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Presentation Transcript
Salvation Plan Holy Days – Managing Trials - FOT
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Our topic today is *Managing Trials*. It was given in 2022 – September – in Sandestin, Florida at the Feast of Tabernacles.

We read in the Bible and see encouragement from the apostles and Jesus to put aside our anxieties and persevere in spite of o-

When a plane takes off, there's a checklist of things the pilot needs to think about *before* he takes off. Are there things that we need to check off to successfully pass through a trial? Yes, there are. And we're going to take a look at some of them today. We're going to build a trials checklist and we're going to look at *some* of them God shows us in the scriptures.

Let's start with something the apostle Paul said. It's in 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-4 – *...and we sent Timothy – he's talking to the people in the church at Thessalonica – our brother and coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions.* So, he'd been going through some trials and so had they. And then he says: *For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.* So, here Paul's rehearsing some history about a situation and he was worried that the trials they were experiencing would cause them to lose faith. That's a legitimate concern. We probably all know people who have forsaken the faith because of a trial. Then he says that being a servant of Jesus Christ does not mean smooth sailing. Not only do we have to experience time and chance, like everyone else, and not only do we cause ourselves trials through disobedience or foolishness – I guess disobedience is foolishness too, isn't it? – and not only does God, sometimes, send us trials, but we also, by being Christian, can come under persecution from non-believers. If we read the context, that's the kind of trial Paul was referring to. He continues in verse 4: *For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.*

So, what can we take from this? Well, I think the first thing we need to put on our checklist is that *trials happen to everybody*. Now, is there anyone here who didn't know that already? We all know that, so why is it important? Because if we *don't* know this, an entire collage of self-pitying thoughts can creep in. "I'm on my own." "God has abandoned me." "God isn't fair. He doesn't love me. He's punishing me." "This isn't supposed to be happening to me." Thinks like that.

So, let's move on to our next one and let's think about something else Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:8.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 – *For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. He wanted them to know what was going on with him. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.* Now, I know some people that God never tests us beyond our resources. That's not what happened to Paul. He said he was *way* beyond what he could do on his own. Then in verse 9, he says: *Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death* – that God had given him up to death. *But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.* "Kill us, but we're going to be alive again." Then he says in verse 10: *He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us* – He'll keep doing it. *On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*

So, he was in deep despair – in fear and anxiety – and yet God saved him. How did that change him? *On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.* See, God was teaching Paul to trust Him.

Peter sums this up as part of the Christian experience. Let's go to 1 Peter 1:6.

1 Peter 1:6-7 – *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

So, if we ever hope to be in that resurrection – be resurrected in that first resurrection that Christ says will occur at His return – trials are necessary. So, that's the second thing we want to put on our checklist.

Once again, have I said anything that can't be demonstrated out of the Bible – anything that you Bible-reading folks didn't already know? *Trials happen to everybody and they're necessary.* Okay? We know that, right?

Let's look at another one. It's in 2 Corinthians 12:7. Paul said:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations....* What's he talking about? Well, he tells us in other places that he spent three and a half years in the wilderness in Arabia, being taught directly by Christ. I guess that was to get him up to speed with the others. But he said he received a lot of revelations. So, to keep him from being conceited about that, he says: *...a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.* Okay. So, we're not really clear what that is – a thorn in the flesh. So, maybe it was some kind of ailment, or disability caused by the devil, but allowed by God. And he says: *Three times – in verse 8 – I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

2Co 12:10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. What are those things? Well, they're trials. *For when I am weak, then I am strong* – one of the great Christian paradoxes. When we are weak, then we can be strong in God, because we have to remember that He knows everything and we know nothing.

So, God told him that He wasn't going to heal him of that, or remove it from him. And being shown incredible revelations and being forgiven of his sins were big enough blessings. So, God is telling Paul to think about all the good things He has done for him, and learn to live with the thorns in the flesh, and get on with doing God's will.

So, *focusing on the blessings*, then, is the third thing that we need to focus on when we in a trial. Don't let that become the only thing you think about. When I do EMDR with people, and they were traumatized early in life, when they think back to the traumatic events, all they can think about is what's bad. But then, after they reprocess all of that and desensitize themselves to it, they look back and realize that it wasn't as bad as they thought, in some cases. So, God's telling us to do that ahead of time.

Okay, so did I say anything here that's heretical or contrary to the Bible? No. The idea of counting blessings is *not* new to anybody here. No. So, moving on, what's the next one?

Let's look in John 16: 33. John says:

John 16:33 – *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace."* This is John quoting Jesus. *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart. I have overcome the world."*

It's not only that God and Jesus Christ dwell in us by the Spirit – that they keep near to us – it's that they get us. They understand what it's like to be in our shoes. Jesus died the death of a criminal, falsely accused and even abandoned by His friends. He felt totally alone while He was up on that stake. So, He's the world's expert in trials. And yet, He pushed through His trial and overcame what the world threw at Him. He overcame the world in a resurrection from the dead.

God the Father and Jesus the Son understand the battle we fight better than we do. And if we know that, things will go better in an amazing way.

When Paul was in the trial that he was talking about earlier, it felt like God had sentenced Him to death. But that was *not* true! The truth was that *God was right there orchestrating the development of Paul's faith* – faith in God rather than faith in himself.

So, did I stretch anything there? Or, did you see that the Bible says that God is with us and involved in our trials, not way off somewhere, not too busy to be concerned. He has the ability to be concerned with everyone all at the same time, because He's outside of time. All right. So, put that on your list then.

So, for the fifth one, let's go back where we started today – with Paul telling the Thessalonians that he was worried that the trials he faced would cause them to lose faith – and the trials they were facing as well. 1 Thessalonians 3, starting in verse 2 – we read this already, but as a setup:

1 Thessalonians 3:2-3,5 – *...and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions.* But then, in next verse, he takes the discussion in a completely different direction. It's in verse 5: *For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.* Wow! So, he points out that the devil goes active when we're under trial. When people give up, it's because of his efforts. He's the one that causes us to give up on our trials.

Peter also talks about this in verse 5 of 1 Peter – sorry – 1 Peter 5:8:

1 Peter 5:8 – *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* Did you get the part about being *watchful*, instead of oblivious? Being spiritually educated, instead of being spiritually ignorant and unrefined.

Anyone in any kind of trial needs to know that they are vulnerable to the devil. What does he do when we're faced with a trial? How is it that he tries to get us to give up the faith? Does he cast a magic spell on us? Does he strike us with his scepter of evil? How does he do it? I covered this in a general way two years ago here, but research shows we don't remember that far back when it comes to sermons, so I'm going to rehearse a little bit with you. It's in John 8:44.

Jesus was talking to some people who didn't understand what He had said, and he said:

John 8:44-45 – *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.*

So, what can we learn from these two verses? Well, the devil is a liar. That's pretty clear. Believing his lies blinds us to the truth of God. He said, "Because I tell you the truth, you don't believe Me." We don't recognize the truth for truth, because we're believing Satan's lies. So, lies are his *weapon*! That's how he does it. He's a deceiver! He's always branded that way. He's not so much of a magician as he is just a deceiver.

Both God and devil consider people the devil's children when they choose to believe the devil's lies instead of God's truth. So, when we're in that situation, why doesn't God rescue us? Well, He doesn't rescue us because He's not a liar. He has promised us free will. And to rescue us, he'd have to stop us from thinking the way we're currently thinking and He doesn't do that. When we freely choose to believe the devil, God, by His own covenant with us, has to back off. And that leaves the devil with unrestricted access to us. God's not protecting us because we've chosen to believe the devil.

Here's what James says in chapter 4, verse 7:

James 4:7 – *Submit yourselves therefore to God.* So, how would you do that? Well, you'd believe what God tells you. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* So, how do you resist the devil? Well, you stop believing his lies! And then, he has to go! *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* Now, that last part – *purify your hearts, you double-minded* – notice how we're conflicted when we're in a trial. "I know I should trust God, but I've been in this trial for so long." Or, "I know God loves me, but why is He letting this happen to me?" This is a struggle between God's truth and the devil's lies. Who are you going to believe? So, we're told to purify our hearts. Get off the fence and get on God's side. Why? Well, that's how we resist the devil.

So, there's an example of how to do this in the Bible. It's Matthew 4, verses 1 through 11. Because it's so long, I'm going to paraphrase it for you instead of reading it all.

So, in Matthew 4, we see that Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And again, what are the devil's weapons? Lies. And he says to Jesus, "So, *if* you are the Son of God, command these stones become loaves of bread." What's the lie? It's in the word *if*. He's telling Jesus he doubts that He's the Son of God. Is that true? No! He jolly well knows who Jesus is. So, what's he trying to do? Well, in His weak and hungry state, he's trying to get Him to stop trusting God – go it alone, feed Himself. And Jesus knew that His strength was in God and not in fulfilling a wish of His own. So, He quotes a scripture that says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God." So, He just completely sidesteps the issue of *if you are God*, and tells him what everybody should do. So, He quoted a scripture to let the devil know the truth of His power – that it came from God.

Then the devil tried another one, and Jesus quoted another scripture at him. Then, finally, one last effort. He said, "I will give you the world if you will call me father." So, Jesus quoted a

scripture that says, “You shall love the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” So, what was He doing there? Well, He was refuting the devil’s subtle lie with the same truth that you and I already know. In the face of Jesus’ reliance on God, the devil had to leave. The world was *not* the devil’s to give. It was Jesus’. He came to take it back. So, He’s refuting the devil’s subtle lie. And once He did that, access to Jesus was denied to the devil. It says angels came and administered to Him. No more temptations. Did you get that? No more temptations. They were gone. If you’re tempted over and over, you need to figure out what lie you’re believing that allows the devil to tempt you.

So, who will you follow? Who will you believe? If you believe the devil, he owns you. You’re his child. He’s your father. If you believe God, the truth will set you free from the devil and from his lies and from sin. And, if you believe the truth, you already know about trials. The devil will have to stop tempting you. As Paul said, if we do that, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will be yours. Poof! Temptations gone. Did you ever wonder what Jesus meant when He said, “The truth will set you free?” Well, now you know.

So, we just saw four truths out of the Bible to help us successfully pass through a trial. Did you know that the devil has some specific lies, however, that he tells us to cause us to disbelieve those truths about trials? Let’s see what they are so we can resist them. Five lies – here they go:

God doesn’t care. If He did, He wouldn’t let all the people in the world suffer like they do. He wouldn’t let you suffer. So, what’s the truth about that? Well, let’s go to James 1:2. I mean, truth isn’t what I think or what you think. It’s what’s in the Bible, right?

James 1:2-4 - *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* Trials are not fun. They’re not supposed to be. But they’re good for us, if we know how to manage them. So, is God trying to destroy us? No! Just the opposite. He’s saving us from ourselves.

So, which way do you believe? Well, when facing a trial, check to see if you believe what God says about trials or what the devil says. You know, who’s your daddy? If it’s the devil, he owns you. If you stubbornly tell him the truth, God will reactivate your agreement with Him, and the devil will have to flee from you, because you are God’s child now. He *will* protect you. Who wouldn’t protect their child? God *does*!

Let’s read another scripture.

Luke 11:11-13 – *What father among you – this is Luke 11:11, by the way – if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

So, the trick is to be believing God and asking God for help instead of believing the devil's lies. He's not gone far off. He's right there with us. So, don't believe that God doesn't care. He's testing us for a purpose. It's all going to make things better. It will make us stronger.

Here's the second one: "God doesn't love me. If He did, He wouldn't let me suffer like this." You can almost hear the devil's words to Adam and Eve in that one. "You won't surely die. Come one. That's just God withholding the good stuff from you. You think He loves you? Look around." So, what scripture would you use to refute the assertion that God doesn't love you? How about John 3:16 – the most commonly known scripture in the entire Bible. I mean, if you can't pull that one up when you start thinking God doesn't love you, you need to read your Bible some more.

John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son* – are you in the world? Pinch yourself. Yes, you are! Are you human? Yes, you are. Then Jesus gave His life to cover your sins. Why? Because He loves you!

So, when we start thinking that God doesn't love us, we've gone back on our contract to believe God – what He clearly says about how He feels about us – and we become susceptible to the lies of the devil. So, the good news is, we're already only a thought away from believing God. If we say, "I know God loves me," then ask Him to protect us our adversary. He will set us free from faithlessness and from thoughts of despair. Thoughts of despair follow faithlessness. So the adversary is going to be denied to us if we access God. What a relief that's going to be!

Here's the next one: "God is punishing me. What did I do to bring this trial upon myself? God's punishing me. That's why He doesn't heal me or why my mate is leaving me. All this talk about grace is not true. He's getting even with me for stuff I've done." What's the truth? Let's look in Luke 13.

Luke 13:1-3 – *There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.* Trials are *not* punishment. He's not singling you out for punishment. It's not that God is punishing us, but that trials happen to everybody, converted or not. He's drawing us closer to Him. Or, giving us an opportunity to draw closer to Him by teaching us what we need to know to be closer to Him.

Let's look at another one: "God doesn't want to bless me." Have you ever caught yourself thinking that? What's the truth? Romans 5:8.

Romans 5:8-10 – *...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners* – when was that? Well, it's right now and it's all our lives – *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. So, He has blessed us with the greatest blessing that's ever been given to anybody any time. He has forgiven us our sins and redeemed us from the devil. So, how stupid is it, in the face of such truth, to believe that God doesn't want to bless us. The fact that the devil thinks he can give us disbelief ought to be an egregious insult to us after what we just read out of the scriptures.

Years ago, there was a man named Edgar Burgin. He was a ventriloquist for, I think, about thirty years – 1930 to about 1960. He had two puppets – dummies – Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd. He had others, but these are the main ones he had. Charlie McCarthy was sophisticated, intelligent. And Mortimer Snerd was really not the sharpest bulb in the package and sort of gullible. One day, in one of his comedy routines, Edgar asked Mortimer, "I can't believe you're so gullible." And Mortimer said, "Forth yourselth." He'd go around all the time, saying, "Yulp, yulp, yulp," just believing everything he heard. So, the next time you catch yourself thinking that God doesn't love you, just bring to mind the picture of Mortimer Snerd believing anything anybody tells him.

Here's the next one – this is the fifth one: "God isn't fair." Now, this one has to be the most ridiculous and insulting of all. I guess some could say God is unfair. He's letting us off the hook for all the sins we've committed, but that kind of *unfair* we like. Right? That isn't really unfair. It is fair. He did that, by the way, *before* we repented of them. He's forgiven us. And I've heard people say, "Just sins we've repented of are forgiven." No, He forgave us of all our sins *before* we even committed them and *before* we repented of them. He's forgave us all the hurt we've done to others and to ourselves. People who think that way usually are afraid God won't punish those who have done wrong to them. They don't know that God puts mercy ahead of judgment. And for each of us, with our long record of wrongs done and necessary good deeds undone, instead of saying, "God, give me justice," we should say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And that same standard is set for all of us. Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Could anything be more fair than that? Well, there is one who believes that. He's our adversary. And he loves it when we start thinking his way – that we can't be forgiven. He's always wanted us to be a part of his family, too.

So, I'm sure that most of us have heard others express these lies, or we've caught ourselves thinking them when we're in trials. They're everywhere. And we catch from each other. But for myself, until I realized that these thoughts were lies, I had little success in overcoming them or helping others who were in their grip. And once I started calling them what they are – lies – things started to change, just as Christ promised. When we are held captive by the devil in a trial, we need to remember what Jesus told us – "The truth will set you free."

So, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.