

Triumphing Through Trials

E.T.S.: James opens his epistle to Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire with instructions about a proper view of trials which, if adopted, leads to enduring through the trial.

E.S.S.: The text provides four characteristics that we should develop as believers in Jesus.

Christ Follower: Cooperate with God's work to produce these qualities in you.

Christ Seeker: Understand that Jesus alone provides salvation that yields eternal life.

Illustration

Woodworking is a hobby that I do not have the opportunity to enjoy often enough. Whether following a plan or going “off-script”, it is always neat to see a project come together to a finished and successful product.

However, there are times during a project when it can be difficult to see it. Even when following a plan, I may reach a step where it doesn't immediately make sense to my reasoning. I see what I have and what the plan tells me to do next, but it's difficult to understand why I should do that now or even at all.

Even at the beginning, it can be difficult to see. How are these pieces of rough lumber going to

become that!

Introduction

How does this compare to the way we experience life? Our lives are a series of steps designed to work toward a finished and successful product (Philippians 1:6). God is the Designer, and Christ-likeness is the design (Romans 8:29).

Bible

(6) Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 1:6 - KJV

(29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 8:29 - KJV

Introduction

We find it difficult to understand and accept some of the steps that God uses to accomplish the task. When we experience these steps, what the Bible often calls trials, we struggle to come to terms with them.

Some clarification is always needed at this point. God will use all of your experiences to work toward the finished and successful product that He designed you to be, but that does not

mean that He is the direct or active cause of all your experiences. God is not the agent of everything you have experienced or will experience. It's not our purpose within the scope of this message to treat this issue exhaustively, but we need to understand this.

That brings our attention to James chapter one. James, the half-brother of Jesus and early leader of the church at Jerusalem, wrote to believers scattered throughout the Roman empire to encourage them about trials.

Follow along as I read the first twelve verses of the chapter.

Bible

(1) James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. (2) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (3) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (4) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (5) If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (6) But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. (7) For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. (8) A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (9) Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: (10) But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. (11) For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it

perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. (12) Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

James 1:1-12 - KJV

Introduction

In our text, James shows us that triumphing through trials takes place as we adopt and develop four qualities.

1...We need to Adopt and Develop a Joyful Spirit (v. 2)

Explanation

In connection with this command, several characteristics of the trials on James's mind come to the surface.

Trials are not considered a possibility or even a probability, but an inevitability. When, not if.

These trials are trials that are encountered, not created or caused. “Trials that originate outside of us could include being dragged into court (2:6), lacking material resources (2:15), verbal abuse (3:9–10; 4:11), being the victims of divisiveness and quarreling (4:1), structural economic injustices (5:4–6), sicknesses (5:14), and any general kind of “trouble” (5:13)” (Teach the Text).

Illustration

Michael as a 20 month old falling into a hole in the ground in the backyard of papa and grandma's house.

Explanation

Divers temptations identifies trials of all kinds. This is especially true for the Christian because we experience suffering common to humanity, as well as suffering specific to the believer.

Application

Our challenge is to settle in our hearts to be joyful, even through trials.

“The word ‘count’ has the notion of making a deliberate, conscious, and rational choice (see 2 Cor. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; 3:7–8; Heb. 11:26). The Greek word order emphasizes the words ‘joy’ and ‘trials.’ It is not intuitive that trials should cause joy, so James asks his readers to make a deliberate effort to set aside their natural inclinations of fear, discouragement, and anger and choose to be joyful in the midst of trials” (Teach the Text).

The question is how...The remaining traits build to answer the question and show us how we can count it all joy. However, let me also point out that joy is a response to your walk with God. Just earlier this week I read this.

Bible

(11) Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right

hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 16:11 - KJV

Application

Transparently, joy doesn't come natural to me. I am not the person who wakes up with a joyful disposition. To be honest, I struggle with something I would guess many of us do...looking for joy in the what. I look for joy in the circumstances, in the what is going on in my life.

Spoiler: Joy will not be found in the what.

Joy is not about the what. Joy is about the Who!

Today, Lord, help me to find joy in the Who, rather than looking for joy in the what.

2...We need to Adopt and Develop an Understanding Mind (vv. 3, 12)

Explanation

There is unexpected blessing produced in trials for the present and the future.

What is tested when we experience trial?

Our faith. This identifies our faith as valuable. The testing of our faith produces faith that is more valuable still having added endurance.

Application

Maintaining a joyful attitude is helped by having an understanding mind that God uses our trials to produce something in us that is of value.

3...We need to Adopt and Develop a Surrendered Will (vv. 4, 9-11)

Explanation

Experiencing the productiveness of trials is accomplished as I choose to yield to the Lord and cooperate with Him in the work.

Illustration

Verses 9-11 present a practical illustration of the leveling of our identity in Christ and trials.

Application

Cooperate with God in the work and respond according to obedience.

Explanation

Along with endurance, the trying of your faith produces spiritual maturity. Perfect means complete and entire means complete in all it's parts. One can be mature and still need to grow, as Paul identifies of himself in Philippians 3:13-15.

Bible

(13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Philippians 3:13-15 - KJV

Application

So, we can count it all joy because we realize that our faith's testing brings us to the place of being all that God wants us to be.

4...We need to Adopt and Develop a Believing Heart (vv. 5-8)

Explanation

Wisdom is active, not passive; knowledge put into action. As one teacher put it wisdom is "skill for living. Wisdom is not primarily knowledge, but godly behavior in difficult situations."

The question we often ask when we experience trial is "why?"

The true question that man needs the answer to is "how?" or "what?"

Bible

(13) I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. (14) Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalms 27:13-14 - KJV

Application

We can put into action the knowledge we have received trusting God to do what He says He will do.

Conclusion

I am not sure who needed this message today and why you needed it. However, I know that someone did. God's word promises His blessing for those who endure trial. You can if you will adopt these four traits as your outlook and response to trials of faith.