

"Strength for the Storm"
"How to Think in Tough Times"
James 1:2-4
3-26-17 Sun AM

No matter what the trials may be on the outside (James 1:1, 12) or the temptations on the inside (James 1:13), through faith in Christ we can experience victory. The result of this victory is spiritual maturity.

There are two different Greek words used in these two verses.

- In verses 2-12, the temptations are what we might call holy **trials** or problems which are sent from God, and which test the reality of our faith and produce likeness to Christ.
- In verses 13-17, on the other hand, the subject is unholy temptations, which come from within, and which lead to sin. The Christian life is filled with problems. They come uninvited and unexpected.

Sometimes they come in droves. They are inevitable. James does not say "if **you fall into various trials**" but **when**. We can never get away from them in this body and life.

The question is, "What are we going to do about our trials?" "How are we going to think in tough times so we can have strength for the storm?"

I like what the BBC says, "There are several possible attitudes we can take toward these testings and **trials** of life. We can rebel against them (Heb. 12:5) by adopting a spirit of defiance, boasting that we will battle through to victory by our own power. On the other hand, we can lose heart or give up under pressure (Heb. 12:5). This is nothing but fatalism. It leads to questioning even the Lord's care for us. Again, we can grumble and complain about our troubles. This is what Paul warns us against in 1 Cor. 10:10. Another option—we can indulge in self-pity, thinking of no one but ourselves, and trying to get sympathy from others. Or better, we can be exercised by the difficulties of life (Heb. 12:11). We can say, in effect, "God has allowed this trial to come to me. He has some good purpose in it for me. I don't know what that purpose is, but I'll try to find out. I want His purposes to be worked out in my life."

TT- If we are going to have strength for the storm, we must obey three imperatives in our text: count, know, and let.

I. Count (1:2). Attitude

God tells us to expect trials. It is not if, but when. The believer who expects his Christian life to be easy is in for a shock.

Some trials come simply because we are human — sickness, accidents, disappointments, even seeming tragedies. Other trials come because we are Christians.

The key word is **count**. It is a financial term, and it means "to evaluate." When we face the trials of life, we must evaluate them in the light of what God is doing for us.

This explains why the dedicated Christian can have joy in the midst of trials: he lives for the things that matter most. Even our Lord was able to endure the cross because of “the joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2), the joy of returning to heaven and one day sharing His glory with His church.

Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to “count it all joy.”

So, when trials come, immediately give thanks to the Lord and adopt a joyful attitude. “But how is it possible to rejoice in the midst of trials?” The second imperative explains this.

I. Count (1:2). Attitude

II. Know (1:3). Mind

Q- What do Christians know that makes it easier to face trials and benefit from them?

1. Faith is always tested.

God always tests us to bring out the best; Satan tempts us to bring out the worst. The testing of our faith proves that we are truly born again.

2. Testing works for us, not against us.

The word trying can be translated “approval.” Trials work for the believer, not against him.

Paul said, “And we know that all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28); and, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

3. Trials rightly used help us to mature.

What does God want to produce in our lives? Patience, endurance, and the ability to keep going when things are tough.

Rom. 5:3-4, “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

It is a courageous perseverance in the face of suffering and difficulty. God wants to make us patient because that 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 only way the Lord can develop patience and character in our lives is through trials. We must go through the difficulties of life, trust God, and obey Him. The result will be patience and character.

Knowing this, we can face trials joyfully. We know what trials will do in us and for us, and we know that the end result will bring glory to God.

I. Count (1:2). Attitude

II. Know (1:3). Mind

III. Let (1:4). Will

God cannot build our character without our cooperation. God wants a perfect work; He wants a finished product that is mature and complete. God's goal for our lives is maturity.

Many Christians shelter themselves from the trials of life, and as a result, never grow up. But God cannot work in us without our consent. There must be a surrendered will. The mature person does not argue with God's will; instead, he accepts it willingly and obeys it joyfully.

If we try to go through trials without surrendered wills, we will end up more like immature children than mature adults. God uses trials to wean us away from childish things; but if we do not surrender to Him, we will become even more immature.

We have three imperatives from James so we can have strength for the storm and think right in tough times-

- count — a joyful attitude;
- know — an understanding heart;
- let — a surrendered will.