

## Knowledge in Trials Brings Joy

James 1:1-4

8/15/1999

The book of James, chapter 1. We'll read together verses 1 through 4. James, chapter 1, verses 1 through 4.

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

The book of James is a challenge to us to prove the validity and the reality of our faith in God by the way in which we live: Our motives, our attitudes, our values, our conduct—all of them serve either to prove or to disprove our claim to true saving faith. James seeks to set before us in this book what those motives, attitudes, values and conduct are which *do* demonstrate true saving faith, and what they are which disprove it.

Now the first area in which he sets forth as a test of genuine saving faith is our response to trials. The attitude that we have in the midst of trials and the development of character that flows *out* of those trials is a clear demonstration of the reality of our saving faith.

You see, both Christians and non-Christians go through trials and difficulties. Christianity does not exempt us from adversity. But the distinguishing difference between Christians and non-Christians is the way in which they respond to trials, and their attitudes in the midst of those trials. The unsaved respond with despair, with anger, and with a rejection of God. The Christian's response, on the other hand, is one of joy and of faith and of patience. And it is this response to trials that demonstrates genuine salvation.

Now last week, we began to consider together our attitude towards trials in verse 2, when it says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” And first of all last week, we considered our attitude towards fellow Christians who are *in* trials. And we saw that we should have concern for them and reach out to them and try and help them in any way in which we can. And we also saw that we are to have a concern for how they react to trials so that they might both uphold the honor of God, as well as profit from the difficulty by a proper response to those trials.

Then secondly last time, we considered our attitude towards the trials themselves, and we saw that we were to count it all joy when we fell into them. We saw that we were to command and control our feelings and attitudes towards trials by a rational process of reflection upon the biblical perspectives concerning it. How we think directly controls how we feel. And by marshaling our thoughts to reflect on biblical perspectives concerning our trials, our attitudes towards them can be controlled.

When we recognize that God is in control of our trials; when we recognize that God will give us strength and resources to cope with our trials; when we recognize that suffering for Christ is rewarded by Christ; when we recognize that our losses upon earth are recompensed in heaven;

when we recognize that suffering for Christ is proof that we will be *glorified* with Christ; when we recognize that suffering is something that God entrusts to His most *worthy* servants—then these things help us to have joy in the midst of our trials, even though the trials themselves cause us grief and sorrow.

And so then last time, having considered our attitude towards fellow Christians who are *in* trials, and having considered our attitude *towards* trials, then thirdly, we considered the trials themselves, and we saw that they are those into which we fall into, not those which we are to seek out. He says, “Count it all joy when you fall *into* various trials.” And so we are not to seek out trials. A perverse ambition for suffering or for martyrdom is utterly alien to Christianity. We may expect to fall into a wide variety of trials, based on God’s individual purposes for our lives in His providential dealings, but we are to use every lawful means possible to avoid them and to mitigate them that are at our disposal.

And so having then considered last time our attitude towards trials in verse 2, today we want to consider together the benefits that flow out of trials, as outlined in verse 3. So having seen then our attitude *towards* trials, today let us consider together the *benefits* that flow out of trials, as outlined in verse 3.

Now he says here in verse 3, “knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”

**1A In the first place then this evening, let us consider together the priority of knowledge in dealing with trials. The priority of knowledge in dealing with trials.**

Now for the Christian, the promise of Romans 8:28 is especially precious in times of trial. It says, “And we *know* that all things work together for good.” For us to *know* that God will bring good out of *all* things that He allows into our lives helps us to have an attitude of joy *towards* them. And so the key to having joy in trials is to *know* certain truths.

Now notice if you will, James 1 and verse 2. He says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, *knowing*...” And what he is saying is that we can have joy in the midst of temptations if we *know* certain things. Ignorance is the cause of a great deal of sorrow and failure on the part of Christians in the midst of trials. And what James is saying is that knowing certain truths is critical to being able to have joy in the midst of trials. And if you don’t *know* these things, then you’re not going to be able to have joy in the midst of trials.

Now of course, knowledge alone is not enough. We must exercise *faith* in relationship to that knowledge, and by faith *act* on that knowledge. He says, “Knowing this, that it is a trying of your *faith*.” And so knowledge is not divorced from faith, but neither is faith divorced from knowledge. But we must start with knowledge so that faith has something solid to act on. A faith apart from an accurate knowledge is merely a blind zeal that is almost always entirely destructive.

Turn in your Bibles please to Romans, chapter 10. In Romans chapter 10, we have a description of people who lacked proper knowledge. And it was precisely the lack of that proper knowledge that caused their faith, or their zeal, their desire to *do* something with reference to their situation, to be utterly misdirected. Notice if you will, Romans, chapter 10, verses 2 through 3. He says in

verse 1, “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge.”

And you see, these people were very zealous to do something with reference to God. But this zeal lacked proper information to direct it. Notice verse 3, “For they being *ignorant*”—there’s their problem—“of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”

And so what we have here is these people exercising some kind of faith apart from an accurate knowledge. And so they had this tremendous zeal, but the zeal was misdirected and in fact entirely destructive, because it was not exercised in accordance with knowledge. It flowed out of a result of ignorance. So it is imperative for us to realize the priority of knowledge in dealing with trials. And the key to having joy in trials is to *know* certain truths.

Now it is true that knowledge without faith is barren orthodoxy. But it is also true that faith without knowledge is merely destructive zealotry. To have knowledge without faith is like having a car that has a steering wheel, but no gas pedal. You know how to direct it and you have the means to direct it, but you’re not going anywhere because you have nothing to motivate it.

On the other hand, having faith without knowledge is like a car that has a gas pedal, but no steering wheel. It’s ready to go, but it doesn’t know where—and will generally wind up crashing into a guardrail, or going over a cliff.

And so what James does is, he starts with knowledge. And we must start with knowledge. And then act with faith *upon* that knowledge—“knowing” is where James starts in verse 3, and it is where we must start as well. Because if we do not rightly understand the purpose for trials, then we inevitably have a wrong response to them and the Devil wins the day, and we go down to defeat.

Turn in your Bibles please, if you will, to Philippians, chapter 4—the book of Philippians, chapter 4. Once again, notice Paul’s emphasis in this passage. Philippians 4, verses 11 through 12. He says with reference to his condition—you remember he’s in jail at this time—he says, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have *learned*, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I *know* both how to be abased, and I *know* how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am *instructed* both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

Notice in these two verses, he says, “I have learned,” “I know,” “I know,” “I am instructed.” And what Paul is saying is that the knowledge that he gained through learning and instruction was the basis for a godly response to the various circumstances in his life that would be prone to cause a lack of contentment, or an attitude of grumbling, or greed, in the midst of being either abased or abounding.

And so knowledge gained through learning was the basis for a godly response to the various circumstances of life. In prosperity, Paul was not corrupted, but he was thankful. And in adversity, he was not dejected, but he was joyful and peaceful. And why was he able to have these godly responses to his wide variety of circumstances? It was because of what he had learned, what he knew, what he knew and what he had been instructed with reference to. Because of the knowledge he had and what he learned, he was able to maintain a proper attitude in every circumstance.

Proverbs 24, and verse 5 says, “A wise man is strong. Yea, a man of knowledge increases strength.” And he’s not talking here about muscles. The strongness and the strength that he’s talking about here is strength of character, as well as strength in times of trial. The Scripture says, if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. And so those who faint in the day of adversity have little strength. They have little strength because they do not have wisdom and they do not have knowledge. It is *wise* men who are strong. It is a man of *knowledge* who increases strength. So the more you know, the stronger you’re going to be when times of trial and difficulty come.

Those who fail in trials are often those who are ignorant of biblical truth, and are therefore weak and faltering people. So we therefore need to labor to obtain the knowledge that will help us have a right understanding of the trials we find ourselves in, in order that we might be able to respond properly to them. James says, “Count it all joy when you fall into different kinds of trials, *knowing* this.” And it’s precisely the thing that we are to know that enables us to respond with joy.

Well, you might be asking, okay, I understand that knowledge will give me strength to have joy in trials. Precisely what knowledge is it that will give me that strength in order to enable me to have joy in trials? What knowledge is it that I must exercise my faith upon in order to be able to have joy in the midst of trials?

Well that brings us this evening to our second point.

## **2A Having seen the priority of knowledge in dealing with trials, notice secondly, the content of knowledge concerning trials—the content of knowledge concerning trials.**

The Scriptures provide us with many reasons that we can *know* as to why we may have joy in trials. And it gives us many perspectives that will help us to have a proper attitude in the midst of them. And of course, James immediately provides us with one of them when he says, “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience.”

And so James provides us with one of these reasons for having joy in trials, but there are many more mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures as well. And so what we’re going to do is not only look at what James says as to what we can know and understand that will help us have joy in trials, but we’re going to be looking at a number of other passages as well.

Notice then, first of all, that we can have joy in trials because trials produce of maturity of character. We can have joy in trials because trials produce *maturity* of character.

Now James tells us here that “the trying of our faith worketh patience.” Notice, you can’t just have knowledge, you also have to have faith. But it is that faith exercised in such a way that a particular virtue is produced, here labeled as “patience.” And of course patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is one of the characteristics of a mature and Christ-like character. To endure trials is a means of gaining Christ-like character traits, and this is one of the reasons why we can have joy in the *midst* of them. To endure trials, in order to gain a Christ-like character, is an excellent exchange.

Trials, you see, are temporary. But character is eternal. And the blessings that accrue to us from *being* Christ-like far outweigh any losses or pain that we may incur through trials. Now it is true

that the trial doesn't seem very pleasant. But afterwards, it yields fruit. And one of the fruits that it yields is a Christ-like character.

Now if you are a Christian, then to be like Christ is the greatest passion in your life—to be an imitator of Christ, to follow Him and to be like Him. And since that is your greatest passion in life, then you would be willing to do whatever it takes to achieve that and to endure that with joy, because the blessed result that you know will be the outcome.

So the first reason why we can have joy in trials is because trials produce maturity of character, and you can say, You know, I don't like this and this is a difficult situation I'm going through, but I know that if I respond to this thing properly—which we're going to investigate in verse 4 next Lord's Day, God willing—that I'm going to come out of this more like Jesus than I went *into* it. Now what could be better than that? And what could be designed to generate greater joy in you than that you would be more like your Savior?

Now, if you're unsaved, you think, Hah! That wouldn't bring *me* any joy! But you see, the heart of a Christian is different than the heart of an unconverted person. The heart of the Christian *pants after* conformity to Jesus Christ. Paul's great aspiration in the book of Philippians was that I may *know* Him, that I may be *like* Him, that I may be conformed to Him in every way possible. So this is the first reason why we can have joy in trials, because we know that although the trial isn't pleasant, it's going to mature and develop our character, and *that* is a blessed and happy result.

Secondly, trials—we can have joy in the midst of trials because trials prevent us from falling into sin. Trials prevent us from falling into sin.

Now in the book of Second Corinthians, chapter 12, Paul speaks of this effect of his trial in his life in these words. In Second Corinthians 12, verses 6 through 10, he says, "For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool..." You see, only fools glory in themselves. He says, "[F]or I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me about that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me." And then he says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

And so what Paul recognized is that because of the privileges he had of being caught up to the third heaven and seeing things and hearing things that were above and beyond what any ordinary mortal has ever seen or heard, lest he be puffed up with pride because of the privileges he had, God sent a trial into his life. And this trial is called "the messenger of Satan." It is called "the thorn in the flesh." And God gave him this trial or this difficulty in order to *prevent* him from falling into the sin of pride, or of being self-promoting or self-glorifying.

And so as a result of this thorn in the flesh, Paul was prevented from falling into this sin. And he, of course, sought the Lord three times that this might depart from him, but the Lord said to him, verse 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee. My *strength* is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong."

And so in verse 9, he talks about receiving strength. And in verse 9 he talks about receiving power. And in verse 10, he talks about being *strong*. What is all this strength and power with reference to? Well it is precisely with reference to *resisting* the sin of being self-exalted.

Now all of us have propensities for particular weaknesses: for some, it's propensity to lying; for some, it's propensity to pride; with some, it's a propensity to stealing; for others, it's a propensity to lust—sexual lust; with others, it's propensity to self-exaltation; the abuse of other people. Whatever our propensity for sin may be, one of the ways in which we gather *strength* and *power* to not fall *into* that sin to which we are so prone is through trials and difficulties, messengers of Satan to buffet us, and thorns in the flesh.

In First Peter, chapter 4, verses 1 through 2, Peter makes this stunning statement with reference to the relationship between trials and suffering and personal sanctification and prevention of falling into sin. He says in First Peter 4, verses 1 and 2, “Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind”—that is, the mind that we, too, are going to suffer in the flesh—“for, he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

And what Peter is saying here is not that those who have suffered have stopped committing *any* sin of any kind whatsoever and have reached sinless perfection. But what he is saying here is that suffering has a powerful deterrent effect in separating us from the practice of sin and will bring into our lives the cessation of *particular* sins.

The point is this: The greatest trial we can possibly experience is not as great an evil as the smallest sin that we can commit. Let me repeat that. The greatest trial that we can possibly experience is not as great an evil as the smallest sin that we can commit. And one of the things we need to realize is that if our trials are being used of God to separate us from our sins and to prevent us from falling *into* sin, then those trials can be received with joy. I mean, which would you rather have, a finger smashed or a bullet through the chest? Well, a finger smashed can never be as great an evil as a bullet through the chest.

And so if I realize, this trial in my life, as painful and difficult as it is, is saving me from an even *greater* pain and difficulty, namely, committing a sin against God, then I can receive that trial with joy. And that's why Paul can say things like this: “Most gladly, therefore, will I *glory* in my infirmities and take *pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses”—because if that's what it takes to keep me from falling into sin, I'm *glad*. I have *joy* that I have this instead of a commission of a sin.

So when we *know* that not only do trials produce maturity of character, but they also prevent us from falling into sin, then we can have *joy* in our trials because we know we're going to come out of it on the other side *more* mature and less sinful. And that's a source of joy to the heart of any Christian who hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and he strives for purity of heart—two of the Beatitudes, which are marks of a saved individual.

The third thing that can enable us to have joy in trials is we can have joy in trials because trials equip us for ministry to other people. Trials equip us for ministry to other people.

Now in Second Corinthians chapter 1, verses 3 through 4, Paul has this amazing perspective on his trials. Second Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 3 through 4, he says, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all of our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in *any* trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

In other words, what he is saying here is, Here we are—we’re in a trial. And God comes and comforts us in this trial and shows us how we should react to it and what the resolution is to it, and how to deal with it. And he says, that experience of going through that trial and having God deal with us *in* that trial is precisely the thing that equips us then to be more effective ministers in helping other people with reference to *their* trials.

And so what we go through in experience by way of help from God in times of difficulty gives us the ability to minister to others as we see God working in us and through us in our *own* trial. I am certain that there is no one who would be better equipped to comfort someone who has gone through a tragedy, who has gone through that *same* tragedy themselves—and who has, in the midst of that tragedy found the grace and the help and the mercy of God, and thus can take those very lessons and convey them to other people.

Now oftentimes, we as Christians pray, “Lord, use me. Help me to be able to serve you. Lord, give me a ministry. Open doors of opportunity for service.” Well, the Lord has to equip us. And one of the ways that He does that is through trials. So as you’re going through your trials, know this—not only does that trial produce maturity of character so that you’ll be more like Christ on the other side, not only does it prevent you from falling into sin so you can be more holy on the other side—but also, it equips you for ministry to others so you can be a greater servant to God on the other side of it, and more effectual in helping other people.

Fourthly, we can have joy in the midst of trials because trials provide opportunity for evangelism. Trials provide opportunities for evangelism.

Now, the classic illustration of this, and there are many, is in the book of Acts, chapter 16, verses 16 through 31. You remember Paul had gone to Philippi in Acts 16, and he had cast a demon out of a woman, and when her master saw that their hope of gain was gone, because she used to tell fortunes through her demonic indwelling, they stirred up the magistrates against Paul and against Silas, and caused them to be beaten. It says, “When they had laid many stripes on them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.” Now, if that isn’t a trial, I don’t know what is.

It says, “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed”—out loud, obviously—“and sang praises to God”—out loud, obviously, because it says, “and the prisoners *heard* them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s bands were loosed and the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. [Then] he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Now what provoked him to ask that question? It was precisely his observation of the conduct and attitude of Paul and Silas in the midst of their trial—as he saw the way these men responded to their trial. He saw them praying and singing praises to God when they had just been *beaten* to a pulp, and were in the most miserable of conditions. It must have moved upon his heart to say, What kind of a God do these people have, that in the midst of their trials, they have joy?

And you remember last Lord's Day, we talked about upholding the family name and reputation of God by having a proper response to trials. And here is a perfect illustration of how by *doing* that, they brought credit to God and they brought a sinner to Christ. And so, our response to trials will attract attention and inquiry for the Gospel and will make Christ either attractive or else *mocked* at, based on how we respond to the trials we have. When someone is going through trials and they're down and depressed and despair and despondency, what they're really saying to people is, You know, I really don't have a God that can help me in times of difficulty. And I really don't have a God who's sovereign that I can trust. And I really don't have a God who is personal and real. All that "God-talk," that was for the good times, but now, I'm in as much despair as anyone else.

So we can have joy in trials because as we're going through the trial, we can say, Aha! I have an opportunity by having joy in this, perhaps to lead someone to Christ! And instead of sitting there moping about your trials, you're saying, How can I display such an attitude that people will look at my trials and they'll look at me and say, "Man, that person's religion has credibility!"

Fifthly, we can joy in trials because trials bring glory to God. We can have joy in trials because trials bring glory to God.

Now there's an episode recorded which we're going to be preaching on in John, chapter 9, verses 1 through 3, in which it says, "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." Now is that a trial? That's a trial. "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? And Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents." And what this is telling us is that not all trials are the result of chastisement for sin. Some of them are to produce maturity of character. Some of them are to keep us from falling into sin. Some of them are for the purpose of equipping us for ministry. Some of them are to provide us with opportunities for evangelism. And in *this* case, the purpose was to provide glory to God. He says, "Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

And as you read the rest of this story, you see the tremendous glory that was brought to God as a result of the healing of this blind man, and how he came to faith in Christ and how God's glory and Christ's identity was declared before all of the religious leaders and the people.

And in fact this is exactly what First Peter, chapter 1 and verse 7 tells us one of the purposes of trial are, when it says, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And so praise and honor and glory is going to accrue to Jesus Christ, as a result of us going through trials, when He appears.

Now once again, the heart of the true Christian is that he wants to glorify God as his chief purpose in life. You remember the first question in the Catechism is, “What is the chief end of man?” It is to glorify God—and to enjoy Him forever.

And so we’re told in the book of First Corinthians that “whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.” And so our purpose in life and our desire is, What can I do to display God’s glory? Well, one of the ways in which His glory is displayed is through us going through trials. They are an opportunity to display His power in deliverance, His wisdom in their management, and His goodness in bringing out good from the midst of evil.

And so people not only learn something about the Gospel through our sufferings, but they also learn something about God. What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight? They were singing praises unto God and God was being glorified through their trials.

So if you have a desire to bring glory to God to display His attributes to a watching world, to illustrate His character to those who are observing you, then ask yourself, How can I in the midst of this trial *display* the glory of God? And if God is glorifying Himself in this trial—isn’t that what the book of Job is all about? I mean, why did he go through all that stuff? Well, in order to declare something about God. And we see that God was glorified in Job’s sufferings, and the Devil was actually and entirely defeated in that episode.

And so we can have joy in the midst of our trials because we know that by responding to them properly with joy, God is getting glory to Himself. And if no other benefit accrues from our trials than that, the trials have been well worth it.

Sixthly, trials—we can have joy in trials because trials correct us for our sins. We can have joy in trials because trials correct us for our sins.

Now as I said, not every trial is chastisement for sin, but certainly some of them are. And this is what we read in Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 5 through 11. Hebrews 12, 5 through 11 says, “You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” So what is this trial? It is a *rebuke*. We’ve been doing something wrong, God has come to put a stop to it.

Verse 6, “For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards”—that is, illegitimate—“and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, in order that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.”

And so what is being said here is that sometimes God brings trials into our life as a *rebuke* to us, as a *correction* to us, for a sin that we have stubbornly and willfully persisted in, after God has been patient with us, after He has rebuked us through the Word and by the Spirit and in our conscience. If we do not turn from our sins, then He will turn up the heat.

Now the reason why we can have joy even when we are being chastised for our sins is because we recognize, You know, when this is over with, I'm going to be a more holy person. Because, you see, the purpose of it is that we might be partakers of His holiness. And when it's done, the peaceable fruits of righteousness are going to be in my life.

And you see, *these* are the causes for joy in the midst of trials, even when we're being corrected for sins by them, is that these trials are saving us from apostasy by arresting our course of sin, number one, and number two, they are *proving* our sonship and adoption by God.

And so when you fall into sin, and you persist in it, and you do not repent of it, and God pleads with you through His Word and His Spirit and his ministers—all to no avail—then God will begin to bring trials into our lives in order to scourge us, to correct us, to rebuke us. Why? Because He doesn't want us to go into that ultimate and final apostasy that will damn our souls to hell. That's why. Because a Christian *must* persevere. And if he doesn't, he's damned. And God graciously ensures our perseverance by chopping off our courses of sin through chastisement.

And so we can say in the midst of trials that are brought by chastisement, O God, I'm joyful in this trial because I know that it shows I'm your son. I know that it shows that you love me too much to let me go on in this soul-destructive and ultimately soul-damning sin, and that the peaceable fruits of righteousness will be the result. And so you can have joy in those—knowing those things, even when you're going through those difficulties.

So knowing that these good outcomes are being wrought by God—did you hear me? *Knowing?* *Knowing* that these good outcomes are being wrought by God in and through our trials—*knowing* that causes us to be able to have joy.

Now if you *don't* know any of that, and you don't reflect on it by faith and interact with it by faith, you're never going to have joy in your trials. You can't. See, if you lack knowledge of the things I've just spoken of, even though you've got all the faith in the world, that faith has no direction. And so, therefore, it cannot be exercised in such a way as to produce joy.

On the other hand, if you have the knowledge of these things, but you don't exercise any faith in them, then you're never going to take action with reference to them, and thus begin to be able to produce joy.

Now let me ask you a question. Entirely apart from any trials whatsoever. Let's just take trials and let's just cross them off and say they didn't exist—entirely apart from them. Would you be joyful if you were being matured in your character into consistent and increasing Christ-likeness? Would you be joyful if you were being kept from committing sin? Would you be joyful if you were being equipped for ministry to others? Would you be joyful if you were being given opportunities for evangelism? Would you be joyful if you were being used to glorify God? Would you be joyful if you were being kept from apostasy and having your adoption before God confirmed?

Well if so, when you keep those things in your mind as you're going through trials, when you *know* that these are the outcomes of the trials and that the trials are specifically designed to

*produce* these outcomes, then there is every reason to be joyful in them. But apart from knowledge, and apart from the exercise of faith, you will never have joy. But you can count it all joy when you fall into different kinds of trials, *knowing*, and exercising the faith that is being tried with reference to that knowledge, and in light of that knowledge. And it is the combination of knowledge and faith operating together that will cause our disposition to rise above despair and discouragement, and to joy and rejoicing in the midst of our trials.

We must remember that we are in our trials by God's appointment. We are under His care. We are in His time of training for as long as He sees fit to accomplish the purpose. And God recognizes that to accomplish these six things in our lives, He must bring trials into our lives.

And so trials are not because God's mad at you, and God doesn't care about you, and God is just wanting to increase your personal agony. But it is precisely because God has these six goals that He is pursuing in *bringing* trials into your life and *causing* you to fall *into* them. And when we recognize that this is God's purpose, that the scalpel in the hand of the surgeon is designed to heal, the trials are like the surgeon's knife in the hand of God. They are not like the assassin's knife, designed to destroy. And we can have joy.

And so I trust that you will exercise yourself to *learn* and to *know* and to *remember* these perspectives, and then act your faith *upon* them, and thus generate a disposition of joy with reference to them. It's not going to happen automatically or by accident. It's going to take a conscious determined effort on your part to let *these* things be the dominate controlling thoughts in your mind—not, Woe is me.

Let us pray together. Father, thank you for the trials that you have brought, are bringing, and will bring into our lives. Father, to know that we are being matured into a Christ-like character; to know that we are being hindered from falling into sin; to know that we are being equipped for ministry; to know, Father, that we are enabled to glorify you, and to be given opportunities for evangelism; to be prevented from apostasy. Father, to know these things—what a joy that is. To know that you are working all things together for good. To *know* that! And then to mix it with faith and let our zeal rise with our knowledge and our disposition and proclamation to be that God is good and He does good.

Father, thank you that your *ends* are always holy and just and good. Help us then, Father, not to be deceived and discouraged by the Devil, who would tell us that we are abandoned and that you are cruel and uncaring. Father, we know better than that. For the God who had sent His Son for us would not then abuse us.

Father, help us to be a joyful people. And as Paul says in Philippians 4 and verse 4, to “rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice.” Because we know, and because we have faith, that you are working those things for our specific good. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.