

James 1:2-4
“The treasure of trials”

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III. Introduction

“Count it all joy”, James urges! What a strange paradox he bids his readers when suddenly overwhelmed by misfortune. What James is not saying is that we should seek disaster or deny the pain and sorrow that they produce. Instead he says that we must regard such adversity as tests of our faith and pathways to our spiritual growth! The patience that they produce is not mere passive submission but steadfast endurance that of triumph trust! Every believer faces two pressures that will either causes us to behave like victims or victors, these two pressures are from two opposite directions outside and inside. Based upon the text from James they are:

1. Vs. 2-11 Trials from the outside

2. Vs. 3-18 Temptations from the inside

How we respond to these pressures will indicate whether or not we will grow in our relationship with Jesus. The Greek phrase “count it all joy” speaks to the believer considering and looking up and foreword past the present trial to the desired outcome our maturity. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4 (NKJV) “I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” This is not a call to “grin-and-bear-it”, there is NO masochistic character trait being suggested by James, he is not saying that we ought to be happy about tragedy and pain. The Christian life is not phony or put on; James’ words aren’t looking at the present to interpret the future but using the future to interpret the present! James is calling on Christians too: Look ABOVE the immediate unpleasantness of the trial and find joy in what God WILL ACCOMPLISH by it! One author put it, “Trials will either break you or make you. If you are not utterly crushed by them then you will be utterly enlarged by them!” The choice is yours!

V. Vs. 2 Character before comfort

Vs. 2 As noted last week we can expect “Coach James” not to mince words as he wrote this letter and the 2nd verse indicates just this fact. There are two things that jump out in James’ opening statement about the purpose of trials for followers of Jesus.

1. “Count it all joy”: Before James ever gets into the type of trial a person might be facing he lets his readers in on the biggest secret that ill respective of the type of trial will ensure that his readers will be 100% victorious and will become mature as a result of having gone through the trail. The word “Count” in the Greek is a financial term that means to evaluate, as such we are being told that we need to reassess the value of trials. James tells his readers how to win the battle before the fight! He informs the reader of these two powerful truths: “Outlook determines outcome” and “Attitude determines action”! Far too often we followers of Christ fail when trials come upon us because we didn’t have the right perspective upon them; we got our eyes upon the nature of the “various trial” instead of having our heart in the right place! All this time we have become overwhelmed at the size and shape of the trial when ALL we needed to be concerned about was our “outlook” ahead of the trial as that alone is the sole determination of the “outcome”! Our “attitude” will determine our “action”! James spends no time in telling you how to avoid the trial and everything in how to be more than conquers through Him who loves us! (Romans 8:37)

2. “When you fall into various trials”: The second point that “Coach James” wants his team to know is another big technique in being victorious over trials and that is their arrival is not about “IF” it is about “WHEN”! This truth reveals and then removes one of the biggest advantages trials have over us and its called “the element of surprise”! We may not be able to prepare for the type of trials we may face but as noted above that isn’t our biggest problem; our biggest problem is our outlook and attitude! What James is saying isn’t new he may have heard Jesus say it as we read in John 16:33 “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Paul gave the same truth to those newly saved in Acts 14:22 “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” James also

wants his readers to know several other truths about trials other than just to expect them:

a. "You fall into": Though we should expect "trials" the use of the word "fall" categorizes these trials not as a something that is caused by our own stupidity or something because of our sin nature that we manufactured but rather something that we Christians have come across and encountered. Peter said it this way in 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." I think that we can categorize what James is writing about into two distinct groups:

1. Personal: These kinds of trials are those that just happen to you because you are a human; things like being sick, accidents, disappointments and tragedies. They are personal in as much as you are a "person". We Christians didn't receive an immunization from Jesus when we trusted in Him as our Lord and Savior! There is NO inoculation with a syringe that will counteract any and all of the trials that come upon all humans. Life isn't fair and we above all should know that as we understand that we live in a sin-cursed world. We have all heard the question asked, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" But the question is stated wrong to start; people ought to be asking, "Why do bad things happen?" When they include, "To good people!" they are no longer asking the right question and they are stating an incorrect assessment of humanity! That is what Paul wrote in Romans 3:10-12 "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." "Bad Things", happen to humanity because we live in a sin-cursed world and we are sinners by nature and by choice! The only "GOOD Person, Jesus" came to reverse this!

2. Positional: These trials that happen towards simply because we are followers of Jesus, persecution, rejection and alienation, just to name a few. The truth of the matter is; Satan fights against us because of Jesus and because of this and his influence the world opposes us and both of these truths which makes our life a battle!

b. "Various trials": The word "various" means "varicolored" and is the same word Peter used in 1 Peter 1:6. The use of this word suggests a colorful yarn that someone would use to make a beautiful garment. It speaks of careful forethought and arrangement by God who mixes trials of life into something that is a fabric to not only be worn but one that adorns the person in God's glory. It is interesting to note that if you have ever seen the backside of a tapestry they are a chaotic jumble of knots woven into an unintelligent design, it isn't until we view it from the right side that we appreciate its design, beauty and craftsmanship of the artist. That is how we view our trials from the backside and unfinished, but when our lives are complete the trials will look far different as we will appreciate the beauty of the Master's work. It is interesting to note that according to Paul's testimony to the Philippians in Philippians 3:8 "He indeed counted all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." The things he thought were of greatest value were garbage and the things that he thought were garbage was a treasure.

The key to this change in our evaluation of trials is: We must value character before comfort! That is how "Outlook will determine outcome" and "Attitude will determine action"! Job's counsel in 23:10-11 was, "But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside." God is working all the events of our lives especially the ones that we don't understand! He is a refiner and the fire of trials separates the dross from the Gold of our faith! Usually we Christians "count it all joy when we ESCAPE various trials" not endure them! We all ought to learn the lesson of the oyster, who when irritated by a trial and something getting under its shell it covers it with its best part and makes a gem. Every pearl is simply a victory over irritation! The exhortation of verse 2 of "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" has its explanation in verse 3 and 4.

VI. Vs. 3 Three truths about trials

Vs. 3 The test of faith is that we find out that it works! We don't rejoice that trials come but we must rejoice in the possibility of the maturity they can produce. A trial is not something that is to be tolerated but by faith treasured because of what it will produce. This verse reveals to us that every Christian can know "THREE truths about trials" before we enter into one.

1. "Knowing that the TESTING OF YOUR FAITH": The first thing a believer can know is that "their faith is always going to be tested"! From Abraham the "father of faith" to you and I, God is always going to allow trials to come to us in order to bring out the best in us and cause us to grow in faith and trust towards Him. God always tests us not so that we will fail but in order to bring about the best in us! Our trials are not

arbitrary they are deliberate that's the first thing James wants his readers to realize that what is going on in their life isn't some random fait it is a deliberate action of God designed for a specific purpose, to cause you to grow more dependent upon Him, to move closer to His love, to rely more upon His power!

2. "TESTING OF YOUR FAITH": The second thing that you should know about trials also comes from this same words and that is that the testing is designed to work "FOR" your benefit not "AGAINST" your benefit. Put simply, God's tests are always designed for you passing not your failure. The word in the Greek for "testing" is one in which means to "assay" or approve. Peter used this idea in his letter of 1 Peter 1:7 saying, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The illustration both Peter and James employ is that of a prospector who would bring in a sample of the gold ore to the assayer's office who would test it by fire to determine the amount of gold verses the amount of trace metals that the ore has. The sample may not have much value but the approval by the official office would be worth millions as it would determine the true value on the mine! God's approval of our faith reveals whether or not it is genuine and pure!

3. "PRODUCES PATIENCE": The third thing James tells his readers about trials is that they are "positively productive". "Patience" in the Greek is a word that means "staying power" and James in verse 4 will use two words that describe this "staying power" saying that trials produce that is "perfect and complete" both describe a durability and endurance that trials will produce in the Christian. This "staying power" is key to every other blessing in the Christian life as we will need to learn to wait on the Lord. Psalm 27:14 tells us to, "Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" Endurance and patience can't be achieved by reading a book, lessoning to a message, it can only happen by Christians going through trials as we learn to trust Him in spite of our trials. The result of such endurance will be our maturity.

VII. Vs. 4 Under construction

Vs. 4 The final thing we will examine that James informs his readers about trials is that trails require our "PARTISIPATION"! God cannot produce maturity in us without our cooperation, if we resist His work in us through trials we will NOT mature! But if we submit it His work than we will be able to count the work all JOY as it will accomplish its work of maturity! God the "Master Craftsman" that He is wants a finished work, He never wants to leave His creation halfway finished, so if trails are happening you need to remember that He has a sign over you that says "Under Construction"! God's goal in your life in maturity, He doesn't want to see His children be elderly babies. Patience is not a passive word, it is not a resignation to whatever happens, it's a word that requires a tough commitment in the midst of extreme circumstances. Trails in the life of Christians refine our faith and strip away our talk reducing our words to TRUTH! The patience spoken here is best defined by what it produced in the early church as it wasn't the ability to bear things, it was the ability to take trials and be perfected by them seen in the great work of reaching world for His glory! Trials have two aims in our maturity described in verse 4:

1. Perfect: The word "perfect" in the Greek means to carry to the end our complete. Three times Paul asked that the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh and though the answer to his threefold prayer was not answered as he would have asked but he did realize a greater truth in as he writes in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that God's "grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." David said in Psalm 138:8 "The LORD will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands."

2. Complete: The word "perfect" refers to "complete in all parts" where as "complete" in the Greek refers to "perfected all over". These tow adjectives often appear together in the New Testament. "Lacking nothing" is a negative statement that is proceeded by a positive. This statement of completeness from James speaks of the sum total of all of us being whole. It informs us that it is possible for the believer in Christ to be fully grown in some areas of their life and yet still be immature in others.

What are we to do when facing trials that overwhelm us? Perhaps the words found on this poster may offer a solution as it read: A prayer to be said when the world has gotten you down and you feel rotten, and you're too tired to pray and your in too big a hurry to bow your knees and besides all of that you're to mad at everybody to ask them to pray for you.....HELP GOD!

We get a view of this passage that appeared in A poem that first appeared in Oswald Sander's book attributed

to an unknown author,

“When God wants to drill a man and thrill a man and skill a man, when God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part; when He yearns with all His heart to create so great and bold a man that all the world shall be amazed, watch His methods, watch His ways! How He ruthlessly perfects whom He elects! How He hammers him and hurts him, and with mighty blows converts him into trial shapes of clay which only God understands; while his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands! How He bends but never breaks when his good He undertakes; how He uses whom He chooses and with every purpose fuses him; by every act induces him to try His splendor out-----God knows what He’s about!”