

The one who must face life's shattering experiences without faith is surely to be pitied.

— James E. Means. A Tearful Celebration. Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985. pp. 107, 109.

Jonathan Chao writes:

Before the Communist takeover there were many "rice Christians" in China. They joined the church for material benefit, like free education, free medicine and possibly church employment. Persecution separated the genuine believers from the false believers, who quickly denied that they were Christians. Persistent persecution has preserved the purity of the church because it has made it costly to confess Christ.

(p. 16)

True faith overcomes, wins through, endures trials. If faith is in ourselves or is self-generated, trials will defeat it. If it is in and from God, it will last. God sustains the faith He puts into our hearts, and perseveres until faith becomes sight.

## B. Is Suffering Then a Good?

If God uses suffering to accomplish His purposes in believers' lives, then is suffering a good, or is it transformed or transmuted into a good?

Let us recall a few basic scriptural facts:

- (1) Suffering came into this world because of mankind's original sin.
- (2) The five basic causes of suffering are all rooted in sin, whether original or individual.
- (3) Suffering is inflicted by God as a judicial punishment for sin.
- (4) Therefore suffering is not a good, nor one of God's good gifts, but an evil.
- (5) God often uses suffering to accomplish His purposes in believers' lives by overruling it for good. He brings good out of evil!
- (6) Even when God uses suffering for good, the suffering itself is still a result of sin and is still an evil, not a good. When God uses suffering for good, He is the source of good, not the suffering. Thus we should be grateful to Him for the good that He brings out of suffering, not to the suffering!