

# Whitewater Ahead!

James 1:2-4

Pray:

**Thrust:**

God is sovereign over our trials, which are designed to bring us to maturity. By recognizing this, having the proper attitude, and asking God for wisdom; we are able to endure the trials of life through His grace and to His glory.

Let's be honest: our lives are full all kinds of trials. In the midst of life, this world places demands upon us and confronts us with challenges. Challenges in our family, in our workplace, in our community... in ways that are painful and sorrowful. Confronts us with things that bring failure and tears, doubts and disappointments, cries and groanings. Hardship and difficulty, trouble, various forms of suffering; small trials and big trials come to all of us at some time or another.

Video Clip: "They will never Raft again."

<https://youtu.be/UUU17IqOSR8?t=16>

< ...tie back into rafting analogy...>

For many of us, our lives *have* been marked by difficult days. Some, over a long period of time, have been wrestling with illness or with family circumstances that just seem never, ever to quit; some with relationships; others with unfulfilled hopes and dreams; still others buffeted by disappointment and by doubts and darkness. Loss is painful, trials are difficult, and troubles *hurt*.

<sup>2</sup> *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,*

Later in James, we will see that “various trials” would 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), sickness (5:14), and any general kind of ‘trouble’ (5:13).

But, here in verse 2, as Sam Allberry noted, “James deliberately keeps his language general, and it is great that he does. It is easy when undergoing hardship to think that our particular situation is different to everybody else’s, that the normal rules don’t apply, and that we are an exception to the rest. But by keeping his language broad, James is showing us that what he is about to say applies to us all. If he had specified a particular trial he had in mind, it would be too easy for the rest of us facing different situations to excuse ourselves from what he is saying.” (*James for You*, pgs 13-14)

Now, James is sensitive to what his people—his readers (we)—are facing, he addresses very quickly and very practically the facts of life which are inescapable, unavoidable, and experienced by everyone—namely, that the Christian life is full of tests and trials.

And, what does James say?

<sup>2</sup> *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,*

<sup>2</sup> *When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my*

*brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!*

The New Testament in Modern English by J.B Phillips

The Perspective (...requires a joyful attitude)

What?

<sup>2</sup> *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials*

< ...tie back into rafting analogy...>

<sup>2</sup> *Consider it ...* This is a command, an imperative, it's a verb that addresses how we think. It is also a financial term ("count") and it means "to evaluate"

So, it's important to recognize what he is *not* saying.

As Blomberg and Kamell put it, "James does not command us to wear our 'happy faces' that so many seem to think are required in Church or in other Christian circles." (*James*, pg 59)

He's not suggesting that trials in and of themselves are a source of joy. But what he is saying is this: they may become the occasions of rejoicing *if* we respond to them from the right perspective.

Perspective is crucial. The right perspective is fundamental to the right response. Unless we think correctly, we cannot respond properly. It is thinking correctly that enables us to respond properly.

Sometimes we wonder why the "minor" trials are even there, and then when the "major" trials come, the tragedies and the difficulties that make the everyday trials seem so small, we wonder what James is thinking when he tells us to consider all of these things as "pure joy."

It takes some "renewing of the mind" (Romans 12:2) to get this, because it is a paradox, isn't it?

But God is not asking from us what He is unable or unwilling to provide for us.

<sup>2</sup> *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials*

It's much the same as what we find one book back in Hebrews, where the writer to the Hebrews says,

*“No punishment is enjoyable at the time, but it produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it.”* Hebrews 12:11

(I'm not equating trials to punishment here...just try to see the train of thought.)

When a child is disciplined, if they stiffen their necks, if they grow resilient and resistant to it—they are not trained by it.

Most of us can look back to our own childhood and admit to seeing this in ourselves; and, as parents, we may even have seen this in our own children.

You might think of it this way: that any benefit that we receive from going through trials and difficulties is directly related to the perspective with which we view them and the spirit in which we respond to them.

... *“In the world,” Jesus says, “you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33

God is encouraging us to embrace trials not so much for what they are but for what God sovereignly accomplishes through them. David Platt would suggest (*Exalting Jesus in James*, pgs 6-9) that we can learn at least four things in trials that should cause us to rejoice.

We learn to grow in His likeness. (v.3-4)

We learn to trust in His wisdom. (v.5-8)

We learn to rely on His resources. (v.9-11)

We learn to live for His reward. (v.12)

The Process (...requires an understanding mind, a surrendered will, and a believing heart)

We learn to grow in His likeness. (v.3-4)

Let's move into verse 3 and verse 4, where he outlines the process or the sequence that results in the finished product.

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup>*knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* <sup>4</sup>*And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

<sup>2-4</sup> *When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character...*

The New Testament in Modern English by J.B Phillips

<sup>3</sup> *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance*

First of all, there is faith. (Before it can be tested, it has to be there.)

James is writing here not to people who are interested in religion, but he is writing to people who have come to understand that Jesus is their Savior. They are aware of the fact that by their nature they are unfit, they are unable to rectify their circumstances, and they have discovered in Jesus the only one who *can* save them, deliver them. They are people who have received Him and who have believed in Him. (John 1:12)

Faith. Then, faith put to the test.

Trials are the means by which our faith, our Christian life, is tested. The test is to look for the *genuine* nature of faith, and the test is to look for the *growing* nature of faith.

Warren Wiersbe, put it this way: “Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and the physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to ‘count it all joy.’ If we live for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better.” (*Be Mature*, pg 23)

*<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>8</sup> and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

1 Peter 1:6-9 (NASB)

How do we find out whether we have genuine faith? In the test! In the midst of the trials!

*<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance*

Faith, faith put to the test, then endurance.

<Lisa, marathon training. Couch to 5K>

And our heavenly Father knows how much we can take.

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* <sup>4</sup> *And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

<sup>6</sup> *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*      Philippians 1:6

And the good work that he brings to completion is to make us like Jesus. To bring us to maturity.

“If we stop and think about it, this is what we should long most for: to become more whole (or “complete”) in Christ; to know him more fully and intimately. And it is trials that give us this opportunity to mature in our faith. In fact, we can’t get there without trials. This is how Christian life works; faith grows through learning to persevere in hardship.”  
(Allberry, James For You, pg 14)

The apostle Paul says something similar in his letter to the Roman church

<sup>3</sup> *And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;* <sup>4</sup> *and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.*      Romans 5:3-4

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* <sup>4</sup> *And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*<sup>12</sup> Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Do we believe it?

Because if we do, it will change dramatically the way we respond to our trials

Let's pray.