

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

1. REVIEW

A. **James 1:2-4 (NASB)** Consider it all **joy**, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **knowing** that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And **let** endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

B. **NOTE GOD DOES NOT CAUSE “TRIALS” BECAUSE HE IS A GOOD FATHER.**

1. LIKE A **GOOD FATHER** HE **USES** “TRIALS” TO **MATURE US**.

2. GOD DOES **NOT ALLOW** “TRIALS” TO MAKE US **FALL**, THEY **ARE** MEANT TO MAKE US **SOAR**,

3. GOD DOES **NOT ALLOW** “TRIALS” TO **DEFEAT** US, THEY **ARE** MEANT TO **BE DEFEATED**,

4. GOD DOES **NOT ALLOW** “TRIALS” TO MAKE US **WEAKER**, THEY **ARE** MEANT TO MAKE US **STRONGER**,

5. **THEREFORE**, JAMES SAYS... WE SHOULD **NOT COMPLAIN** ABOUT “TRIALS” ... WE CAN HAVE AN **ATTITUDE** OF “**JOY**” AS WE GO **THROUGH** THEM..

2. **THREE ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS:**

A. THE FIRST **ESSENTIAL** ELEMENT FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS** IS: **A JOYFUL ATTITUDE** ... “**CONSIDER IT ALL JOY** WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER **VARIOUS TRIALS**” ...

B. THE SECOND **ESSENTIAL** ELEMENT FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS** IS: **AN UNDERSTANDING MIND**... “**KNOWING** THAT THE **TESTING** OF YOUR **FAITH** PRODUCES **ENDURANCE**.”

C. THE THIRD **ESSENTIAL** ELEMENT FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS** IS: **A SURRENDERED WILL**... “**LET** **ENDURANCE** HAVE ITS PERFECT RESULT SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE LACKING IN NOTHING”.

3. THE FIRST **ESSENTIAL** ELEMENT FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS** IS: **A JOYFUL ATTITUDE** ... “**CONSIDER IT ALL JOY** WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER **VARIOUS TRIALS**” ...

A. **NOTE OUTLOOK** DETERMINES **OUTCOME** AND **ATTITUDE** DETERMINES **ACTION**.

B. **REMEMBER** THAT WHEN WE **CHANGE** THE WAY WE **LOOK** AT **THINGS** (“**TRIALS**”)... THE **THINGS** WE **LOOK** AT (“**TRIALS**”) **CHANGE!!**

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C. JAMES TELLS US THT CHRISTIANS SHOULD EXPECT TRIALS.

1. IT IS **NOT** A MATTER OF **"IF"** WE WILL **"ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS"**, **BUT...** **"WHEN"** WE WILL **"ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS"**.
 - a. THE **BELIEVER** WHO **EXPECTS** THEIR **CHRISTIAN LIFE** TO BE **"TRIAL"** **FREE** IS IN FOR A **SHOCK**.
 - b. **IF** CHRISTIANS **LEARN** TO **ACCEPT** THAT **"TRIALS"** ARE A PART OF LIFE AND THAT GOD WILL **USE** **"TRIALS"** TO **MATURE** US... WE WILL **NOT** BE SO **SURPRIZED** WHEN THEY COME... AND WE CAN **RESPOND** **INSTEAD OF REACTING**.
 - 1) **RESPONDING** **INSTEAD OF REACTING** IS 50% OF THE VICTORY!

D. A LOOK AT SOME REASONS WHY "TRIALS" COME IN CHRISTIANS LIVES:

1. **"TRIALS"** COME BECAUSE OF THE **"WORLD"** WE LIVE IN.
 2. **"TRIALS"** COME BECAUSE WE ARE **HUMAN** (**"FLESH"**)
 3. **"TRIALS"** COME BECAUSE OF **SATAN** AND HIS **DEMONS** ("according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
 4. **Ephesians 2:1-3 (NASB)** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of **this world** (**WORLD**), according to the **prince of the power of the air** (**SATAN**), of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the **lusts of our flesh** (**FLESH**), indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
4. THE SECOND **ESSENTIAL** ELEMENT FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS** IS:
AN UNDERSTANDING MIND... **"KNOWING** THAT THE **TESTING** OF YOUR FAITH **PRODUCES ENDURANCE**.
- A. **WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS "KNOW"** THAT MAKES IT **EASIER TO TURN TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS?**...
1. WE SHOULD **"KNOW"** THAT **FAITH** IS **ALWAYS TESTED**.
 2. WE SHOULD **"KNOW"** THAT THE **"TESTING OF OUR FAITH"** ACTUALLY **PROVES** THAT WE ARE **BORN AGAIN**.
 3. WE SHOULD **"KNOW"** THAT **"TRIALS"** WORK **FOR US**, **NOT AGAINST US** **BECAUSE SCRIPTURE** SAYS THAT IS TRUE:

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- a. Romans 8:28 (NASB) 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.
- b. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NASB) For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1) MOMENTARY... LIGHT AFFLICTION. VERSUS...

1. ETERNAL... WEIGHT OF GLORY.

2) THINGS SEEN... TEMPORAL. VERSUS...

i. THINGS NOT SEEN... ETERNAL.

4. CHRISTIANS SHOULD “KNOW” THAT “TRIALS” RIGHTLY USED HELP US TO MATURE.

- a. Romans 5:3-5 (NASB) And not only this, but we also exult (= “JOY”) in our tribulations (“TRIALS”), knowing that tribulation (TRIALS) brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and 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.

B. THE “TESTING OF FAITH” HERE IS NOT INTENDED TO DETERMINE WHETHER A PERSON HAS “FAITH” OR NOT... IT IS INTENDED TO PURIFY AND STRENGTHEN THE “FAITH” THAT ALREADY EXISTS.

1. ANOTHER WORD FOR “ENDURANCE” (NASB) IS “PATIENCE” (KJV, NKJV)

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- a. THE GREEK WORD FOR “ENDURANCE/PATIENCE” PAINTS A WORD PICTURE OF THE QUALITY THAT IT TAKES FOR A RUNNER TO FINISH A MARATHON.

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- 1) **NOTE** THE **PURPOSE** OF **"TRIALS"** IS **NOT** TO **SNAP** OUR **FAITH** **MUSCLES...** **BUT**, TO **STRETCH** AND **STRENGTHEN** OUR **FAITH** **MUSCLES** PRODUCING **"ENDURANCE"** TO **FINISH** THE **RACE**.
 - a. IN THE **BIBLE** **"PATIENCE/ENDURANCE"** IS **NOT** A **PASSIVE** **ACCEPTANCE** OF **CIRCUMSTANCES...**
 - b. IT IS **COURAGEOUS** **PERSEVERANCE** IN THE FACE OF **SUFFERING** AND **DIFFICULTY** (**"TRIALS"**).
 - 1) **NOTE** **GOD** WANTS US TO BE **"PATIENT"** BECAUSE **"PATIENCE"** IS THE **KEY** TO **EVERY** **OTHER** **BLESSING**.
 - 2) **WHEN** BELIEVERS LEARN TO **WAIT** **ON** **GOD'S** **TIMING** (**"PATIENCE"**) THEN **"PATIENCE"** **CAN**, AND **WILL**, DO **GREAT** **THINGS** FOR **US**.
 - c. **REMEMBER** THE **WAY** **GOD** **DEVELOPS** **"PATIENCE/ENDURANCE"** IN OUR LIVES IS THROUGH **"TRIALS"**.
 - d. **"ENDURANCE"** CAN **NOT** BE **ATTAINED** BY **PRAYER** OR BY **LISTENING** TO A **SERMON**.
 - 1) **"ENDURANCE/PATIENCE"** COMES FROM **GOING** **THROUGH** THE **DIFFICULTIES** OF **LIFE** (**"TRIALS"**) WHILE **TRUSTING** AND **OBEYING** **GOD**.
2. **SONG** **"THROUGH IT ALL"**
2. THE THIRD **ESSENTIAL** ELEMENT FOR **VICTORY** **IN** **TRIALS** IS: A **SURRENDERED** **WILL...** **"LET** (**SURRENDER** OUR **WILL**) **ENDURANCE** HAVE ITS PERFECT RESULT SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE LACKING IN NOTHING".
 - A. **NOTE** **GOD** CAN **NOT** BRING US TO **SPIRITUAL** **MATURITY** IF WE **RESIST** **GROWTH** DURING **"TRIALS"**.
 1. **DISCUSS** **WAYS** WE **RESIST** **GROWTH** **DURING** **TRIALS**.
 2. **IF** WE **RESIST** HIM HE **ALLOWS** **MORE** **"TRIALS"** ... IF WE **SUBMIT** TO HIM DURING **"TRIALS"** HE **WILL** **MATURE/GROW** US **SPIRITUALLY**.

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- B. REMEMBER GOD'S PRIMARY GOAL FOR OUR LIVES IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY.
- C. THREE WORKS INVOLVED IN OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY:
1. FIRST, THE WORK GOD DOES FOR US... SALVATION.
 2. SECOND, THE WORK GOD DOES IN US... SANCTIFICATION.
 3. THIRD, THE WORK GOD DOES THROUGH US... SERVICE.
 - a. NOTE GOD BUILDS CHARACTER (SPIRITUAL MATURITY) BEFORE HE CALLS US TO SERVICE.
 - b. AND HE BUILDS CHARACTER IN US THROUGH SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION.
- D. HOWEVER GOD CAN NOT WORK FOR, IN, AND THROUGH US WITHOUT OUR CONSENT.
1. THEREFORE WE MUST "SURRENDER OUR WILL" TO HIM BEFORE HE CAN WORK FOR, IN, AND THROUGH US.
 2. IF WE TRY TO GROW THROUGH "TRIALS" WITHOUT SURRENDERING OUR WILLS... WE WILL BECOME MORE LIKE IMMATURE CHILDREN THAN MATURE ADULTS.
- E. GOD CAN USE "TRIALS" TO WEAN US AWAY FROM CHILDISH PRIDE... BUT IF WE DO NOT SURRENDER OUR WILL TO HIM WE MAY BECOME MORE PRIDEFUL AND MORE IMMATURE!
3. CONCLUSION: JAMES SAYS THAT WHEN BELIEVERS RESPOND TO "TRIALS" WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD AND A DETERMINATION TO ENDURE, WE WILL MATURE INTO A WHOLENESS OF GODLY CHARACTER.
- A. IN SHORT... "TRIALS" CAN RESULT IN SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.
- B. AND... REMEMBER THAT GOD'S PRIMARY GOAL FOR ALL CHRISTIANS IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY.
4. WISDOM

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- A. James 1:5 (NASB) But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- B. DISCUSS WHY DO YOU THINK JAMES DISCUSSES “WISDOM” IMMEDIATELY AFTER 3 VERSES ABOUT “TRIALS”?

- 1. James 1:2-4 (NASB) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (SPIRITUALLY MATURE).
- 2. THREE ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS:
 - A. THE FIRST ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS IS: A JOYFUL ATTITUDE ... “CONSIDER IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS” ...

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- B. THE SECOND ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS IS: “AN UNDERSTANDING MIND... “KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE.”
5. THE THIRD ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS IS: A SURRENDERED WILL... “LET ENDURANCE HAVE IT’S PERFECT RESULT SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE LACKING IN NOTHING”...