resurrection. What is of note about the incident is not that Thomas doubted but Jesus' response to the doubt.

READ: John 20:24-28

Jesus did not show up and kick Thomas out of disciple-hood. I don't see condemnation in Jesus' response. Rather I see Jesus answering Thomas' doubts with what he needed. Jesus gave the very proof that would stop the voice of doubt in Thomas' head forever. How kind Jesus is toward Thomas! How gentle the proof he offers! Christian history tells us that Thomas went on to become the first missionary in India. A large group of believers in the Kerala area of India still call themselves "Christians of Thomas" as they trace their heritage of faith back to that disciple. Thomas was eventually martyred in India.

I like to think about Jesus' response to Thomas because I have experienced doubt during trials. I know what it feels like to wonder and search for answers. I don't know that it would be accurate to say that James is instructing us here not to feel any doubt when we ask God for his wisdom. Instead I think James is referring here to an immature pattern of doubt & faith. First, we are filled with faith to ask God for help, believing that he is going to answer. After all this is what he tells us to do; ask.

But instead of then continuing to act in faith and trust that God will answer, we begin to listen to our doubts. Soon, we are convincing ourselves that our doubts are legitimate and begin to try to find a way out of our trial on our own, coming up with solutions to the situations that make sense to us.

James compares this faith and doubt combo to the ocean. I love to stand on a beach and watch the ocean! It is one of the most fulfilling things for me to do. As you watch, though, especially if you watch for the better part of the day, you will see the changeable nature of the sea. The tide goes in and out. The waves get bigger and smaller. The color can be anything from gray to blue to green. There is no stability. You cannot trust the sea to be the same from moment to moment. Houses built near seashores are consistently destroyed by the ocean's unpredictable moods.

James calls this kind-of Christianity double minded. A person who tries to face a trial with this attitude will never make it. He won't receive the wisdom of God when he asks for it because his doubts will cause him to trust his own wisdom over whatever God might be saying. Like the sea, he will be subject to wild swings of emotion. He will give into whims, the advice of friends and his own desire to escape the pain of a trial. His faith will become unstable. Riddled with holes and not able to pass the test of maturity.

We become agents of destruction toward our faith when we involve ourselves in being double minded. It can be a strong temptation to be double-minded during a trial. We need to resist this pattern and continue instead to turn our efforts toward asking for and receiving God's wisdom.

ASK: Doubt is certainly one of the fiery darts satan likes to hurl at us during a trial. What other fiery darts have you experienced during a trial? What steps were helpful to you so that you could continue to act in faith?

READ: James 1:9-12

James is teaching on trials when all of a sudden in verses 9-11 he seems to change subjects completely. Why is he talking about rich & poor? What does this have to do with trials?

There are several thoughts on these verses. Some think that James is quoting a well-known proverb at the time that communicated a 'that's life' kind-of thought to his readers. Others think he is referring to the very real trial of poverty that some of his readers may have been facing at the time. Both of these make sense and are certainly possible. What I see here, however, fits in with the theme of trial. I see James making an observation about a person's life circumstances before, during & after a trial.

We are richly blessed in Christ. And for seasons of our lives these riches are on such vivid display that we almost can feel physically the presence of God in our daily lives. Our worship experiences are personal. The time we spend in Scripture leaves us with insight after insight. There is a freshness and newness in our times of prayer. These are times we feel in a high position. Favored by God. Feeling rich in these seasons is to be expected.

Then as you go about your life, the season begins to change and you find yourself in a trial. You go from feeling rich spiritually to feeling very poor indeed! You are humbled by the circumstances you find yourself in. You cannot discern God's voice. Worship is a sacrifice. Praying is painful. You feel shattered, ruined. A season of spiritual poverty seems to have replaced a season of blessing.

Both of these seasons – the rich blessings & poor trial - come to every Christian. They are not unique to one group over another. It is not just the literal poor who face trials. Nor is it only those who are rich monetarily. Every person who takes up their cross to follow Jesus will be tried. James is making a point here to expect to be tried. He is noting that the change of seasons from rich to poor and then back again is the life of a Christian. Don't find yourself in a rich season and look with disdain on someone in a season of trial. Also, don't in the midst of your trial, look at someone in a rich season and despise them for it. Your season is coming too!

During a trial, you may feel very low, an object of pity, but God considers this a very high position indeed according to verse 12. I like that James writes..."when he has stood the test." This is such a perfect phrase to describe a trial. This image is used in Ephesians when talking about the armor of God:

Ephesians 6:13

"...put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything to stand, stand firm with the belt of truth buckled about your waist..."

Many times during a trial about all you feel your faith is capable of is standing. Remaining true to the Bible is you standing. Remaining faithful to what God has called you to is you standing. Continuing to show up at church when inside you are broken is you standing. You might feel like you're stumbling around making a fool of yourself all over the place but persevering will bring reward.

The crown of life is what God promises to those who persevere through trial. This has two implications. The crown itself does not refer to a crown worn by royalty but instead calls up the image of the crown of laurel branches given to victorious athletes. I do not think that it would be a stretch here to assume that God is implying reward and promotion for those who stand firm through trial.

The second reward God promises is life. God is always about life! And he is especially about eternal life. It is where he tells us to lay up treasure (Luke 12:33-34). Knowing that your trial is bringing you blessing now and reward later can give us the hope we need to keep standing.

Trials are not something anyone looks forward to. I doubt there has ever been one person who has actively prayed to be tried. But trials are God's process. Remember three things about a trial:

1. Submit to the maturing process of a trial.
2. Ask God for his wisdom and trust in what he reveals.
3. Believe God is at work and intends to bring about good things.

READ: James 1:13-15

Now James is comparing another process to that of the trial process; the process of sin. This process is exactly opposite from that of a trial in every way.

These two processes differ in how they begin. God uses trials; they originate as part of his plan. Sin begins with us never with God. Our sinful nature is often particularly weak in an area or two. These desires reign in us before we receive Christ. After our salvation, we must wage war against this sin nature to see it defeated and brought under the obedience of Christ. There are many places in the New Testament telling us to put off our old self and be made new. Not only are we in the process of becoming New Creations, but the power to become is ours through Jesus' work on the cross.

The problem is not that we continue to face temptations from our old nature. The problem is when we entertain these temptations as possibilities. Entertaining temptation is always going to grow desire in us which, if left to grow, will result every time in sin.

Do you ever have 'well, maybe...' thoughts? I do. I have them many times about getting up in the morning. I have never been what you might call a morning person. I am slow to wake up even after I am upright and out of bed. It is especially hard for me to wake up if I go to sleep thinking, 'well, maybe I can sleep in a little bit in the morning'. Once this thought has entered my head and I begin to imagine how nice some extra sleep would be, I am almost completely defeated in my quest to get up on time. I haven't even set my alarm yet and my cause is hopeless! Entertaining this 'well, maybe..' thought has beaten my resolve.

It is the same with us and sinful desire. Of course, whether I get up on time in the morning or not is not the point. The point is the entertaining of 'well, maybe...'. This is the same thought we entertain with we are conceiving and giving birth to sin as James says. We tell ourselves 'well, maybe one e-mail to my old boyfriend won't matter...' or 'well, maybe one night out with these friends who I know have dragged me into sin before won't bother me this time...' or 'well, maybe God really doesn't mind he is a God of love right?'. When you find yourself thinking 'well, maybe...' about a sinful desire RUN! You are in a precarious place spiritually. Don't think about it a minute longer.

A trial is not the same as being tempted. The process of temptation brings death while the process of a trial brings life. If we find ourselves in trying circumstances because we have given into temptation, the solution is repentance. We should not claim to be in a trial when in reality the Scriptural laws of sowing and reaping are being played out in our lives. Our sin may bring a trial to someone else or likewise someone else's sin may bring a trial to us, but temptation is not at all the same process as a trial.

ASK: What are some safeguards that we can put in place in our lives to help guard us from giving in to temptation?

READ: James 1:16-18

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James concludes his teaching on trials & temptations with this beautiful picture of God's faithfulness. God does not change. He hung the stars and they have been in the sky since creation. This is a nightly testimony of His consistently faithful nature. God is not like us. He does not change from moment to moment. He is not one moment clear and understandable and the next moment hidden in shadow. During a trial, it may feel as if God has changed. That he is no longer the same. Don't be deceived! God only gives good gifts to those who are his. Not just good gifts but perfect gifts. Only He is able to bring about exactly what we need. He alone is perfect in intent and purpose. Trust Him through the process. Trying to figure it out yourself will only drive you crazy!