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## Scripturally understanding life's circumstances

Circumstances that we never planned on happening can result in our lives becoming a series of “peaks and valleys” over which we seem to have no control. A particular situation in life can either be a welcomed blessing or a nagging difficulty. Nobody ever complains about “something unexpectedly good” happening to them, so these events are almost never in need of dealing with on a mental or emotional level. Finding out that your rich uncle left you a sizable inheritance upon his demise is hardly a cause for worry. Nobody minds “good things” coming their way out of the blue. It is the other end of the circumstantial spectrum, the “curve balls of life” that people have trouble with, and of which there seems to be no shortage. What of these problematic circumstances? How does a Christian best handle some situation in life that can produce a range of anxieties from mild emotional discomfort to downright agonizing frustration? God's Word does offer great help in understanding how we are to view and deal with challenging circumstances.

Whatever the circumstance, and whatever it brings, a Christian who loves God knows that his/her relationship to all happenings in their life has a great purpose: “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*” (Romans 8:28) We are headed to a rendezvous with Jesus Christ, and life's tests purify us in a spiritual refinement for that day: “*Wherein ye greatly rejoice --- ye are in heaviness through manifold testings: --- the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold --- tried with fire --- unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*” (I Peter 1:5-7)

Difficult circumstances are like hurdles that God sometimes places before us to teach us how to jump or climb over them, and meet even more demanding obstacles as our faith increases. Whoever said that training was easy? Training to be victorious over the world requires patience: “*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.*” (Romans 5:3) For this reason the mature and experienced Christian realizes that trying circumstances should be met with thanksgiving just as are easier circumstances: “*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.*” (Ephesians 5:20)

Most likely none of us will ever suffer the way the apostle Paul did for the Faith. Yet with all that Paul endured for the King of kings, look at his solid attitude which he said that he learned from his life in Christ: “*Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” (Philippians 4:11-13) Paul indeed concluded that hard times are not a cause for anxiety (Philip 4:6,7).

God's plans for our victory over life's rough times can be seen repeatedly in the Scriptures. Let us read about these personal victories over impossible circumstances and be encouraged by God's living Word which He has given to us :

*Moses (Exodus 14:10-31) – Israel saved from Pharaoh's army*

*Shamgar (Judges 3:31) – 600 enemy killed with an ox goad*

*Hannah (I Samuel 1:1-20) – barren in her womb, gives birth to Samuel*

*David (I Samuel 17: 39-51) – David as a lad defeats the giant Goliath*

*Widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:8-16) – the widow in extreme poverty rescued*

*Peter (Acts 12: 5-17) – Peter freed from prison*

*Paul (Acts 14:19,20; 16:19-26) – survives being stoned by Jews*