

JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

LEST WE FORGET – JAMES 1:2-4

1. REVIEW

A. THE **CENTRAL THEME** OF THE BOOK OF JAMES IS **SPIRITUAL MATURITY... SPIRITUAL GROWTH.**

1. GOD WANTS US TO **GROW UP (MATURE)** IN OUR **FAITH...** AND **JAMES TELLS US HOW TO DO IT!**

B. **REMEMBER: EVERY CHRISTIAN WHO GROWS OLD DOES NOT GROW UP!**

1. MANY OF THE **PROBLEMS** IN CHRISTIANS PERSONAL LIVES, IN OUR **FAMILIES**, AND IN OUR **CHURCHES** ARE **CAUSED BY SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY.**

a. IF WE WILL JUST **CHOOSE TO GROW UP SPIRITUALLY** WE WILL BECOME **VICTORS** IN LIFE INSTEAD OF BEING **VICTIMS!**

C. **DISCUSS: THE TOOL** MOST OFTEN USED BY **CARPENTERS.**

1. **JESUS WAS IS A CARPENTER** AND HE WANTS TO **BUILD/MATURE** CHRISTIANS USING **HIMSELF AS THE STANDARD.**

2. **REMEMBER: THE THEOLOGICAL TERM FOR THAT P-R-O-C-E-S-S** OF **SPIRITUAL MATURITY** IS **SANCTIFICATION = CHRIST-FORMATION.** (THE STEPS ARE: **SALVATION, SANCTIFICATION, GLORIFICATION.**)

3. **SANCTIFICATION** IS A **TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESS.**

a. GOD WANTS EACH OF US TO BE **TRANSFORMED** INTO THE **IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST...** THEN **SLOWLY** WE WILL **BEGIN TO:**

1) **THINK** LIKE **JESUS THINKS.**

2) **SEE THINGS** THE WAY **JESUS SEES THINGS.**

3) **TREAT OTHERS** THE WAY **JESUS TREATED OTHERS.**

4) **RESPOND TO TRIALS** THE WAY **JESUS RESPONDED TO TRIALS.**

D. **TIMOTHY SAID... 1 Timothy 4:7** "Spend your time and energy in the **exercise** of keeping **spiritually fit.**"

1. THE **PRIMARY WAYS** WE "**EXERCISE**"/**MATURE/GROW SPIRITUALLY** ARE:

a. **BIBLE STUDY.**

1) **INCLUDING BEING OBEDIENT** TO WHAT **GOD'S WORD TEACHES US.**

2) THE **BLESSINGS/GROWTH/MATURITY** DO **NOT** COME IN **JUST STUDING** **GOD'S WORD... BUT IN DOING WHAT IT SAYS!**

i. **James 1:22-25 (NASB)** "But prove yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely **hearers** who **delude themselves.** For if anyone is a **hearer** of the word and **not a doer**, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. **But one who looks intently at the perfect law (GOD'S WORD), the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer,** this man will be **blessed** in what he **does.**"

ii. THE **REAL EXAMINATIONS** IN **BIBLE STUDY** COME IN THE **SCHOOL OF LIFE** ("TRIALS")... **NOT** IN THE **CLASSROOM!**

b. **PRAYER.**

c. **CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.**

d. ... AND **MATURING/GROWING** THROUGH "**TRIALS**".

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2. **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.”
 - A. **James 1:2-4 (NLT)** “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”
 - B. **NOTE: AFTER HIS INTRODUCTION JAMES GOES IMMEDIATELY TO:** “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance...”
 - C. **IMPORTANT NOTE: GOD DOES NOT CAUSE “TRIALS” BECAUSE HE IS A “GOOD FATHER”... BUT, HE DOES ALLOW THEM.**
 1. AND LIKE A “GOOD FATHER” HE USES “TRIALS” TO MATURE US.
 - D. GOD DOES NOT ALLOW “TRIALS” TO MAKE US FALL, THEY ARE MEANT TO MAKE US SOAR,
 - E. GOD DOES NOT ALLOW “TRIALS” TO DEFEAT US, THEY ARE MEANT TO BE DEFEATED,
 - F. GOD DOES NOT ALLOW “TRIALS” TO MAKE US WEAKER, THEY ARE MEANT TO MAKE US STRONGER,
 - G. THEREFORE, JAMES SAYS... WE SHOULD NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT “TRIALS” ... WE CAN HAVE AN ATTITUDE OF “JOY” AS WE GO THROUGH THEM.
 1. **WHY CAN WE HAVE AN ATTITUDE OF “JOY” THROUGH “TRIALS”?... “BUT GOD”!**
 - a. **Genesis 50:20 (NASB)** "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”
 - b. **NOTE: GOD ALLOWS “TRIALS” BECAUSE WHILE HE CARES ABOUT OUR HAPPINESS... HE CARES MORE ABOUT OUR HOLINESS = SPIRITUAL MATURITY!**
 - H. **3 ESSENTIALS FOR VICTORY THROUGH “TRIALS”:**
 1. THE FIRST ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS IS: A JOYFUL ATTITUDE ... “CONSIDER IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS” ...
 2. THE SECOND ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS IS: AN UNDERSTANDING MIND... “KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE”.
 3. THE THIRD ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR VICTORY IN TRIALS IS: A SURRENDERED WILL... “LET (ALLOW) 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 OUR OUTLOOK DETERMINES THE OUTCOME AND OUR ATTITUDE DETERMINES OUR ACTION.**
 - B. **REMEMBER THAT WHEN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT THINGS (“TRIALS”)... THE THINGS WE LOOK AT (“TRIALS”) CHANGE!!**
 - C. **JAMES TELLS US THT CHRISTIANS SHOULD EXPECT TRIALS.**

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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 **FREE OF “TRIALS”** IS IN FOR A **SHOCK** AND **WILL BE DISILLUSIONED WHEN “TRIALS” COME.**
 - 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 CAUGHT OFF GUARD **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.**
 - a. **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:**
 - 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...**

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- i. 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 SPIRITUALLY.**
 - 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 GROW AND STRENGTHEN THE “FAITH” THAT ALREADY EXISTS.
 1. ANOTHER WORD FOR “ENDURANCE” (NASB) IS “PATIENCE” (KJV, NKJV).
 - a. THE GREEK WORD FOR “ENDURANCE/PATIENCE” PAINTS A WORD PICTURE OF THE QUALITY THAT IT TAKES FOR A RUNNER TO FINISH A MARATHON.
 - 1) NOTE THE PURPOSE OF “TRIALS” IS NOT TO SNAP OUR FAITH MUSCLES... BUT, TO STRETCH AND STRENGTHEN THEM, PRODUCING “ENDURANCE” TO FINISH THE RACE.
 2. IN THE BIBLE “PATIENCE/ENDURANCE” IS NOT A PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR CIRCUMSTANCES...
 - 1) IT IS COURAGEOUS PERSEVERANCE IN THE FACE OF SUFFERING AND DIFFICULTY (“TRIALS”).
 3. NOTE GOD WANTS US TO BE “PATIENT” BECAUSE “PATIENCE” IS THE KEY TO EVERY OTHER BLESSING.
 - a. WHEN BELIEVERS LEARN TO WAIT ON GOD’S TIMING (“PATIENCE”) THEN “PATIENCE” CAN, AND WILL, HELP TO MATURE US SPIRITUALLY.
 - b. REMEMBER ONE WAY GOD DEVELOPS “PATIENCE/ENDURANCE” IN OUR LIVES IS THROUGH “TRIALS”.
 - c. “PATIENCE/ENDURANCE” CAN NOT BE ATTAINED BY PRAYER, OR BY LISTENING TO A SERMON, OR BY BIBLE STUDY, OR BY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.
 - 1) “ENDURANCE/PATIENCE” COMES FROM GOING THROUGH THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE (“TRIALS”) WHILE TRUSTING AND OBEYING GOD’S

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PURPOSE FOR OUR **SPIRITUAL GROWTH** (“TRUST AND OBEY FOR THERE’S NO OTHER WAY TO BE HAPPY IN JESUS, BUT TO TRUST AND OBEY”).

5. 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... IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT GOD ALLOWS MORE “TRIALS”!**
 - a. **IF WE SUBMIT TO HIM DURING “TRIALS” HE WILL MATURE/GROW US SPIRITUALLY.**
 - B. **REMEMBER GOD’S PRIMARY GOAL FOR OUR LIVES IS NOT HAPPINESS... IT IS HOLINESS = SPIRITUAL MATURITY!**
 - C. **THERE ARE 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.**
 - 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.**
6. **CONCLUSION: JAMES SAYS THAT WHEN BELIEVERS RESPOND TO “TRIALS” WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD AND A DETERMINATION TO ENDURE, WE WILL MATURE INTO A WHOLENESS (“BE COMPLETE”) OF GODLY CHARACTER = SPIRITUAL MATURITY.**
 - A. **IN SHORT... OUR “TRIALS” CAN RESULT IN SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.**
 - B. **AND... REMEMBER THAT GOD’S PRIMARY GOAL FOR ALL CHRISTIANS IS OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY.**
 - C. **PLAY “THROUGH IT ALL”**

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