

THE VALUE OF TRIALS, PART 2

TEXT: JAMES 1:1-12

Introduction:

1. Tonight I will try and pick up where we left off in our new series in the epistle of James.
2. We saw that trials develop Christian character (1:2-4).
3. We noted that the word "temptations" (1:2) is used in different ways in Scripture. It could refer to solicitation to evil, like when the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-6), or when he tempted our Lord in Matthew 4.
4. There is also testing under trial, like when Abraham was tried in Genesis 22. The LORD told Abraham to offer up his son Isaac.
5. The word as it is used here in James 1:2 means trials or "testings" (margin). These testings are from God, though He may use Satan, as He did in the case of Job.
6. God never tempts a man to do evil (cf. James 1:13-15).
7. The devil tempts men to do evil, but God never does. In fact, the devil is called "the tempter" in Matthew 4:3 and in I Thessalonians 3:5.
8. It is difficult for us to go through trials and troubles and testings, but if we know the Lord, we can see His hand at work and truly "count it all joy" (1:2).
9. God is working in all of the events of life and is seeking to build Christian character. We can be sure that God is dealing with us for our own good (1:3; cf. Rom. 5:3, 4; 8:28).
10. Romans 5:3 says, "tribulation worketh patience."
11. James 1:3, 4 says, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

I. WISDOM THROUGH PRAYER (1:5).

1. One of the good things about trials is that they drive us to our knees. They motivate us to pray more.
2. Oftentimes we pray more fervently and frequently when trials come into our life.
3. Referring to trials, Andrew Murray said, "First, He brought me here; it is by His will I am in this strait place; in that fact I will rest. I am here — by God's appointment. Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child. I am here — in His keeping. Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn,

and working in me the grace He means to bestow. I am here — under His training. Last, in His good time, He can bring me out again—how and when He knows. I am here — for His time.

4. The Bible does not give specific answers to the various trials and troubles that arise in life. What it does is give us basic principles that we must apply to the various and diverse problems that God allows us to go through.
5. This is why we need wisdom (1:5). Wisdom is the practical application of God's Word to everyday situations. There are many people who are intelligent and well-educated but lack wisdom.
6. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."
7. Many people are intelligent, but not wise. For example, listen to this horrible statement by one of the most intelligent men of the twentieth century: "In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal god" – Albert Einstein.

II. PRAYING IN FAITH (1:6-8).

1. We are to pray for wisdom, believing that God will give us what we ask for (1:6-8). Many Christians have just enough faith to believe God saved them but that's about as far as it goes.
2. Our Lord said in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."
3. "The brother of low degree" (1:9) means low in income, not poor spiritually (cf. 2:5). He is to "rejoice in that he is exalted."
8. "Exalted" here means that he is a joint-heir with Jesus; he is accepted in the beloved; he is saved from hell and on his way to heaven.
9. On the other hand, the rich man should not rejoice in his wealth, but "that he is made low" (1:10).
10. Jeremiah 9:23, 24 says, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."
11. Earthly riches are destined to pass away "as the flower of the grass" (1:10, 11). James develops this theme later on (chapter 5).
12. Any trial that pulls us away from the love of money and directs our affections on things above is truly a blessing in disguise.

III. PRAYING STEADFASTLY

1. Trials produce endurance. There are many examples of this in Scripture. In chapter 5, James refers to Elijah the prophet. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (5:17, 18).
2. If you think you are going through a trial, consider Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are." Wicked King Ahab was on the throne.
3. Ahab's wicked wife Jezebel was killing the prophets of God, and supporting the prophets of Baal. So Elijah prayed earnestly and fervently. And James 5:18 says, "And he prayed again..."
4. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" – or trials (1:12), who can hold up well under pressure, and keep on praying, and keep on trusting the Lord.
5. James 1:12 says, "When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life."
6. There are two references to the crown of life in the Bible. To the church of Smyrna, our Lord said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).
7. The crown of life and all the other crowns will be given at the judgment seat of Christ. We are saved by grace but judged by our works (cf. Rom. 14:10, 12; I Cor. 3:12-15; II Cor. 5:10, 11; II John 8; Rev. 3:11).

CONCLUSION:

A number of years ago, Pastor WA Criswell told this story:

There was a man who had a little boy born into his home and the little fellow was born with a deformed foot. And as the little lad grew, and that deformed foot was so much a handicap to the little fellow, the loving father took the boy to the doctor, and to the doctor, and to the doctor, and none could help. And he took the little boy with the deformed foot to the surgeon, and to the surgeon, and to the surgeon and none could help. They gave him up, the little boy with the deformed foot. Do you know what the father did? He got books and books and books, and he studied and he studied and he read and he studied and he studied. He learned every bone in the foot, its every articulation; the tendon, the nerve, the muscle. He read and he studied. Then he made a strange-looking box with screws, with felt washers at such strange angles. And then he took his little boy and he put that deformed foot in that strange-looking box. And he tightened those screws. And the little boy cried. And the father tightened the screws, and the little boy was in an agony. The father came home from work in the evening and the little boy cried to his father and the father tightened the screws.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, when the father would come home from work, the little boy would cry in an agony and the father would cry and mingle his tears with the boy and tighten the screws! And the day came when the father unloosed the screws and opened the box and said to his son, "Son, stand up." And the boy stood up for the first time, erect. And as the days passed, the boy gained strength in his foot. And he walked erect, no deformity! That boy grew to be a man, and one day over the grave of his father, he wept tears of gratitude and loving appreciation. Maybe the father, being human, tightened a screw just one turn too much. But our heavenly Father never does, never. He knows exactly how much we can bear...He purposes in what He does, He means it good for us.