Triumphant In Trials
James 1:2-4

The Book of James is one of the most practical books in the Bible. He deals with common, everyday areas that all Christians will face.
-He discusses the Christian and his Battles, the Christian and his Bible, the Christian and his Brethren, the Christian and his Beliefs, the Christian and his Boasting, and the Christian and his Burdens.
-But the very first area that James deals with is the Christian and his Battles.
-Some words bring dread to our hearts. There are some things that we had rather not have to deal with; such things as trials, problems, difficulties. We all have to face them, but we had all rather escape them if we can.

I think of the story of a fellow that rode into a western town on a stagecoach. He was hired as the local saloon's bartender. The owner gave him a word of warning: “Remember, if you ever hear that Big John is on his way to town, drop everything and run for your life.” Things went fine for several months until one day, a big strong cowhand with a ghost-white face burst through the swinging doors shouting, “Big John's a cominn', Big John's a comin'.” The patrons scrambled to get out of the door, knocking the bartender to the floor, running over him as they rushed out doors and windows. The bartender gathered his senses, got up off the floor, and was dusting himself off when a giant of a man suddenly came through the saloon doors. Riding bareback on a buffalo, using a rattlesnake for a whip, he rode through the doors, splintering the doors and doorframe. The man flung the snake into the corner, knocked over the tables as he walked up to the bar, and then with his huge fist split the bar in half. “Give me drink,” he yelled. “Yes sir,” said the frightened bartender. The man bit the top of the bottle off with his teeth, downed the contents in one gulp, and let out a belch that shattered the saloon mirror, and then turned to leave. The bartender said, “W-w-w-would you like to have another d-d-drink?” The man roared as he jumped back on his buffalo, “I ain't got time. Big John's a comin' to town.”

You may feel like troubles and trials have bullied their way into your life and you are surrounded with adversity and affliction.
-The Bible gives us this warning: Trials are going to come!
  - John 16:33 “In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.”
  - John 15:20 “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...”
  - 2 Tim. 3:12 “Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

How different is the teaching of James and the other Bible writers than the teachings of the “health and wealth” boys of our day. Some teach today that if you are right with God, you will be prosperous, happy and never have trials or problems.
-The fact is, that once a person becomes a Christian, he is likely to have trials as never before.

Listen to James: “Count it all joy...lit., consider it pure joy when you experience trials....”
-Consider it what? Joy! What kind of joy? Pure joy!
-That must be a misprint! Most of us would say, Count it all joy when you Escape trials”.
-If we understand that God is more interested in making us HOLY than in making us HAPPY, we will understand better why God allows trials to come in our lives.
I. The Fact of Trials - 1:2

James uses the phrase “my brethren” no less than 15 times in his book.
-That tells us a great deal about this man, James. Though he was a leader of the early Christian church, he identified himself with every one of his readers. He saw himself as a Brother; not a Boss.
-The word “brotheren” here means “to be cemented with the same blood of Jesus”.

Notice that James didn't say “If” you fall into trials, but WHEN you fall into trials. It's not a matter of IF, but when. Expect them!

That word, “when you FALL INTO” is the same term used in Luke 10:30 in the story of the Good Samaritan of the man who “fell among thieves.”
-The thieves fell upon this man suddenly and without warning, attacking him and robbing him. James is saying that we can fall into trials that come suddenly and without warning. We can be going our merry way without a care in the world, then all of a sudden we find ourselves engulfed in trials.
-A knock at the door, a phone call, a visit to the doctor, a pink slip on Friday can suddenly turn our calm and peaceful sea into a stormy and raging sea.
-Everything may be fine at the present, but just around the bend a trial is facing us.
-It's interesting that we get our English word “pirate” from the word translated “temptation.” Like pirates that ambush the unsuspecting ship, trials can come suddenly.

Why does God allow trials to come to the Christian?

God does not allow troubles to come upon us just for trouble's sake.
- God has a goal in mind – you can count on that. Trials are meaningless, suffering is senseless, and testing is irrational unless there is some good purpose for them.
- Trials that come in our life are for a Purpose and for our Profit.

The word “count” it all joy means “to think forward, to consider.”
- We must learn to look at our trial experiences from God's perspective and see the trial not as a happy experience in itself, but as the means of producing something very valuable in our life.
- The attitude of faith should be that God has permitted our trials for a purpose and He has a high and lofty goal in view. We can know that God is working something out in our lives.
- This doesn't necessarily mean that we will understand what purpose God has in it! This is the test of FAITH! Gloom now, but glory in the days to come.

Notice 1:3 The word “knowing” means “understanding.” Understand that when trials come, they are not without rhyme or reason. God always has a purpose in the trials that come our way. There is also a promised outcome in the trials that come our way.

Let me give you three purposes for the trials God allows to come to us.

A. To Enlarge Us

Warren Wiersbe tells the story: “An associate of mine, a gifted secretary, was going through great trials. She had had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and then had to be taken to the hospital where we were sure he would die. I saw her in church on Sunday and assured her that I was praying for her. “What are you asking God to do?” she asked and her question startled me. “I'm asking God to help you
and strengthen you,” I replied. “I appreciated that,” she said, “but pray about one more thing. Pray that I'll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!”

B. To Expose Us

Sometimes we would never see the weaknesses in our character if there were no trials. -Simon Peter heard Jesus say, “All of you will forsake me.” Peter said, “Not me!” Jesus said, “Simon, you don't know how weak you are in that area of your life. I'll allow a trial to come in your life to show you how weak you are.” I don't think you could have convinced Peter that he would have denied the Lord. I think he meant what he said. Sometimes we think we are stronger that we really are in certain areas, so God has to show us how weak we are – often through trials.

C. To Use Us As Examples To Others

Job is the classic O.T. Example of a saint being tested so others would be inspired by his faithfulness to God. After all the trials and suffering, Job ends his book by saying, “Though He tried me by fire, I come forth as pure gold.” Job came out of his trials a wiser and better man.
- Trials are not electives in God's school; they are required courses.

A saint who had experienced great trials and testings in his life wrote:

When God wants to drill a man
And thrill a man
And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
to play the noblest Part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!
      How He ruthlessly perfects
      Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
      Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hand!
How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses
And with every purpose fuses him;
      By every act induces him
      To try His splendor out -
      God knows what He's about!

Strong, mature men and women of God are molded, shaped, and made only through trials.
II. The Forms of Trials – 1:2

“Diver temptations” speaks of two things:

A. The Types of Trials

Trials come in all different sizes and shades.
- Some of the greatest trials are not the “big” trials, but the everyday kind of trials.
- Then they are multi-colored gray, dark, black.
- I Peter 1 talks about the manifold grace of God; The many colored graces of God. Trials are many colored, but the grace of God is many colored, too. God's grace will match every color of trial that comes our way.

B. The Times of Trials

God knows when we need trials in our life. They are a surprise to us, but not to Him.

III. The Facing of Trials – 1:2

We have the option to choose how we will respond to trials. We can complain, whine, ask “why me” or we can count it all joy.

No one knows how to react to trials like Paul. When he and Silas were beaten at Philippi, then jailed, and then subjected to the torture of the stocks, they sang! They sang so well that their singing was testimony and influence to their fellow prisoners, but also led to the conversion of the jailer.
- In Acts 5:41 when the Apostles were beaten because of their bold testimony for Christ, they went out, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name.”
- Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13; Rom. 5:3-5

IV. The Fruit of Trials – 1:3-4

There is a Promised outcome to trials.

“The trying of our faith works patience”. The word “trying” speaks of the purging effect of trials.
- The picture behind the word is that of precious metals being heated in order for the impurities to be removed. God puts the believer into the fire in order to purge our lives of all impurities. Trials are often God's way to getting us to deal with things in our life that are displeasing to the Lord. Trials have a purifying effect.

1. Trials Produce Durability

“Worketh Patience” The word “patience” means “steadfastness, durability, brave endurance. It means to stand up under, to bear up under.”
- But it is not just the ability to bear up under things, it is the ability to turn trials into greatness and even glory.
- The thing that amazed the heathen in the centuries of persecution was that the martyred did not die grimly; they died singing!
2. Trials Produce Maturity – 1:4

When patience has done its work in us, it causes us to be:

a. *Perfect* – Means mature, fully developed, complete, full grown
- This is a picture of the ripening process of fruit, say a peach or an orange. When the peach first comes on the tree, it has all the parts it's going to have, but it is not yet ripe. It takes time for the peach to ripen. You can't rush it. You must wait until the process is completed. If you pull the fruit too soon, it will be hard and bitter.
- God is never in a hurry in His developing of us. One of the hardest things for us to do is to wait upon the Lord.
- “Let patience have its perfect work” calls for our cooperation in what God is doing in our life.

b. *Entire* means to be whole or fully developed in every part.

c. *Wanting nothing* means nothing lacking or left behind.

May God help us to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

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