

J.J.

TRIED AND TESTED

James 1 : 1-4

James 1: 1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

PRAY

INTRODUCTION

During the time of the Great Depression, the story is told about two wives who were doing their laundry in a laundry mat. They were both mending their husband's pants.

One wife said, "My husband is so miserable. Nothing goes right at work, and he can't find anything good on television. Our home is a place of despair. When we go to church, the song leader is terrible and the pastor is an idiot.

The other wife said "My husband is so excited." He can't wait to go to church. He loves the sermons. We laugh all the time and enjoy our family.

It got very quiet in the laundry room as the women continued sewing the pants. One was patching the seat of the pants, and the other was patching the knees.

Source: Unknown

Quick background on the Letter of James

1. This is addressed to his fellow Christians. *my brothers*

Etymology : "adelphos" brethren, same parents or used by Christians to describe their fellow believers. We all have the same Father in heaven as written in *John 1:12-13*

2. These Christians were Jews who became followers of Christ

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:*

This is the half-brother of Christ but he describes himself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is addressing this *To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:*

Dispersion – diaspora- you have to remember that in the beginning of Acts, the first Christians were Jews and they were all in Jerusalem until they were persecuted and they were forced to flee to different parts of the known world at that time to escape it.

Note: This means James was writing to people who were undergoing extreme trials.

Imagine: The government suddenly says, “All people who have a Filipino heritage whether born here or not, will be taken into custody by the government and their properties taken away effective immediately.” Then when you go to Ocean’s and people see you and knows you as a Filipino drags you outside and lynches you. And then you know, some of your Filipino friends, They poured gasoline on them and set them on fire. Or they would just run over them with cars. Or they would just get steel pipes and beat them What would you do? You would bring your whole family out of Canada as soon as possible.

That’s what happened on why there was a Dispersion. Christians were crucified, fed to wild animals, burned as torches for lighting...

What was the purpose? Why did God allow that to happen?

*Acts 8:4 But the believers who were scattered **preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.***

*Acts 11:19 Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. **They preached the word of God, but only to Jews.***

Illustration : Imagine a paper and you burn it in the middle, the fire spreads out quickly to the outer parts of the paper. This is how the gospel spread so quickly to other nations because they were persecuted in Jerusalem and forced to scatter.

Again, remember **they were scattered because they were being persecuted.**
You see, God uses even the seemingly tragic situation for His glory.

Etymology : preached ; euggalizeo instead of didaskelio
Euggalizeo means sharing the good news instead of declaring it.

Remember, when you are a true follower of Jesus Christ and God allows trials in your life, **one of the main reasons He is allowing that is for people to know who Jesus Christ is.**

THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER OF JAMES is to show what true faith is all about.

James was showing to his brothers, **that a person who has true saving faith in Jesus Christ will result into good works. It will show in his life.**

James 2:14 What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

19 Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do.

22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

That's why with James, he starts by conveying to his readers that a person with true faith will show it during times of trials.

Biblical Illustration : You remembered how God allowed Satan to test Job. Job's wealth was taken away and then their children...he continued to praise God. And then his health was taken away. Even his wife, who can't stand to see his husband suffer so much said to him already.

Job 2: 9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Remember, integrity, "tummah" in Hebrew, means completeness. It means that his words, actions and his beliefs are one and the same.

The wife of Job was saying : Do you really still believe on who God is?

Quote : "Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace." — Oswald Chambers

Now let's talk about the trials first :

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds

Etymology :

Trials "peirasmos" - it's a test of integrity (testing of your belief);
various "poikolos" diverse (KJV) different colors

Isn't that what trials in our lives are all about? It has different colors. Sometimes our trials will be relationship problems, or financial, or emotional or it's our health or job and etc. These are all different kinds of tests.

QUOTE : In the end, say it with me, "A trial is a test of my faith"

That's why James said, "*trials.... Testing of your faith*"

So now when our faith is being tested, what are the things we should look out for?

We should watch out for our reaction to trials, the reason behind trials and the result of trials.

I. OUR RESPONSE TO TRIALS.

One of the hardest things when you are undergoing trials is the anxiety and the stress that it produces. You can't sleep at night or your heart is palpitating or it affects your mood. In short, your emotions take over. **THAT'S THE NORMAL THING!**

ILLUSTRATION : Whenever I'm stressed... BACKACHE

Now look at the reaction that God is asking us to do when we meet trials.

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

Joy is not a natural reaction to trials. It is a supernatural reaction.

Why do I say this? It's because joy is a result of God's presence in our lives.

Psalm 16:11 ... in your presence there is fullness of joy;

Quote : Joy is the flag which is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there." – Robert Rainey

Illustration : You will know if King Charles is currently in the palace when the flag is raised up there.

Joy is a fruit of God's presence...that's why it's the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control

That's why the Psalmist was able to say :

Psalm 94:19 When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.

Now what is the command when we are undergoing trials? "Count..." *Consider it all joy*

Etymology : Count, consider "hegeomai" it means to be a leader; to rule, to command. This word is used for any kind of leader or commander.

In short, God is telling us to take command of our anxiety, of our emotions, our nervousness and etc. Our rebellious nature tends to wreak havoc on our emotions when we have problems. We tend to be "all over the place." We need to rule over that

Illustration : Military training when I was young and I was really "malikot". The sergeant had to go down and discipline me so I will just "be still"

But how are we going to take control of our anxiety or emotions.

Count it all joy

How? By considering, what's the reason behind these trials.

II. THE REASON BEHIND TRIALS

Why? It's because we know God has a purpose for our trials.

for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

The reason behind our trials is to produce steadfastness.

What is steadfastness? Perseverance?

Etymology : Hupomone, means to remain; to abide.... To remain steady... "steady ka lang"...cool ka lang...chill

In short, the REASON BEHIND our trials is that so we will continue to abide and remain in Christ.

Illustration : There was this hawk and there's this squirrel. The hawk was trying to get to the squirrel but the hawk can't catch him at the side of the tree and the squirrel will just run always to the tree and the hawk won't get him.

LISTEN CAREFULLY : Remember again, the letter of James intends to tell his fellow believers what it means to have true faith.

And a person who has true faith will cling more to Christ when trials come into their life and that's why he can "count it all joy". He can now be sure that his faith is real because the result of this trial is for him to cling more to Christ instead of pulling him away from Christ.

My Favorite Quote : It doesn't matter what the pressure, what matters is where the pressure lies – Hudson Taylor

In short, it doesn't matter what the problem is whether it's a financial problem, or health problem or relationship problem what matters most,

Does this problem bring me closer to God or farther away from God?

If trials tend to bring us closer to God, then it means we are practicing true faith.

Trials and sufferings have a way of making us cling to God more because we tend to forget Him or just take Him casually when everything is fine and dandy.

AGAIN, THIS IS THE REASON WHY WE CAN COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN THERE ARE TRIALS BECAUSE THE PURPOSE OF THAT IS TO MAKE US ABIDE MORE AND CLING MORE ON OUR LORD.

That's why Paul said while writing in prison

Philippians 4: 3 Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again, Rejoice!"

Why?

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Gentleness - a person who is anxious, stressed or worried will have no gentleness. It seems that their life is not under control but we can rejoice knowing that "The Lord is near...at hand." He's just there. Or we have the hope that He will be coming back again soon.

And the trial's purpose is for us to remain steady in Christ.

III. THE RESULT OF TRIALS.

AND WHAT IS THE RESULT IF WE REMAIN STEADY IN CHRIST?

4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If we put our trust in the Lord, what it produces is completeness. That's what Christians know as "shalom"

Shalom means "completeness, lacking nothing"

This is the reason Psalm 23 started with ...

Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. (NIV)

That is the true meaning of peace.

And why do we have peace? It's because we know that God is in WITH US.

Quote : Peace is not the absence of challenges. Peace is in the presence of Christ.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, FOR YOU ARE WITH ME."

Listen carefully : And the more our lives go deeper in Christ, the more we experience that completeness.

THE CUSHION OF THE SEA : A submarine was being tested and had to remain submerged for many hours. When it returned to the harbor, the captain was asked, "How did the terrible storm last night affect you?" The officer looked at him in surprise and exclaimed, "Storm? We didn't even know there was one!" The sub had been so far beneath the surface that it had reached the area known to sailors as the cushion of the sea. Although the ocean may be whipped into huge waves by high winds, the waters below are never stirred. The Christian's mind will be protected against the distracting waves of worry if it is resting completely in the good providence of God. There, sheltered by His grace and encouraged by His Holy Spirit, the believer can find the perfect tranquility that only Christ can provide.

CONCLUSION :

We have to remember God is not interested in mediocre faith...He is in interested in producing quality faith.

How do we know that something is quality...IT IS TRIED AND TESTED!!! That's why there's a quality control area in any manufacturing company.

It's the same with our faith. It must undergo quality control.

So who does the quality control? OUR FATHER GOD HIMSELF.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

This is the reason why we can be joyful when undergoing trials. It's because we know God is perfecting us. And once we have been tried and tested, what happens?

James 1:12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Now here's our comfort when we are undergoing trials

STORY : In the 1800s, a group of women met to study the Bible in Dublin. They were puzzled by the words of Malachi 3:3, "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." One of the ladies promised to call on a silversmith and report to them what he said on the subject. She went accordingly and without telling the object of her errand begged to know the process of refining silver which he fully described to her. "But Sir," said she, "Do you sit while the work of refining is going on?"

"Oh yes, Madam," replied the silversmith, "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace. For if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver is sure to be injured."

At once she saw the beauty and comfort of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Christ sees it needful to put His children into the furnace, but He is seated by the side of it. His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and His wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for His children. Their trials do not come at random.

As the lady was leaving the shop the silversmith called her back and said he had still further to mention that he only knew when the process of purifying was complete by seeing his own image reflected in the silver. When Christ's image is reflected in us His work of purifying is accomplished.

Source: The Mother's Magazine, Volume 3, A. G. Whittelsey

That's the comfort : While we are undergoing trial, like the refiner, our Lord is closely watching us.

“Is your faith right now being tried and tested?” Don’t worry, God Himself will make sure about the quality and He does it with the guidance of His loving hands.

Why would He do that?

1 Peter 1:7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

And this is the reason why we can rejoice in the midst of trials. Why? It’s because God is using this for the glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And isn’t this the highest calling?

S.G.D.