

## Why do Christians face hardship?

Since Christ's First Coming, Christians (true believers) have endured / suffered terrible affliction and persecution, and this will continue until His Second Coming.

Although salvation is free, there is a definite cost, a high price to be paid, in terms of what a true believer must endure thereafter as he / she walks out their destiny in Christ.

Remember though, people said to Jesus that He had a devil in Him, an unclean spirit, that He was a deceiver, a liar, an illegitimate child, and a mad dog. This they said to God in the flesh, so don't be surprised at how you are treated! One becomes a Christian by believing, but discipleship produces suffering. If you are a born again believer, you will go to Heaven, but discipleship will result in you receiving rewards and crowns in eternity; crowns you can then place at the feet of Jesus.

All the New Testament writers, with the exception of John, laid down their lives for Christ. Matthew died from the wounds of a halberd, which in those days was a spear with an axe on the end. Mark was dragged through the streets by a team of wild horses until he died. Luke was hanged. The apostle John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, and although he survived the painful ordeal, he was disfigured for life and banned to the isle of Patmos. The apostle Paul, whom Christ loved dearly, was beheaded. Jude and Peter, were crucified. James was beaten to death with a fuller's club.

Even as true sons and daughters of the Most High God, until the Rapture we will still be compelled to deal with runaway crime, abortions, drug abuse, plagues, pestilence, A.I.D.S, wars, and rumours of wars, and especially an unprecedented hostility toward the Gospel and those true believers who make a stand for Christ.

Just as God gave Satan permission to test Job's righteousness, so too will He give permission for ours' to be tested. This is done to prove our faith and obedience, even in the face of trials, tribulations and hardships. We must continue to trust God, and love Him with all our heart and soul, even while suffering for reasons we don't understand.

*God was not punishing Job for some sin; he suffered because he was the best of men, not because he was the worst.* Satan challenged God, saying that if He took away Job's many blessings, he would reject Him and no longer serve Him. However, Job persevered despite Satan's best efforts (Job's herds and property were carried off by raiders or destroyed by natural disasters, a powerful wind killed his ten children, and he was afflicted with painful boils all over his body) to turn him against God. In the end Job was restored to health, with a new family and twice as much livestock.

Trials and suffering provide spiritual enrichment and build a deeper relationship between us and God. At the end Job had a much clearer perception of his Creator. But this new awareness was only a by-product of the real purpose of Job's suffering, which was the testing of his faith and love. God needed to know / discover something about Job, and Job needed to know / discover something about himself and about God. Job affirmed that God was still God, no matter what, and always worthy of our love, reverence and worship. That was the ultimate test on Job, and he passed it. He vindicated both himself and God by

remaining faithful. Job proved it is possible for us to love God unconditionally, just as God loves us unconditionally.

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