

TAUGHT THROUGH TRIALS

© 1997 by Mark Beaird and Tim Dubberly

Text: James 1:2-8

When was the last time you had a trial come your way? Maybe you're in a trial right now! You're not alone. We've all been through times when we just felt like tossing in the towel, having a break down, or just screaming to release the tension. The really bad thing is that most of the time we can see it coming and still it seems impossible to get out of the way.

■ Here are EIGHT WAYS YOU CAN TELL IT IS GOING TO BE A ROTTEN DAY, with which you may be able to identify.

1. You see a "60 Minutes" news team in your office.
2. You call Suicide Prevention and they put you on hold.
3. You turn on the news and they are showing emergency routes out of the city.
4. Your twin sister forgot your birthday.
5. Your car horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels on the freeway.
6. Your boss tells you not to bother to take off your coat.
7. Your income tax check bounces.
8. You put both contact lenses in the same eye.

(Hewett, 18)

At times like these, it is good to know that you are a Child of God. In fact, James has a great deal to say about the Children of God in times of trials.

HE WANTS US TO KNOW...

I. THERE IS A RIGHT WAY TO RESPOND TO TRIALS (v.2).

A. We must realize that trials are inevitable.

James said, "Count it all joy WHEN you fall into divers temptations," WHEN, not IF. Trials are inevitable and for a reason. Each trial is a test of our faith in God.

■ Peter said in I Pet. 1:7, "That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

B. We must realize that each test or trial will help us to grow and mature spiritually.

God helps us develop and mature so we can maintain victory over sin. As a all knowing God, He knows what we can endure. As a loving God, He will not let the test be more than we can bear, but He always makes a way of escape.

■ Paul wrote, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (I Corinthians 10:13)

C. We must realize that we can face our trials with JOY.

James admonishes us to, "Count it all joy." Joy comes from the belief that God is about to do something good. When our faith is tested and tried, rejoice by faith, knowing that God is about to do something good.

James wants us to know...

II. WE CAN LEARN TO APPRECIATE OUR TRIALS (v.3).

A. We must recognize trials for what they are.

■ James said, "Knowing that the testing of your faith" (or that our faith will be tried).

Trials are opportunities for us to see the power and glory of God. Remember, that which is being accomplished is greater than our suffering.

■ Peter writes, "Beloved do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12, 13)

■ When they first manufactured golf balls, they made the covers smooth. Then it was discovered that after a ball had been roughed up, one could get more distance out of it. So they started manufacturing them with dimpled covers. So it is with life; it takes some rough spots in your life to make you go your farthest. (Hewett, 12)

Only when we realize that God is using all the trials and attacks of the devil to make us strong can we appreciate each trial. There are trials that come simply because we are human. Other trials come because we are Christians.

B. We can be destroyed by our trials *or* we can learn from them.

■ Vance Havner wrote concerning the "Use of Broken Things." God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume...it is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever. (49)

C. We can appreciate trials by recognizing their importance to us.

Biblical patience is not a passive acceptance of circumstances; it is a courageous perseverance in the face of suffering and difficulty. However, impatience is always a sign of immaturity.

■ Someone wrote, "In order to realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the stress of the storm."

Yet, James assures us...

III. WE CAN OVERCOME THROUGH OUR TRIALS (vv.4-8).

A. We overcome by letting patience run its course (v.4).

God wants to increase our ability to be patient because it is the key to every other blessing. When the believer learns to wait on the Lord, then God can do great things for him.

The way the Lord chooses to develop patience and character in our lives through trials.

Endurance cannot be attained by reading the Bible. Endurance cannot be attained by listening to a sermon. Endurance cannot be attained by prayer only. Endurance can only be attained by going through the difficulties of life.

B. We overcome by learning the power of prayer (v.5).

Pray and ask for wisdom to understand the trial. God will give us the spiritual understanding or the spiritual significance of the trial if we ask.

■ Warren Wiersbe says, "The trials of life are not all alike; they are like variegated yarn that the weaver uses to make a beautiful rug. God arranges and mixes the colors and experiences of life. The final product is a beautiful thing for his glory." (338)

C. We overcome when we pray in faith believing (vv.6-8).

Praying without faith is equal to trying to gain a firm footing on a raging sea. It is useless and fruitless. The individual who does not exercise his or her faith has no right to expect to receive anything from the Lord!

CONCLUSION

We often complain about our trials and tribulations without stopping to reflect upon the benefits we gain from them. God is not unjust nor is He uncaring -- He is simply wiser than we are. What God is trying to accomplish in our lives many times cannot be seen by us until afterward.

■ Many years ago, there was found in an African mine the most magnificent diamond in the world's history. It was presented to the king of England to blaze in his crown of state. The king sent it to Amsterdam to be cut. It was put into the hands of an expert lapidary. And what do you suppose he did with it? He took the gem of priceless value, and cut a notch in it. Then he struck a hard blow with his instrument and -- lo! -- the superb jewel lay in his hand cleft in two. Did he do this out of recklessness, wastefulness, and criminal carelessness? Indeed not! For days and weeks that blow had been studied and planned. Drawings and models had been made of the gem. Its quality, its defects, its lines of cleavage had all been studied

with minutest care. The man to whom it was committed was one of the most skillful lapidaries in the world.

Was that blow a mistake? No! It was the climax of the lapidary's skill. When he struck that blow, he did the one thing which would bring that gem to its most perfect shapeliness, radiance, and jeweled splendor. That blow which seemed to ruin the superb precious stone was, in fact, its perfect redemption. From those two halves were wrought two magnificent gems which the skilled eye of the lapidary saw hidden in the rough, uncut stone as it came from the mine.

Sometimes God lets a stinging blow fall upon your life. The blood spurts; the nerves wince. The soul cries out in agony. The blow seems to you an appalling mistake. But it is not. For you are the most priceless jewel in the world to God. And He is the most skilled lapidary in the universe.

Let us beware of questioning the methods and approaches of almighty God. We lie in His hands and He knows just how to deal with us. (Hewett, 15)

References

- Hewett, James S. (1988). *Illustrations unlimited*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
Havner, Vance. (1983). *Pepper 'n' salt*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
Wiersbe, Warren W. (1989). *The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.