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A0705 – February 4, 2007 – Jas 1:2-4 – Consider It All Joy

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II. DVP Responses to Tests (1:2-12)

Verses 2-12 give two DVP responses to various tests that believers fall into and one illustration. First, the believer who is oriented toward DVP has the Attitude of Joy in (2-4). Second, the believer who is oriented to DVP Asks for Wisdom (5-8). The illustration of two trials, poverty and wealth is in vv 9-11 with the proper DVP Response of Boasting in Spiritual Riches. The promise of divine reward for these DVP responses is in verse 12. Tests are used by God to refine believers. God does not want His children to remain children but He wants them to mature into men and women of God. The way God does this is by testing us. In order for us to mature we have to respond properly to these tests. First, by Considering it all Joy (2-4). Second, by Asking for Wisdom (5-8). Third, by Boasting in Spiritual Riches (9-11). The promised result for DVP responses to trial is divine reward (12).

A. Consider it all Joy (1:2-4)

James 1:2-4 Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν· ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον

τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ
λειπόμενοι.

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, whenever various tests fall around you, knowing that the approval of your faith brings about endurance. And let endurance have its complete work, in order that you all may be complete and whole, lacking in nothing. (Authors Translation)

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB95)

Verses 2-4 are a unit. If I could summarize what James is saying it would be this. Believers, when you stumble into unavoidable trials and the stresses of life surround you, there is only one DVP attitude: joy. This joyful attitude can only proceed from a particular teaching of Scripture that you must have in your mind. That teaching is this: that God tests our faith so that we will develop the ability to endure under pressure. And once we have endured under pressure, once we have finished the test we become perfect, complete, lacking in nothing.

Let's start with the words **my brethren** in verse 2. "James refers to his readers as his *brethren*, not because they are fellow Jews but because they have been born from above, *brought...forth by the word of truth* (1:18; cf Acts 9:30; 10:23; etc.). This form of address, (*my*) brethren, is frequent in this epistle (1:16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19). Even a superficial reading of James 1:2-18 shows that the author regards his readers as Christians. It may be said that nowhere in the letter—not even in 2:14-26!—does he betray the slightest doubt that those in his audience are truly his brothers or sisters in the Lord. If we do not observe this simple and obvious fact, we may fall into a quagmire of skewed interpretations, just as so many expositors of James have actually done."¹ You must constantly keep this in mind. James is talking to a regenerate audience. He never digresses to question whether they are born again. They unquestionably are!

Consider it all joy. When I ask you to "consider" something...what am I asking you to do? I'm asking you to "think about it" and that involves the

mind. Some translations say “count it all joy” but James is not asking us to “count” but to “consider”. He’s asking us to think about trials in a certain way. The Greek word **consider** is the middle deponent of the verb *hegeomai* and is therefore translated as an active voice. It means “to lead with the mind”. It means that when you encounter a trial the first thing to do is consult the mind. The mind and not the emotions is the leader when we face trials. James is arguing that the proper starting point to dealing with trials is the intellect. In trials the tendency is to lead with the emotions but the word of God is very straightforward. When you face trials you should never respond out of emotion. You should respond out of the intellect. Christian responses are not supposed to be grounded in emotions; they are supposed to be grounded in the human intellect.

We have far too much emotionalism in Christianity today. There is a complete imbalance between the intellect and emotions. Most Christians just want to feel good because this is what the media and culture are telling us all the time. So, they choose a church because the pastor makes them feel good. They choose a church with an hour of singing and a ten minute sermonette for Christianettes because it makes them feel good. They choose a church because the pastor gives positive messages and never condemns anyone by mentioning they’re a sinner. So, they choose emotional churches because they like to feel good. The really terrible thing that has happened is that emotionalism has been confused with spirituality. If there is a lot of emotionalism that supposedly signals that the Spirit is there and the people are spiritual. And that’s completely wrong! When I was in High School Mike Tyson was on top of the boxing world and when I went to a friend’s house to watch the fight there was a lot of emotion. Guys bouncing off the walls, wrestling, yelling. Now, tell me those emotions were the result of the Spirit of God. Tell me that was spiritual. No, the Spirit of God brings about order, not bouncing off the walls, not a wave of emotion across a stadium full of believers. Spirituality is not emotionalism. Spirituality is walking in the truth. It’s not emoting. Most emotion comes from the flesh, it’s the opposite of spirituality. I’m not saying emotions are wrong. We have one listed right here, **joy**. But James is saying that when we lead with the emotions it is wrong. When church starts by appealing to emotion it is wrong. It is well known that when you get people in an emotional frenzy they let their guard down and will accept almost anything you say. So, this is popular in churches. And quite frankly, I’m convinced that when you bring the world’s

music into the church, play the instruments the way the world plays them it appeals to the flesh, it appeals to the carnal man. The emotions which come from that are not of God, they are of the flesh, they are carnal. You may feel good but that's because you're gratifying the flesh. But you can't bring the world into the church and then try to dress it up with God words. That doesn't work. You can dress up idolatry all you want but in the end what's underneath is still idolatry. Don't confuse emotions with spirituality. True spirituality starts with the mind so James says **consider**, think when you fall into a trial.

Think about what? The word of God. Specific content from the word of God has to be in the mind for the mind to lead when you face trials. Otherwise you will emote. You'll fall apart. What is that content, Jacob says in verse 3 **knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance**. See, there's knowledge, content that has to first be in the mind before the Christian can consider and Jacob assumes his audience already has this knowledge because they were Jewish believers who were fully conversive with the OT Hebrew text. So, James is calling them to consider OT examples they are already know about where someone fell into a trial and when their faith was approved it produced endurance. Who might they think of? Job, Abraham, Rahab, and Elijah are all given as examples in Jacob/James. We're Gentiles and we don't know the OT very well and that's very unfortunate because the New was written under the assumption that you know the Old. And these Jewish believers did know it. So, the point is, if we don't know this truth of v 3 then we can't lead with the mind. Many Christians don't go into trials with the mind leading because they don't know this. They don't know that the testing of our faith produces endurance. So, rather than going into trial with the mind they go in with their emotions. And that's what Jacob/James is attacking. Trials are liable to cause a mental lapse because the pressure is on and we don't want to think we want to emote. We want to lash out, get angry and yell and James is saying these are the last things we should do. So, we have to train ourselves in the word of God now so whenever the trials come we can lead with the mind. Otherwise we're doomed.

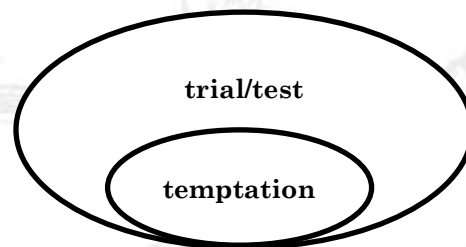
When we encounter various trials "Where should the mind guide us?" "To what attitude?" **all joy**. **Joy** is to be the prevailing attitude during trials and not partial joy, but **all joy**. Our attitude should not be a mixture of joy with something else but **all joy**, pure joy. This is the Greek word *chara* which is

the noun form of the salutation in verse 1, “greetings” which is *chairo*. It means “an experience of gladness”. The point is that the mind should lead us to have an attitude of gladness in the midst of trials. It is not saying that the trials are gladness, they are sorrowful (Heb 12:11), but the basic attitude during trials should be one of gladness. So, here we see that when the mind knows the purpose of trials and when we consider that knowledge then we can then put on the proper attitude of joy.

When are you supposed to have joy? **when you encounter various trials**. The word **when** or better “whenever” signals a note of certainty and uncertainty. Trials are certain to come but when they will come is uncertain. So you have to be ready now. See, a lot of Christians want to get ready when the trial comes. But it’s too late then! We are in training now for trial “whenever”. There are a lot of people who have come to this church and left because it didn’t meet their felt-needs of the moment. Well, according to the word of God this person is an ignoramus. You don’t go to church to get your felt-needs met. You go to this church to hear the word of God because whatever He says in His word is important down to the last jot and tittle. There will be a day when you need this knowledge so if you reject the knowledge today you may wish you had it tomorrow. Because all of a sudden a trial will fall around you and you won’t be able to do anything but emote. You won’t be able to lead with the mind because what you need isn’t in your mind. Emotions are the only outlet and you’re not going to have the attitude of joy. There’s going to be a whole lot of anger and yelling and stress and this is going to lead to depression, bitterness, and broken relationships. It’s simply inescapable because whenever you lead with HVP, and HVP always leads with the emotions, you are rejecting DVP and HVP responses are gimmicks. They never work. They’re going to lead you down the well-worn path of so many Christians and it only leads to spiritual depression and mental illness and then when you get there, when you’re spiritually ill you’re going to emote some more and everyone around you is going to suffer because of your negative volition to the word of God. Some of you are waiting to get serious about the word of God. You’re not sure if you want to get serious. It’s time to get serious about Bible study and start thinking with DVP because the trials can come “whenever”. And the question is, when they come “Is my mind prepared with DVP?” or “Am I going to emote out of HVP?”

Now, the word **encounter** in the Greek is *peripipto*. It means “to fall around”. The idea is that a believer falls into and is surrounded by a stressful situation or circumstance that was unavoidable. This is not a self-induced trial. This is something unavoidable like the case of Job. There was nothing Job could do to avoid it. Job had done nothing unrighteous. His friends tried to argue that this was judgment because of his unrighteousness but we know that was not the case. There was nothing Job did to bring this trial upon himself. The trial was unavoidable, he fell into it, and God had a purpose for it. The Greek text makes clear that the trials are **various** (*poikilos*). It means “diverse”. It’s the same word used to describe Joseph’s coat of many colors (LXX Gen 37:3). Just as Joseph’s coat had many colors so there are many diverse trials we may fall into. But no matter what trial we fall into there is only one DVP attitude, **joy**.

Trials, this is the main idea here and in the book. This is what all believers fall into. It is the Greek word *peirasmos*. Our English word “pyre” meaning “fire” comes from this word. So, the idea is that of falling into the midst of a fire. The word has two senses; broad and narrow. First, the narrow sense is “temptation”. Temptation is “an attempt to make someone do wrong”. It is to solicit someone to evil. That is the sense in verses 13-14 and James’ point is that God never does that. God never “attempts to make someone do wrong”. He permits us to be tempted but He is never the source of temptation. An example would be the case of Job. God permitted Job to be tempted by Satan but God did not tempt Job. So, the narrow sense of this word is “temptation” and the purpose of temptation is to solicit to evil and God never does that, but He does permit us to be tempted.



Second, the broad sense is “trial/test”, that is, “an attempt to demonstrate one’s character”. This is the sense being used here in verses 2-3. God does test believers in order to demonstrate their character but He never tempts anyone to do evil. It’s interesting that the temptation always comes in the midst of a trial. So, while God is trying to do one thing Satan is trying to do another.

God is trying to demonstrate our character and Satan uses that as an opportunity to solicit us to evil. Job is another good example. God sent adversity Job's way in order to demonstrate Job's character but Satan used it to solicit Job to evil. God is the source of the trial but not the temptation. So, there are two senses of the word *peirasmōs* and that is why the word is translated "trial" in verses 2-3 and "tempt" in verses 13-14.

	Trial	Temptation
Source	God	world, flesh, devil
Purpose	to demonstrate character	to solicit to evil

God is like a professor who tests his students. A good professor does not want to see his students fail the test. He wants to see them pass. In the same way God does not want His children to fail. He wants them to pass because this will produce endurance in the child of God.

The basic way to pass the test, the means of passing the test is by faith. Basically the believer's faith is being tested, thrown in the refiner's fire. God wants to refine our faith, purify our faith so that we are not double-souled, double-minded. We should therefore walk by faith in the midst of trials so our faith can be purified. Faith in what? There has to be some content there. We can't have faith in thin air. You can only have faith in what you know and what a believer needs to know with respect to trials is that God uses trials to produce in us endurance. So, you have to know this first before you can act on it in faith. Faith operates on the basis of knowledge. There has to be content in the mind before we can place our faith in that content. So, God sends tests or trials in order to refine our character. Trials are never meaningless, they always have a purpose! How are you going to respond? With an attitude of "joy". Why? Because you know the outcome is endurance.

Verse 3, the content of knowledge is explained. **knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. knowing**, these Jewish believers have come to know that a tested faith produces endurance. How did they come to know this? Because they already know the OT, they were raised on the teachings of the OT, particularly those concerning Abraham's offering of Isaac, Job's adversity and Rahab and the spies. The faith of these OT saints was tested and when they passed the test it produced endurance, a strengthened character, a refined faith, a stability that can be reached no

other way. In one sense the saying “No pain, no gain” is true.” Without adversity we can’t grow as Christians.

The **testing** here is the Greek word *dokimion* and means “to approve”. In other words, the word “testing” really means “approval”. James is saying “You know this teaching, that when an OT saints faith was approved, as in the case of Abraham or Job it worked endurance into their character, the ability to withstand greater pressures without succumbing.” That is, when the test is over, after you have passed the test because you continued to walk by faith, then and only then is endurance produced. It’s not in the trial but after the trial. It should be translated **knowing that the approval of your faith produces endurance.**

So, the product of an approved faith is endurance. We want to understand something here with the word **produces** in the NASB there is a shift from the plural to the singular. Everything has been plural up till now but James wants to shift here to emphasize how endurance is produced in the individual when his faith is approved. In a minute he’s going to switch back to the plural and this is going to show that the effects of one believer enduring through a trial spread through the whole church and I’m going to illustrate this for you from the Book of Acts. This is a dramatic shift in the text right here and you can’t see it in the English so let me highlight for you where it switches from plural to singular and then from singular back to plural.

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB95)

Everything in bold is plural and everything in regular type face is singular. Hopefully these observations are going to reinforce the importance of gathering together with a local group of believers. See, some believers like to stay away from church and just listen to tapes and they’re missing out on God’s plan. God’s only prescribed organization during the present age is the local church. And the Church has a definite structure and ordinances it is supposed to follow. A believer who has abandoned gathering with local believers under the revealed structure has rejected the plan of God and replaced it with what he thinks is a better plan. Let’s see how this works.

So, here, when an individual's faith is approved something is **produced** in that individual. The Greek word for **produces** is *katergazomai*, which is a deponent verb so it functions as an active verb. The root word means "works", an approved faith works or brings about **endurance**. But it has a preposition and this intensifies the work. In other words, when we meet a trial or test by faith and we are approved it "really works" **endurance** into our character. This is a dramatic change in the character of the person whose faith was approved.

The Greek word for **endurance** is *hupomone* and it can also be translated "patience" or "perseverance". This refers to the production of a greater ability to bear up under the pressures of circumstances. As a result of the approval of faith in one trial the believer will be able to bear up under greater pressures in future trials.

Verse 4 continues in the singular so here we're still talking to the individual. **and let endurance have a complete work**, that's an imperative, a command, **let endurance have a complete work**. This is individual. When you are in a trial don't give up, don't endure for a little while and then quit. It's tempting to want to give up and this is the dimension of this word *peirasmos* I spoke about earlier where Satan is involved. God may have brought the trial but the world, the flesh and the devil are the ones who tempt us to give up. Every trial has included within it the temptation to give up. We'll learn later that those temptations to burn out in a trial are not from God, they are from Satan or our own selfish desires. But if we don't endure then the work is not completed. That is, the character building stops there, we don't get the full effect God wants for us. So, the lesson is to persevere to the end in order to get the greatest results and that's what the end of verse 4 teaches.

Here he shifts back to the plural and this is a second reason it is so important to obey this command and let endurance have a complete work in your life. It's going to have more than just individual results. It's also going to have corporate results. The whole local church is going to benefit. That's what the grammar indicates. **So that**, or **in order that**, this is the final goal or purpose God has with trials in our lives. **that you all may be perfect and complete**. The English text does not say **you all** only **you** but that's because

in the English language the word “you” can be used to mean “you all” or just “you”. But the Greek language doesn’t do that. It has a word for “you” individually and a different word for “you all” corporately. And here the word is “you all”. James is saying there’s a corporate benefit when an individual endures a trial. Somehow when one believer endures all the other believers benefit. The nuance of the subjunctive **may be** is that this is the expected result. When one believer endures the expected result is that the corporate body of believers **be perfect and complete** or better **complete and whole**, not missing any parts. See, the body of Christ is made up of a diversity of individuals who undergo various trials and when these believers endure trials it has a corporate effect. It brings the church to completion and wholeness **lacking in nothing**, having no deficiencies. So, the word of God is teaching that all the parts are vital to the whole. Different parts have to undergo various trials and when we do this makes the church corporate perfect and complete so that we don’t have any deficiencies. This happens when one of us endures a trial and comes back to report it to others. This is good news because it builds up the whole body. So, this is a critical reminder how important it is not give up assembling with one another. Some of the believers in Hebrews had forsaken assembling together and they were commanded to stop this deviant behavior because each member is vital to making the church **perfect and complete, lacking in nothing** (Heb 10:23-25). Okay, now I want to illustrate to you how this works from the Book of Acts. Here we’re going to see both dimensions, individual trials with both individual and corporate results. So, trials bring about individual and corporate sanctification.

Turn to Acts 4:1-31. What I want you to see is that there are two individual’s here, Peter and John and they endure the testing so endurance is built into their character. But, it does more than that, because when they go back to the local church and report what happened guess what happens. Everybody benefits. Everybody unites. The church becomes more complete and whole, they move toward spiritual adulthood as a unit. So, this emphasizes the importance of sharing with one another the victories we have in trial because it helps spur all of us on. It gives us all more confidence as we see God at work in our lives.

What you have to see here is that when Peter and John were faced with a trial they saw it as an opportunity and they spoke out boldly and the result

was greater boldness. They gained the ability to stand under even more pressure and I suggest this is why they didn't leave Jerusalem when Stephen was martyred. They could handle more persecution than the Jewish believers who scattered (Acts 8:4).

Conclusion: Believers, when you stumble into unavoidable trials and the stresses of life surround you, there is only one DVP attitude: joy. This joyful attitude can only proceed from a particular teaching of Scripture that you must have in your mind. That teaching is this: that God tests our faith so that endurance is built into each one so we can bear up under pressure. And once each one has endured under pressure, once each one has passed the test all of us become complete and whole not lacking any parts or having any deficiencies. God casts each one of us into the refiners fire to purify our faith to build up His body and the only DVP attitude to such trials is joy. Consider it all joy!

ⁱ Hodges, Zane, *The Epistle of James: Proven Character Through Testing*, 18.

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