

A FAITH THAT WORKS

(A Study of the Book of James)

Joy in Trials, Really?

TEXT: James 1:2-4

INTRODUCTION: I have prizes to give away this morning. Who wants one?

Maybe you should know what's in them.

- I call these my “trial” prizes.
- No not “trial size” prizes – “trial” prizes
- When you get one of these, you get a trial
 - Like this one says – SALARY CUT BY 15%, anybody want this one?
 - Here's another – LOSE JOB
 - HAVE WRECK IN CAR
 - AIR CONDITIONER MUST BE REPLACED AT HOME
 - Here's one for students – FLUNK NEXT TEST, somebody want this one?
 - Hey, you better hurry and take these; the rest are worse.
 - RELATIVE TO BE PARALYZED FOR LIFE
 - RECEIVE DIAGNOSIS OF TERMINAL ILLNESS

Ok, we've done the full disclosure thing, so who wants some of the trials I have to give away today?

What? No takers?

Gee! I must have misread what it says in James.

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

No, I didn't misread it. But we do need to pay attention to the precision with which the Holy Spirit inspires these words given to James.

- He does not say that trials are joyful.

- He doesn't say we should desire trials, or pray to have more.
- He doesn't say we should volunteer to receive them.
- In fact, he says we fall into various trials. We don't jump, trying to land in the midst of trials; we fall into them.
- And the instruction "count it all joy when you fall into trials" is in the imperative. It is a command.
 - It would not be a command if it were something we did naturally or automatically.
 - It's not descriptive of normal reaction, even for a very devoted Christian.
 - Wives, would you think your husband was a Super Christian if you called him and told him the transmission just went out on the car and he said, "Wonderful. I was praying for something bad to happen today"?
 - No, you would think he was crazy.
- No, if the trial itself was joyful, it would not be a trial.
- There would be no need for a command to "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials."

But there is the command.

- We don't have to volunteer for trials.
- We don't have to pretend to enjoy the trial itself.
- But we are told that after we fall into a trial, that we are to count the experience as a joyful one.
- We are to consider the experience of the trial as a joy.
- When we get through it, we are to look back upon it as something good.

How do we do that? Why should we do that?

Hopefully the Spirit who inspired the command will share with us God's reasoning. Let's read the rest of the passage.

James 1:2–4 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

And the Holy Spirit does not disappoint us.

He gives us two insights into the ways of God about trials.

He gives us one further instruction that will cause us to count trials as joy.

I. TWO INSIGHTS

A. Trials test our faith.

1. Trouble and trials test a lot of things:

- Our language
- Our self-control
- Our emotional stability
- But most of all, trials test our faith
 - Do we really believe God is in control with this thing happening. I mean, how did this slip by Him?
 - Do we really believe God will supply all our needs when we just lost 50% of the house-hold income?
 - Do we really believe that God cares for us if we are not getting well?
 - Do we believe He is walking through the valley of the shadow of death when our heart still aches over our loss day and night?
 - Trouble, trials, test our faith.
 - Just ask Job. Just ask each other.

2. So, what good is that? What good is it that trials test our faith?

a. If we pass the test, God is glorified.

- If you can say, losing my job is awful, but I still trust God in this, your Lord is honored by your words.
- If you can have a dreaded disease, and even while admitting you don't know if you will be made well in this world, you still can say to others, I trust God. He is with me in this. God in heaven takes note of your testimony. He is glorified.

- If while you are in the middle of the trial you say, “This is awful, awful, awful,” but you can add “but God is going to get me through this.” God is pleased and blessed by your faith.
- He is glorified when we pass the test.
- b. If we fail the test, God will help us grow.
 - The first thing that must happen to grow our faith is to recognize a need for our faith to be stronger, for our faith to be larger than it is.
 - When trials come and we only meet them
 - with frustration
 - with anger
 - with bitterness
 - with despair
 - instead of trust, confidence, in God and what He is going to do,
 - Our eyes are opened to the fact that our faith is small and weak.
 - Even in this, there is opportunity to glorify the Lord by
 - Repenting
 - Asking God to increase our faith.
 - Asking God to strengthen our faith.
 - This is a prayer God will answer. This is in His will. God wants our faith to grow. God wants our faith to strengthen.
 - If our faith grows in the trial, God again is glorified.

Second insight the Spirit offers us:

B. Trials produce perseverance. The word here means more than just a willingness to wait without complaining which is how we usually understand patience.

The word here means **steadfast endurance**.

God wants us to have a steadfast faith rather than a faltering faith.

- Which kind of faith do you think glorifies God the most?
- Which kind of faith blesses you and blesses others the most?

- Of course. A steadfast faith is better for us and honors God. That is why He wants us to have it.

God wants us to have a persevering faith rather than temporary faith.

- Which kind of faith do you think glorifies God the most?
- Which kind of faith blesses you and blesses others the most?
- Of course. A persevering faith is better for us and honors God. That is why He wants us to have it.

DAVID’S FAITH WAS A PERSEVERING FAITH.

A. David’s faith was a faith that carried him through the toughest times of life.

1. David was a man who knew what tough times are like. Listen ...
 - There were years in David’s life that he owned no more than the clothes on his back.
 - He was so hungry he had to beg bread from the priests of the tabernacle.
 - He was being hunted like a fox although he had never raided the hen house.
 - He had to roam the country like a mongrel dog, not knowing where the next kick would come from.

But if David were here with us this morning and we asked him about those days when he could not even go to the home of his parents for fear of bringing death to their door, he would say to us, “Oh yes, those were some difficult days, but not the worst. No, there were days, there were months, there were years worse than that by far.”

B. David’s most difficult and pain filled years came in the years of his life as the King of Israel.

Ron Dunn used to say, “**The trains of triumph and tragedy often run on parallel tracks, and they usually arrive about the same time.**” (Ron Dunn)

1. Karen and I have found this to be true.
2. David certainly found it to be true.
 - a. The years that David reigned as King over God’s Chosen People, we would expect to be good years, pleasant years. This is especially true when we think of all that God gave to David, a man the Lord described as a man after His own heart.
 - b. Both David and his nation were tremendously wealthy.

- c. Israel was victorious in war and in the latter years of his kingship, David ruled over a victorious kingdom.
- d. David's health was good until the very last years of his long life.

Health

Wealth

Power

Peace

What more could a man desire? The train of triumph stopped in David's backyard. But so did the train of tragedy.

During these years,

David's infant son died.

Health

Baby died

Wealth

Power

Peace

His daughter was raped by his son.

Health

Baby died

Wealth

Daughter raped

Power

Peace

That son was murdered by his half-brother.

Health

Baby died

Wealth

Daughter raped

Power

Son murders son

Peace

His favorite son rebelled against him, stole the hearts of the people of Israel from their king, and then was killed.

Health

Baby died

Wealth

Daughter raped

Power

Son murders son

Peace

Son rebels and is killed

3. I mentioned that my wife Karen and I have found this to be true as well. This has happened several times in our lives, but I remind you of one most of you know about.

We were talking with the Search Team about coming here as your pastor. We were excited at the prospect. All was going well. About to meet again with the search team.

Hurricane Katrina struck.

Church I was pastoring went under water. Third of the congregation had major damage. Local economy destroyed. I had to call team and say, "I can't come to the meeting and I don't know when we can get things fixed here, but I can't come be with you until everything is right here, so just move on in your search."

Triumph and Tragedy, Victory and Trial, often arrive about the same time.

At least one of the reasons that is true is because God wants to develop in us a persevering faith.

- **It glorifies God.**
- **It blesses us.**

II. ONE FURTHER INSTRUCTION TO HELP US COUNT TRIALS AS JOYS

James 1:2–4 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Let's put in the word we learned in place of patience.

4 But let **PERSEVERANCE** have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

If we will allow our trials to produce a persevering faith in us, that persevering faith will grow and develop us more and more. Listen to

Romans 5:3–4 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

When we have met trials with faith, and our faith perseveres, and through it God develops character, and gives to us lasting hope,

Then we can count it all joy when we fall into various trials.