

Learning to Grow Through Trials

James 1:1-8

Familiar passage...but needs to be reinforced

Why? Because trials are part of the fabric of the Christian's life

Job 5:7...man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward

Setting...NT "wisdom literature"

**James refers to wisdom 4 times in his epistle...James 1:5, 3:13, 3:15, 3:17
(wisdom from above 3:13-18)**

Starting point of the letter... and this passage...Imperative

Mental...consider (verse 2)...knowing (verse 3)

The importance of the "mental game"...Goaltending

The goalie has one of the most mentally demanding positions in any sport. When you combine the speed and mental skills required of a goalie with the danger of the sport, ice hockey is tops...Sean McCann, sport psychologist for the US Olympic Committee states boldly, **"Thoughts impact behavior...and consistency of thinking results in consistency of behavior. If one seeks to perform reliably between the pipes, then his preparation should guide his thinking and game behavior accordingly."**

Between the Pipes: Mental Toughness Tips for Goalies

<https://www.podiumsportsjournal.com/2011/10/28/between-the-pipes-six-mental-conditioning-tips-for-becoming-a-braintough%E2%84%A2-goalie/>

We are to respond based on what we know to be true vs "how we feel"...not stoic indifference, but believing trust

A matter of perspective...J B Phillips paraphrase...welcome trials as friends not intruders

"2-8 When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realise that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort

of independence. And if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God—who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty—and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God’s help or not. The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations, is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next. That sort of man cannot hope to receive anything from God, and the life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn.”

Certainty...”when” not if...inevitable

What is a trial?

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

the trial of man's fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy, etc...also an enticement to sin, temptation, whether arising from the desires or from outward circumstances

Trials can, and often do, precipitate temptations, such as...

Self reliance...but Proverbs 3:5,6

Bitterness/resentment...vs joy 1 Thessalonians 5:16

**Fear...some are prone to “catastrophizing” (worst possible outcome etc.)
Joshua 1:6-9**

Anxiety/Worry..Philippians 4:6,7 and 4:8 (note that Paul associates our “mental game” with how we respond to trials)

How? Consider what you know about God. What do you believe?

Omniscient? Yes. He knows...

Omnipresent? Yes. He is with us...

Omnipotent? Yes. He can do exceedingly more than we ask or even imagine...

Wise? Yes. He is the fountain of what we need most in the midst of trials...a God centered mindset.

Good? Yes. He does what is good for us and brings Him glory...

Personal? Yes. He is actively engaged in our lives...

Purposeful? Yes!

“Providence”...WSC definition... “God’s most holy, wise and powerful governing and preserving all His creatures and all their actions”

What is God’s purpose in trials? Endurance (James 1:

Endurance- Gk. hupomone...”bear up under pressure”

Not avoid but bear up under pressure

What is the endgame of trials? Conformity to Christ

James 5:11...”We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the *endurance* of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.”

Philippians 1:6...He who began a good work...will complete it

See also Romans 5...exult in tribulations knowing...

Romans 5...Therefore, **having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but **we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.****

Note that Paul speaks of justification and peace with God before he goes on to address tribulations

Once you know you have peace with God, trials fall into proper perspective

1 Peter 1 ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are **protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the **proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;** ⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls

Romans 8:29 (in context)...

Romans 8:²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

How do I respond in this way? I need wisdom?

What is wisdom? Skill in living

Ask of whom? Others? God...yes.

Question...What is our reflexive, instinctive response?

How do we pray?

Plead the promises...be specific

Ask in faith...faith honors God

How do you pray?

Specifically?

Expectantly?

Believingly?

Boldly?

Waves...no inherent structure, form (driven and tossed)...their shape is driven by external forces

Help me in my unbelief...Mark 9...Lord if you can...If I can?

*²¹ And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²² It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But ***if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!***” ²³ ***And Jesus said to him, “If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.”*** ²⁴ ***Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.”****

What does God accomplish in our trials?

Weans us from our idols. Our instinctive response to loss can be quite revealing.

Breaks the bonds of sinful affections.

Psalm 119:67...before I was afflicted I went astray

Psalm 119:71...it was good for me that I was afflicted

Psalm 119:75...in faithfulness You have afflicted me

Psalm 119:107...I am exceedingly affected; Revive me O Lord according to your word

Equips us to serve others with hearts of compassion...2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Affirms the genuineness of our faith...1 Peter 1:7

Fosters communion with God...Isaiah 40:31

“When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realise that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence. And if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God—who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty—and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him.”