

***Question: Why does the Christian life sometimes become so difficult that we want to give up?***

Satan, the ruler of this dark world, is at the root of most of our troubles in this world (John 12:31-32; Ephesians 6:12). He uses every subtlety imaginable to undermine our faith and to seduce us away from our Lord. The apostle Peter wrote: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

However, Jesus came into our world and launched a major counterattack against Satan and his evil purposes. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus personally faced Satan's temptations and never gave in (Matthew 4:1-11). In the following three years, he provided proof that his power is greater than Satan's by casting demonic forces from their strongholds in human lives (Matthew 4:24; 8:16). Finally, Jesus took Satan's strongest blow in death on a Roman cross; but he gained victory over Satan through his resurrection from the dead. Now, through perseverance in faith we can also overcome Satan's attacks and gain eternal victory (1 Corinthians 15:55-58).

Closely associated with our efforts to overcome Satan's attacks is the human tendency to forget God and to attempt to handle difficulties by our own wisdom and strength (Mark 10:24-27). Jesus overcame the world (John 16:33) and offered his help to us saying: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). We have also been assured that "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1: Corinthians 10:13).

But there is also another side to our difficulties as Christians. Sometimes the Lord uses our trials in life to discipline and strengthen us (Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 12:1-11). Athletes have the saying "No pain, no gain" because they know that the difficulties of exercise make them stronger. The Hebrew writer said, "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” (Hebrews 12:11). We are also told that although Jesus “was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). Peter later added: “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” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Ultimately, each of us must decide whether to serve Jesus only because he keeps us from difficulties in life, or to serve him because he is the Son of God. Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15). He chose to trust in God instead of his own wisdom and power. Evidently he understood what the New Testament stated many years later, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). [Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12<sup>th</sup>, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: [www.nchrist.org](http://www.nchrist.org) ] 2014/06/06