

(continued from the front)

difficulty and pain.

Opportunity—In times of tragedy and suffering, two wonderful opportunities are presented to the people of God. Recognizing the value of these opportunities will help prepare us to face the difficulties and hardships of life.

First, through pain and suffering, we have the opportunity to become the people God wants us to be. Some things are not created immediately but are formed through a process. Listen to the words of James: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2–4; cf. Romans 5:3; 1 Peter 1:6–9).

Second, through pain and suffering, we have the opportunity to praise God and bring glory to Him. Days of suffering remind us of the days without, and of the God who is with us through them both. Let us never forget the opportunity presented to Paul and Silas on the night an earthquake opened the prison doors (Acts 16:26). They had a chance to convert a man and his household, whereby God was glorified (16:27–33). What gave them that chance? Was it not their attitude in the midst of their difficult circumstances (16:25)? Without the joy in their hearts and the praise on their lips, the jailer and his family may have never known Christ.

There is no belief that will remove the problems of life or safeguard us from having to deal with tragedy. However, through proper understanding and recognizing our opportunities, we can be prepared for whatever comes our way.

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### **Are You Ready for Trouble? (continued)**

Second, suffering is the result of natural laws, which our Creator put in place to order the universe (Genesis 8:22). While sunshine results in healthy crops, it can also cause sunburn. Water is vital to the lives of mankind, animals, and plants, but it can also lead to flooding or drowning. Fire brings warmth, but it can also destroy. Gravity makes life on earth possible, but when defied, it can lead to injury or death. God’s natural laws, which serve to protect, sustain, and bless mankind, can also lead to pain and suffering.

Third, suffering is a result of time and chance. Solomon wrote that “time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Time and chance suggest that not only will bad things happen to “good” people, but that good things will also happen to “bad” people. All people may suffer from being in the wrong place at the wrong time or from the choices and mistakes of others. Realizing these three factors will give us a better perspective amid

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