

# Facing Trials with Joy

James 1:2-4

## Intro

Everybody who lives in the world will live through trials at one time or another. Because of sin and that we live in the midst of a fallen world there will always be trouble, problems and trials.

Even in marriage there is trouble. In Scripture we read, “*But those who marry will face many troubles in this life*” (1 Corinthians 7:28). It probably means that if you have trouble just being you, then imagine how it will be when you have to be you with somebody else trying to be who they are. There is going to be trouble even in the best of things that life gives to us.

That reminds me of the guy I saw wearing a T-shirt that said, “If a man speaks in the forest and his wife isn’t there to hear him is he still wrong?”

## Context of the book of James

James, the half-brother of Jesus is writing this letter to the Christian Jews who have been scattered after the persecution of the church in Jerusalem in Acts chapter 8. He knows that they are going through tough times and that they will go through many trials.

This passage in the book of James 1:2-4 he writes about the test of trials, because trials will reveal whether our faith is living faith or dead faith, whether it's genuine faith or imitation faith. How one handles trouble is an indication of how genuine and strong their faith is. When trouble comes into your life and my life it will speak to the reality of our faith or the lack of it.

## 3 Ways to Respond to Trials

A French writer by the name of Jacques Philippe wrote a book entitled *Interior Freedom*. In it he talks about 3 ways on how people face trials.

### 1/ Those who Rebel

Philippe says the first way you can respond to a trial in your life is to rebel. You push back against it, you fight against it, and you get angry. You're mad at God, you're mad at the world, you're mad at anybody who had something to do with it. Maybe it was a doctor, maybe it was a teacher, a relative, a spouse, maybe it was somebody at your work and you're complaining, and you rebel. That is probably the most common response.

### 2/ Those who Resign

A second way you can respond is to resign. You believe you are powerless in this trial, and you give up. In a sense, to acknowledge that you are powerless in the situation or trial is healthy to know and recognize that. But unfortunately this often leads to a sense of powerlessness without hope. You lie down in this trial and you begin to slip into despair, sadness and even depression. There is no ability to pray into the situation you're facing. It is over as far as you're concerned. Neither life nor faith can grow in those conditions.

### 3/ Those who Rejoice

A third way is often ignored and hard to accept. When you first hear this word, *rejoice*, you will think that it is impossible. But look what Jesus says in Matthew 5 where he says, God blesses you

when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you. Here is how He says you deal with that: "*Rejoice.*" He says, "*Rejoice.*" And just in case you aren't clear that is what He means, he says, "*Rejoice and be glad*" (Matthew 5:11-12).

God wants you to choose that response. He wants you and me to enter into the power of joy by His Spirit. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit that He wants to produce in us (Galatians 5:22).

That's what James says in James 1:2

**James 1:2** "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds...*"

Now the word "*consider*," means once and for all consider it or evaluate it as joy. You need to decide if you are going to Rebel, to Resign and be miserable or be joyful.

You may be thinking, "Whoa, I'm over here in the rebel place response right now. Or I'm kind of in resignation. How would I ever get to a place of rejoicing? That doesn't seem possible for me. What would it take to do that?" Well, it is a long and hard journey. But it is a possible journey.

When Paul says to the Philippians in chapter 4:11, "*I have learned in whatever state to be content,*" and he said that while he was in prison. He had learned to do that. He had cultivated that and that's not something that happens by accident or overnight. He learned – it took some time to learn. It can be a long hard journey but with God's Spirit it is possible.

### ***Pure Joy***

In Philippians 4:4 Paul says, "*Rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice.*" He learned in any state he was in to rejoice. Why? Because he could see that he was drawing near to God, he was communing in the sufferings of Christ. And that was his prayer, as he said, "*that I may know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings*" (Phil. 3:10). And he knew that he would see the power of Christ in his weakness. And he knew that out of that the Lord would make him a better person and accomplish some glorious work and prove his faith.

Trials are to be faced with an attitude of joy. Why?

- They produce proven faith.
- They strengthen us.
- They draw us into communion with God.
- They identify us in the sufferings of Christ and what a sweet identification that is.
- And they promise better things to come.

I guess in one way we can enjoy the suffering today because it will be so wonderful when we get to heaven. Like Romans 8:18 says, "*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*"

It's kind of like the guy who beat his head on the wall because it felt so good when he stopped. It's going to feel awfully good, isn't it? Especially when it all is over.

"*Whenever*" not "*if*" but *when* you face trials. That means they're going to come.

The word for "trial" also conveys the idea of a testing or temptation. Every trouble that comes into your life and every trial, be it a small one or a big one, becomes a test of your faith. You either pass or fail a trial.

So trials then are tests that reveal the genuineness and the strength of your faith. They can, on the one hand, reveal the ***genuineness*** of your faith and they can, on the other hand reveal also the ***strength*** of your faith. What you do through a trial will reveal whether you really believe God and are genuinely saved. And it will also reveal how strong that saving faith really is in your life.

Our life is made up of trials and tests. They come in the forms of disappointments, frustrations, misunderstandings, unfulfilled dreams, unmet expectations, loss, loneliness, fear, criticism, persecution, and conflict.

***James 1:3 "Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance."***

The purpose of the testing of our faith is to help us to see whether our faith is real and strong. They are tests of genuineness for those who claim true faith, and tests of the strength.

We know that the trial is not for the bad but for the good. Don't look at it as a negative thing but as a positive learning experience.

Paul says in Romans 8:28, "*For we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...*"

***James 1:4 "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."***

I love this verse. Look at this, this is a command, "*Perseverance must finish its work*" or in another translation, "*let perseverance have its perfect work.*" Let God do His work. Let endurance do what God wants it to do. What he's saying is be submissive to the trial. Don't fight it. Don't argue or complain about it. Don't get disappointed with God.

What it's trying to do is just make you better. Make you spiritually mature. Don't be reluctant when trials come. Don't fight against it. Don't deny God that wonderful perfecting work that He wants to do in your life.

Perseverance or endurance is not the goal. The goal is maturity and perfection.

Perfection is really synonymous with spiritual maturity. Let endurance lead to the goal of spiritual maturity.

*"And complete."* That's a marvelous word, *holos* means whole, we get a word today, hologram which is a 360 degree picture, and it means all perspectives and dimensions.

God wants you to be all intact, well- rounded, and fully put together spiritually from all sides.

And in the end you will, "*lack nothing.*" Oh what a comprehensive statement. He puts you through trials so that you can gain endurance so that you can go through more trials until you've become fully complete as a mature person in Christ, ready for heaven!

***James 1:12 "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the victor's crown, the life God has promised to those who love him."***

Now the point is simple. The person who claims to be a Christian and who goes through trials and comes out a winner which means they never give up their faith, in the end they will receive the victor's crown which the Lord will give to those that love Him.

The sad thing is that there are some people who supposedly profess faith in God, but when trials or troubles come into their life they fall away from the faith. Maybe they got burned in a

relationship? Or maybe they came and they had to go through some struggle, maybe a member of their family died and it just was overwhelming and they walked away.

Now in James 1:12 it says, *"to those who love God."* This is all about a love relationship. This is not just some transaction where God saves us no matter what our attitude is and once we're saved we can have any attitude we want. No, those of us who are truly saved have an on-going profound love for Him even through trials.

What it means is that the bond that ties a person to God is the bond of love, not just superficial affection, and not just a fleeting sentiment, but a true bond of love that can endure any trial.

### **Conclusion**

Larry Crabb in his book "Shattered Dreams: God's Unexpected Path to Joy" wrote this thought provoking truth,

*"Our spiritual journey is about attachment to God, not our comfort. Life may involve suffering, but that suffering kindles our passions and drives us to God. Suffering is a privilege and I don't see how we're going to be released in our passions to know God and be delivered from our self-centeredness and be delivered into deep community without very deep and meaningful suffering."*

Also Warren Wiersbe wrote a profound truth on trials. I want to share it with you. He said, *"Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to count it all joy. If we live only for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better."* (Source, The Bible Exposition Commentary, New Testament Vol. 2, 2001)

So then, what will be your response to trials?

- Rebel?
- Resign? or
- Rejoice?