

Personal Study

JAMES PART 2 TRIALS / TEMPTATIONS

"AS BELIEVERS, WE WILL FACE TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS IN THIS WORLD, AND THESE HARDSHIPS TEST OUR FAITH AND DEPENDENCE ON GOD. BUT ENDURING ADVERSITY IS ULTIMATELY FOR OUR JOY".

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Introduction:

When you give your life to Jesus, all of your troubles will disappear, you will have all of the money you will ever need, no one will ever get sick, and no hardships will ever come your way.

Right?

Wrong!

In fact, adversity and trials are not an **“IF”**, but a **“WHEN”**.

There are a lot of dangerous teachings in our world of “church” today that express “if we have enough faith, trials will not come our way”. This is called the “prosperity gospel”; a false gospel that elevates people and circumstances above the Lordship of Jesus over all things.... including trials and adversity. So, despite what you may have heard, following Jesus in this world is not easy. Trials will come, adversity will come, hardship will come, and persecution will come. So how do we faithfully follow Jesus in the midst of trials?

James chapter 1:2-18 gives us several core truths to meditate on as we navigate the winds and the waves of life. Here are two of them:

1. Trials can become our joy.

Now this statement from James in 1:2 **“count it all joy** when you meet trials of various kinds” can seem nearly impossible to understand. How can we possibly take joy in circumstances that cause us grief, sadness, or hardship?

James is differentiating for us here the difference between “happiness” and “joy”. Happiness is an emotion that we feel as a result of a good circumstances. Joy, on the other hand, is like an anchor for our soul **DESPITE** the circumstance. Why? Because ultimately, Joy has a name, and His name is Jesus.

Jesus is the personification of joy. He is an unmovable anchor that we can hold on to in the midst of grief, loss, pain, suffering, and hardship. When we are navigating a season of suffering, sadness, or pain, we can simultaneously experience a joy that supersedes our context, our situation, and our circumstances. We can experience the joy of knowing Jesus more truly and deeply when we experience Him **THROUGH** a storm, not only in the good seasons.

Here is the good news. Trials do not scare Jesus. Jesus is our “ever present help in time of need”. He is immovable, unshakable, and unstoppable.

2. Trials produce “steadfastness” in us.

James 1:3 tells us that **“the testing of our faith produces steadfastness”**. James is expressing to his church that the Holy Spirit does transformational work in the hearts and lives of Jesus’

people through trials and seasons of testing. Keep in mind the context here: James is writing to the persecuted church who has been scattered throughout the region. The church at that time was being martyred for their faith. Their season of suffering, grief, fear, and hardship was always before them.

James continues in verses 4-8: “⁴ And let **steadfastness** have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ If any of you **lacks wisdom**, let him **ask God**, who **gives generously** to all without reproach, and **it will be given him**. ⁶ But let him **ask in faith**, with no doubting, for the **one who doubts is like a wave of the sea** that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways.”

James is painting a picture here for us; the dichotomy of the man who is steadfast under trial, versus the one who is shaken, lacks faith, and does not trust the Lord. If we are honest, this is a picture into our lives as well.

If we were honest, we can likely identify quickly with the “double minded man”. The person who doubts that Jesus will show up in our situation, provide the wisdom we need, or lead our lives forward through the pain and sorrow of our situation.

Here is the good news: Jesus is not surprised by this. Even in the middle of our doubt, He pours out grace upon grace, welcoming us into His presence, eager to mend our wounded souls and lead us into next steps that bring Him glory.

By His grace, when facing a trial, we can remain steadfast in the Lord by asking for wisdom to face the trial. When we ask for wisdom, trusting that the Lord is faithful to provide all of the wisdom we need to face the storm in front of us, we find ourselves anchored on the firm foundation of Christ. We are not shipwrecked or shaken, but firm and full of joy despite the hardship we are facing.

Application:

This week, read James 1:2-18. Each day, highlight areas in the text that the Holy Spirit speaks to you. When you feel the Lord speak to you, take a moment to write it down. Pay attention to the deposits of wisdom that the Lord wishes to pour out on you as you read His Living Word.

For further reflection: Are you facing a trial right now? If so, conclude this week’s personal study by praying through the following questions:

- In what areas do you need wisdom from the Lord in order to navigate this trial?
- In what ways have you doubted that the Lord sees you and desires to work in you?
- Have you asked the Lord to be your “anchor” of joy in the middle of your trial?
- In what areas do you need to ask for grace? Both for you and for others?
- How is the Lord shaping you and producing steadfastness in you through the middle of this trial?

