

# The Christian's Joy in Trials and Temptations

James 1:2-4

## Introduction:

1. Have you ever had a totally lousy day? I read about a man who was sitting in a bar, looking at his drink. He stayed like that for half-an-hour. Then, a big trouble-making truck driver stepped up next to him, grabbed the drink from him, and gulped it down in one swallow. At that, the man burst into tears. The truck driver said, "Come on man, I was just joking. Here, I'll buy you another drink. I just can't stand to see a grown man crying." "No, it's not that." The guy said, "Today day is the worst of my life. First, I overslept and was late to an important meeting. My boss was outrageous and he fired me. When I left the office, I discovered my car had been stolen, and the police said there was nothing they could do. I took a cab home, and as he drove off I realized I left my wallet in the back seat of the taxi. I thought it couldn't get any worse, but when I walked into my house I found my wife in the arms of another man-and she told me to leave. So I stopped by a chemical store, and then came here. I've been sitting here thinking about taking my life...when you come in and drink all my poison!"
2. The storms in our lives are designed to show the sufficiency of the Lord
3. How else would the world see the glory of God in our lives if we were never tested, tried or tempted?
4. We would never know wherein our strength lies if we were never in the whirlwind of temptation or tribulation.
5. But nobody enjoys trails and temptations
6. Sometimes God helps us by allowing us to be hurt.
7. God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. I often think of a sculptor sitting down before a chunk of marble. On the outside, the marble looks ugly and unformed. But the sculptor sees something beautiful inside that hunk. So with hammer and chisel, he begins to chip away. For many weeks he shapes, cuts, and polishes, until, little by little, an image emerges from the stone. On and on he works never stopping until the sculpture is complete. What was once ugly is now a thing of beauty. Even so the Lord takes the hammer and chisel of human suffering to shape us into the image of Jesus Christ. And in those moments when we feel that God has simply hammered us into the ground, we discover later that nothing was done in anger, nothing in haste, but everything was according to His plan so that, in the end, we might be beautiful like Jesus Christ Himself. The most beautiful people I know are those who have been through suffering and have come through it with their faith in God intact.

## I. "Count" – The Emotional Response – vs 2

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

### A. A Term of Evaluation – "Count"

#### 1. "Count"

- a) "Count" - financial term - it means to evaluate, reckon, consider
- b) When Paul became a Christian he evaluated his life, set new goals and priorities
- c) When we face the trials of life we need to evaluate them in light of what God is doing for us
- d) This is difficult since our nature resents trials and troubles
- e) We see trials as obstacles - we rebel against trials
- f) We need to count trials as positive and beneficial rather than negative and harmful

#### 2. "Joy"

- a) We are to have joy in the midst of our trials
  - (1) **Heb 12:2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
  - (2) **Ro 5:3** And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; **4** And patience, experience; and experience, hope:
- b) James viewed trials as occasions for joy because they were designed by God to produce patience, leading to maturity
- c) We are not happy for the trial itself, but we have joy in what the trouble produces in us
- d) If we value comfort more than character then trials will upset us
- e) If we live for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better
- f) If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to "count it all joy"
- g) We need to look at trials through the eyes of faith
- h) God chooses what we go through, we choose how we go through them.

### B. Trials are Universal – "when"

1. Not "if" but "when" we fall into trials
2. We should expect trials
3. Book of Job says that man is of few days and full of trouble - 14:1
4. Believers who expect the Christian life to be easy will be disappointed
5. Jesus warned, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" - Jn 16:33
6. One pastor had a sign on his door: "If you have problems, come in and tell me all about them. If you don't have any problems, come in and tell me how you avoid them."

### **C. Trials are Varied – “diverse”**

1. The original word means to put something to the test to examine
2. Some trials come because we are human - Sickness, accidents, disappointments, tragedies
3. Some trials come because we are Christians
  - a) *Satan opposes us*
  - b) *The world fights against us*
4. God can use stress, difficulties, trials or suffering in our lives to strengthen and mature our faith
5. Paul stresses the content of the Christian life while James stresses the exercise of the faith in real-life situations. These two writers highlight two sides of the same coin.

## **II. “Knowing” – The Intellectual Response – vs 3**

**3** Knowing [this], that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

### **A. Faith Will Be Tested – “trying”**

1. James wanted us to know some things in the midst of our trials / temptations
2. Trials, sufferings, temptations will enter our lives, but that is not the time to lose courage
3. Abraham was tested by the Lord in [Gen 22](#)
  - a) *God told him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice*
  - b) *God had never done this before*
  - c) *It had taken God so long to give him the son of promise and now God wanted Abraham to offer him*
  - d) *In simple faith, Abraham obeyed God, knowing that God would raise him up again*
4. God tests us to bring out our best - Satan tempts us to bring out our worst
5. God's approval of our faith is precious, because it assures that our faith is genuine

A boy entered a grocery store and asked the clerk for some Tide detergent. The clerk was puzzled and asked why he wanted Tide. The boy said that he was going to wash his cat. The clerk said, “Young man, you shouldn’t wash your cat with this kind of soap.” However, the boy insisted that the cat would be ok.

A few days later the boy returned and the clerk asked about the cat. “Oh, he died,” said the boy. The clerk replied, “I tried to tell you not to use that kind of soap on the cat.”

“The soap didn’t hurt him a bit. It was the spin cycle that got him.” It is often the spin cycle of trials that gets us.

## **B. Trials Rightly Used Develop Patience in Us**

1. "Worketh"
  - a) *Refers to work done to finish an article*
  - b) *Trials are used of God to make us complete*
  - c) *God wants to produce patience, endurance and persistence in us*
2. "Patience"
  - a) *Literally, patience is being able to abide under pressure*
  - b) *God tests us in order to help us build our endurance*
  - c) *God's purpose is to grow us - Phil 1:6*

**6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:**
  - d) *God wants to make us patient for that is the key to the other spiritual blessings*
3. One preacher said..." I didn't like tests in high school. I didn't like them because I wasn't prepared for the tests. In college, it was a different story. I don't know what it was - maybe maturity, maybe it was because I was paying for my college education, I don't know why the change happened. In college, tests became a good thing. They became a way for me to prove my learning. The tests became a way to prepare me for the final exams that were to come. They became an important part of my learning and growing. Seeing them in this new way made me want to prepare for them properly and preparing well allowed me to pass them successfully. Perhaps this is the way that we need to approach the tests of life, the storms of life.
4. Importance of patience
  - a) *Abraham ran ahead of God, married Hagar and brought great sorrow to his home*
  - b) *Moses ran ahead of God and killed a man and had to spend 40 yrs in the desert learning patience*
5. Patience cannot be learned by reading a book - we need trials and trusting God
6. George Matheson was engaged to be married. His eyesight began to decrease and doctors gave him the bad news that he was going blind. His fiancé learned of his blindness and did not want to marry a blind man so she broke off the engagement. Through this trial Matheson maintained the proper attitude. He prayed that he might accept God's will "not with dumb resignation, but with holy joy; not with the absence of murmur, but with a song of praise." This identifies the victorious attitude reflected in the word "patience".

O love that will not let me go -- I rest my weary soul in thee  
I give Thee back the life I owe, -- That it Thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

### III. "Let" – The Volitional Response – vs 4

4 But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

#### A. Trials Have a Perfecting Work

1. Because the trying of one's faith leads to positive results, James tells his readers to allow patience to have her perfect work
2. "Perfect (perfecting) work"
  - a) *Not sinlessly perfect but mature*
  - b) *God uses trials / temptations to bring us to spiritual maturity*
3. God works for us - salvation
4. God works in us - sanctification
5. God works through us – service

#### B. God's Plan for Us – Perfect, Entire, Wanting Nothing

1. "Perfect" - mature, fully developed - teleion - coming to an end
  - a) *Perfect is the same word used for the finish line marker on which the Olympic runner kept his eye*
  - b) *It is a tragedy when a child fails to develop and it is just as much a tragedy when believers fail to mature*
2. God builds character before He calls to service
3. He must work in us before he can work through us
  - a) *God worked 25 yrs in Abraham's life before giving him the promised son*
  - b) *God worked 13 yrs in Joseph's life before allowing him to be second in command in Egypt*
  - c) *God spent 80 yrs preparing Moses for 40 yrs of service*
  - d) *A surrendered will is a mark of maturity*
4. The mature believer does not argue with God's will, he accepts it willingly and obeys it joyfully
5. "Entire" -Something that is complete in all its constituent parts
6. "Nothing wanting" - not to lack anything, not to be in need, not to experience defeat

#### Conclusion:

##### 1. Shepherd and sheep illustration

A lady was visiting in Switzerland. On one of her daily walks she came upon a shepherd and some sheep. The shepherd was seated on the ground with a sheep on a pile of straw. The sheep appeared to be suffering and she looked closely and saw that it had a broken leg. Her sympathy went out to the suffering animal, so she asked the shepherd how it happened. "I broke it myself," said the shepherd sadly. He then explained, "Of all the sheep in my flock, this was the most wayward one. It would not obey my voice and would not follow when I was leading the flock. On more

than one occasion it wandered to the edge of a cliff. Not only was the sheep disobedient, but it often led other sheep astray. When this leg heals this sheep will be a model sheep in my flock. No other sheep will hear my voice so quickly nor follow me so closely. Instead of leading the others astray, it will be an example of devotion and obedience. It will have learned obedience through its sufferings.” Many times the picture is the same with us. Through your trials and suffering, God may be seeking to teach you obedience. He gives us enough tears and sorrow to keep us tender, enough hurts to keep us compassionate, enough failure to keep our hands clenched in His, and enough success to make us certain that we’re walking with Him.

2. He’s still workin’ on me – to make me what I ought to be.

It took Him just a week to make the moon and stars, the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars.

How loving and patient He must be

Cause He’s still workin’ on me.

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