

Sunday, February 9, 2024 pm

## STUDIES IN JAMES (2)

### Concerning Trials (1)

#### James 1:1-4

Tonight, we will begin addressing the text of the book of James. In our last lesson we introduced this general letter. We noted that it was likely written to Jewish brethren who had scattered from Jerusalem/Judea after persecutions. The most likely author was James, the half-brother of Jesus who became a pillar in the church at Jerusalem (cf. Galatians 1:19, 2:9, etc.). It is a letter of practical instructions on how to live as Christians in a society that was resistant or hostile to Jesus and the truth. Today, we begin with James' first subject – dealing with trials.

#### I. Some introductory observations (1:1-2a)

- a. A bondservant
  - i. James described himself as *a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is the only author to use this introduction. Paul, Peter and Jude all described themselves as bondservants of Jesus Christ. Only James mentions both Father and Son.
  - ii. The concept of a bondservant is significant because it means that you belong to the one you are serving. We know that we are to be servants of Christ (Romans 6:16-18, 22).
- b. To the twelve tribes scattered abroad. We addressed this in our introductory lesson. Shortly after the church began, so did persecutions. Acts 8:4 describes their Jewish brethren being scattered and taking the gospel with them.
- c. **Greetings** – from the Greek, χαίρω (chairō) and means to greet with happiness and health. It is associated with rejoicing and gladness (of the 74x it is found in the NT, 46 are *rejoice* & 15 are *glad*). The welcome is brief and the only epistle that begins with this greeting. However, it is also the “greeting” of Acts 15:23 – the letter composed by the apostles & elders of Jerusalem to their brethren in Antioch. NOTE: This makes another argument for James, the brother of Jesus as our author.
- d. **My brethren** (1:2). James references his audience as his *brethren*. There is a bond, akin to a familial bond that is present, and he recognizes it. Some 15 times in this letter, he refers to them as brethren. This is a reminder of relationship. We are to treat each other as family!

#### II. Dealing with trials (1:2-8)

- a. **Count it joyful when you fall into various trials** (2)
  - i. What are trials?
    1. The word actually means to examine something closely, or to put it to the test. It is the same Greek word as temptation (Matthew 6:13, 26:41, James 1:12, 2 Peter 2:9).
    2. As used here, it is more than just being tempted by the devil but describes how we will face troubles of various sorts.
    3. Most translations do a fairly good job of distinguishing usage based on context. In the KJV, the word 21x, 13x is found as temptation & 8x as trial or try.
    4. What they have in common is both TEST our resolve to remain faithful. The difference in English: Trials are troubles we face (persecutions, afflictions, setbacks, rejections, etc.), while temptations are troubles that challenge our

moral standards (based upon God's word). Temptations are a specific type of trial.

5. James will deal with both (trials – 2-8, temptations – 12-16).

ii. James begins by noting they WOULD experience trials.

1. He said “when”, not if. As Christians, we need to be prepared to face trials.
2. 2 Timothy 3:12 – all who desire to live godly will suffer persecutions.
3. Matthew 16:24, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross**, and follow Me.”* The idea of the cross is a willingness to suffer. 1 Thessalonians 3:1-4 Paul reminds them that they were told that they would suffer tribulation and it happened.
4. Of course, enduring trials are not limited to persecutions. Our faith can be tested in many ways – health – both physical and mental, financial hardships, disappointments, loneliness, doubts, fear, grief, making choices (which is best), etc.

iii. How can we be joyful when we face trials?

1. James mentions that we are to “count it all joy” as we suffer. This does not mean we enjoy suffering or disappointments or such. But what it is, is attitude! It is the willingness to find the best in a given situation, especially when it is troubling or disappointing. Yet continually that is what is emphasized.
2. Hebrews 12:2 speaks about how Jesus for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame... Jesus knew what the outcome would be if He did not go through with God's plan. Thus He sacrificed Himself for us. That is the attitude of joy we are called to experience.
3. It is emphasized throughout the New Testament (and at times in the Old). Philippians 4:4 – rejoice in the Lord always (recall why Paul is writing this letter). Philippians 3:7-9, Paul lost so much and was glad to do it to gain Christ.
4. Trials can bring out the best in us. I will address this in a few moments. As with so many things, it is not the fact that we will face trials, but how we handle them. It is about our attitude in difficult circumstances. In our text, James gives some thoughts about this.

b. Knowing the testing of your faith produces patience (3-4)

- i. We need to “know” – we need knowledge. But this knowledge also includes confidence and faith. Again, James will deal with this later in this text (6-8).
- ii. We need patience – steadfast endurance (LSB – perseverance). Hebrews 10:35-36, Galatians 6:9. How do trials produce patience within us? The answer is they FORCE us to determine we are not going to quit and we are going to face our adversity properly. Patience is a quality you ONLY learn through experience.
- iii. Let that patience lead to your maturity – perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
  1. 2 words, and a clarification, that complement each other.
  2. The first means to be without blemish (when you speak of perfecting something).
  3. The second means it is lacking nothing, which James states.
  4. As we patiently endure our trials it is likely we will struggle and possibly meet failures along the way. But as we do not give up and learn, the next time we do a

little better and we keep moving in a positive direction until we ALWAYS exhibit full patience in our trials.

5. NOTE: Most will not meet that lofty goal in this life, but as Paul noted, we “press on” (Philippians 3:13-14).
- iv. In our text, James gives us ONE “benefit” of facing trials. But there are many things to be learned from the trials we face.
1. Trials can teach you discipline.
    - a. *Disciplined*” means you are in control. Like patience, this is something ONLY learned through experience.
    - b. Hebrews 12:5-11 speaks of God chastening us. Directly related to consequences when we sin, the concept of discipline covers a broader range. The word for chastening is also in Eph. 6:4 – “training” & 2 Timothy 3:16 – “*instruction* in righteousness”.
    - c. 1 Corinthians 9:27 – Paul disciplined his own body to strengthen him. “
  2. Trials may be the consequences of our actions. Sin often comes with consequences – both physical and mental. Damage is often done by sinful behaviors – damage to our bodies, material loss, broken relationships, etc. Then there is the guilt and other mental burdens. Cf. 1 Peter 4:14-16 – not how He mentions, do not suffer for sinful conduct and call it persecutions. You get what you deserve. BUT, if we learn from our consequences, it will make us better and stronger spiritually.
  3. Trials can keep us humble – pride will keep us reaching spiritual maturity.
    - a. Pride means we let ourselves get in the way or proper progress.
    - b. Recall 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – Paul’s thorn in the flesh kept him humble.
  4. Trials can help you focus on your need for God –
    - a. As Christians, we know that life is more than here and now. It is about serving and trusting God.
    - b. Trials cause us to trust in God. That is what kept Paul going – cf. 2 Cor. 12:9-10, Philippians 3:8 – “that I may gain Christ.”
    - c. 2 Peter 2:9 – He knows how to deliver us. 1 Corinthians 10:13 – He can make the way of escape.
  5. Trials can encourage you to turn to your brethren –
    - a. Galatians 6:2 – bear one another’s burdens.
    - b. Proverbs 17:17, *A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.*
    - c. James 5:13-16 – addressing prayer, James will later encourage us to rely upon each other as brethren.
  6. When we face trials we are sharing in the sufferings of Christ –
    - a. This is mental encouragement. An attitude reminding you of what your priority is.
    - b. 1 Peter 4:12-16. God takes note. This causes us to more greatly appreciate what He did endure for us.
    - c. Acts 5:41, the apostles having been beaten departed rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer.

7. Trials can deepen your faith – the godly will search for answers from God when facing troubles.
    - a. As you come through, your faith is stronger.
    - b. E.g., 2 Timothy 4:16-18, 3:10-11 – out of them all the Lord delivered me.
    - c. When the world lets you down, the Christian knows that the Lord is always there – Matthew 28:20.
  8. Trials help develop your character – James spoke of patience. But consider Romans 5:3-6 – where our perseverance produces character and character produces hope. Character is that ability to stand firm even under pressure.
  9. Trials can make us wiser –
    - a. We need to learn, both from our mistakes and what we deal with in this life.
    - b. Perhaps you have heard the expression, “Fool me once, shame on you; Fool me twice, shame on me.” With every failure and trouble we face, we have opportunity to learn from it.
    - c. James 1:5-8 addresses this. In our next lesson, we will focus on this in more detail.
  10. Trials can help keep our focus on what awaits us after this life – 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, 5:1-8 speaks of our “light affliction”, because it is temporal.
- v. NOTE: We may not know all the reasons we are facing various trials, but we still trust God. Proverbs 3:5-6 – trust in Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.

We all face trials in this life, whether believers or unbelievers. What matters is how we respond to our trials. We can let them crush us, or we can face them and let them make us better. Much like the clam making a pearl.

As Christians, let us resolve that our adversities are going to make us better and stronger. You may not be able to control what is going to happen, but you CAN control how your respond. And that is what James begins this letter with. What do trials say about you? Think about you?