

2. TRIALS and JOY

We can find five different topics in verses from 2 to 8.

TRIALS, PERSEVERANCE (PATIENCE), WISDOM, PRAYER AND FAITH.

Let's look at them closely one at a time.

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

It says that we should rejoice when we are in trials and tests. That doesn't mean we should go around and giggle and laugh for all the bad circumstances we have. When our closed one dies, or you have a car wreck, or someone we care get hurt or get sick, we are not suppose to laugh and have a ball. God gave us our emotion. Among our emotions, sadness is one of them. It is OK to cry for our loved one's death. It is OK to sadden by our loved one's sickness. And it is OK to be angry for unjust in our lives. But it is up to our spiritual maturity to realize that in the midst of our trials and tests we can lean on His everlasting arms and find rest and comfort in Him who cares about us more than we can imagine. The joy mentioned in here is not a giggling joy or fun. It is like a quiet smile hang around our mouths. Or we may not even be able to smile due to tremendous hurt around us. But knowing that His promises are good and He will see to that He will carry you through whatever the trouble or test or trial you face.

By the way in Greek, the words 'temptation' and 'trial' are the same word. When God use trial to train us, satan tempts us while we are in the midst of that trial. When satan tempts, God uses it as the time of trial to strength our characters.

A. THE PROMISES OF GOD

God's promises are such as:

Joshua 1:5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

Heb 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

These two verses tells us that we should rejoice in trials, persecutions, afflictions, sufferings, of one kind or another, endurance of which proves our faith, and helps build us into the kind of person that Christ came to make of us. Apostle Peter called trials PRECIOUS in 1 Peter.

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:3-5 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

B. OPTIMISTS vs. PESSIMISTS

We can divide people in two categories. One is optimist, and another one is pessimist. An optimist has a tendency to look at everything too lightly. But their good

character is realizing that "It could be worse. From now on it will be better." attitude. Usually people who have this kind of attitude win eventually. Because they don't give up that easily. They try harder next time and succeed.

A pessimist is rather careful. These kind of people look at everything carefully and measure everything. The bad thing about this character is after they look at the situations, they give up, plop down and pout like cry-babies. They become victims not victors.

We see the people on TV or read about the people who resist, fight and stand up against all the odds. Those odds can be their physical sickness or handicaps, mental disability, financial difficulty and so on. We love to see their winning spirits. We cheer for their hard efforts. Because they are the victors. But let's face it. Don't you think that they face one difficulty after another day after day? Did they crumble under pressure? No, they fought and they won.

C. THE BIBLICAL CHARACTER EXAMPLES

Let's look at two different situations in the Bible:

1) JOSEPH

Joseph helped himself to get into trouble by showing off his coat of many color which was made by his father Jacob. Sold into slavery; ended up in Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh, falsely accused as an attempt rapist; thrown into prison; forgotten by a friend who was helped by Joseph, yet he did not lose his heart and kept his faith in God who can do all things. The reward was awesome. He became the second in command in Egypt.

2) JOB

Job had it all. He was a loaded man with mucho money. Because God lifted up His protection from Job against Satan, Satan did real number on Job and ruined everything Job had. His livestock, servant, house, all of his seven children. His wife encouraged him to curse God and die. What a gal!!! Yet he did not lose his heart and realize that his God is bigger. This is the part where we hear that one of the most profound words;

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Sometimes we get ourselves into troubles, or sometimes trouble just includes us. Whatever the situation is, we are the one who dictate the next situation. Yes, it might even go worse when you think that it just cannot go any worse than now. As God allowed Satan to attack Job, God allows these trials and tests to come into our lives to bring out our human characters and mold us into His Son's image.

Remember? When we came to be Christians, we prayed that we want to be like Him? God has very good memory. He honors that prayer and He will see to that we get our prayer answered. I don't know why God uses difficulty and tests and trials to mold us. I suggested to the Lord for using less painful, less difficult way, or just sending me a note or two to let me know that my characters need to be changed. I don't understand it. But the Father knows the best!

Ps 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.

We are not suppose to depend on our strength nor our Bible knowledge nor willpower nor spiritual maturity, but depend on His unchanging Word and everlasting promises and Almighty Power. That is the place where we find our joy and quiet smile.

Ps 61:3-4 For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah

D. BE A CAREFUL OPTIMIST

I believe that God wants us to be careful optimists. I believe that God wants us to be victors not victims. Instead of sitting on our hands and pouting, God wants us to stand up and look up to heaven and smiling with confidence coming from the Spirit and with knowledge coming through Jesus our Savior from the Father.

J. Vernon McGee once said, "There is more immaturity in the main sanctuary of the church than in the nursery. The immature babies in the nursery are cute, but the immature Christians in the sanctuary are not cute, unless you are a new born Christian." Even though it is a church's fault not teaching the Word of God without compromise, but the bottom line responsibilities falls onto each Christian's heart. We are supposed to seek His Word and let the Holy Spirit guide us with His Word in our lives. One of the reason why there are a bunch of immature Christian running around like chickens without heads is they don't take trials and tests as growing pains for their Christian lives.

James 1:2 says, "*count it all joy when you fall into various trials*" it didn't say "if you face trials". Nobody likes trials and tests. But they are there and we will have them in our lives. The main point of this is what our attitude should be willing to learn from these trials and tests. We can pout and wimp around and try to get pity from everyone around us. Or we can stand up with the strength coming from the Lord Jesus and learn everything He stored up for us so that we may grow and be used by Him.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) God uses our trials to grow us up in His ways.

Caribbean pine trees routinely withstand fierce hurricanes, long periods of drought, and even fire. But one thing they cannot tolerate is cultivation. In a well-kept yard with plenty of water and fertilizer, they often die. We tend to be like those pine trees. During good times, we may grow complacent and lose our effectiveness for Christ. But blasts of trial remind us of our need to depend on Him. When we fell our weakest, we can actually be the strongest.

2 Cor 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2) Trials & tests are a part of God's designated courses for all of us.

There are some Christians thinking that God is obligated to give us everything we ask for whether it is in His will or not, as long as we want He has to provide them for us. Also they think that trials should not come to any solid Christians. If you think the same way those people do, you would be one of the most frustrated Christians on the face of this earth. Because they do nothing but spinning the wheel with God. They wouldn't understand why God would do such things like that.