

Title: The Trying of Your Faith

Text: James 1:1-12

Would you turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of James. The book of James chapter 1. I am beginning this morning a series of messages from the great book of James. A book which Martin Luther decided should not be included in the N.T. He felt that it was deining the Gospel of grace as found in the book of Romans. And he felt that it didn't belong in the Bible. However, he later with drew that statement. As he discovered that what James is talking about is that salvation in Christ, or faith in Christ, produces something. If a person is truely saved, if he has true faith, it is going to show in his life. That is the Theme of this book. It is what James is concerned about. In other words, James is concerned about the "HOW TO'S" of a person's salvation. While Paul deals with the bases of salvation. That is..How it starts. Salvation starts with faith. You receive Christ by faith. But, James says that if that faith is real it will show in a person' life. There will be evidences that you are saved.

So, I am looking forward to this series of messagaes, as we look at the HOW TO'S OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. James chapter 1 beginning with Vs 1.....

(Read James 1:1-12)

PRAYER

Our Father in Heaven, we would ask that you would quiet our hearts at this time. We pray that you would give us a new sense of your presence. Give us an understanding that this is the WORD OF GOD. And we pray that we would give careful attention to the things that we shall hear.

Our Father, we pray, that you would speak to our hearts about this matter of "TRAILS AND TESTINGS." We know there are many broken hearts, and hearts of people who hurt, today. And Father, I pray, that the trying of our faith may becme a great blessing and joy to us. And we pray this in the precious name of Jesus, our Saviour.....Amen.

Many Christians have a difficult time explaining why trials come into their lives. Why do we face the things that we do? It almost seems that when a person becomes a Christian the road is tuffer than when he wasn't. It seems as though the problems get wrose and the trails greater, the burdens heavier, and some of us come to the point of breaking down and saying, WHAT IS THE USE.

It reminds me of a young Christian who was working for a man who wasn't a Christian. The boss often made fun of the Christian because he was a Christian. And the boss keep remarking that Satan was always bothering him. It seemed like from week to week the Christian would have one trail after another..one problem after another. And this boss would make fun of this young Christian, saying: "HOW RIDICULOUS, SATAN BROOTHERING YOU ALL THE TIME. SATAN NEVER BOTHERS ME. HOW COME I NEVER HAVE THESE TRAILS THAT YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME?"

One day the boss took this young Christian with him out to hunt ducks. They were out hunting ducks and the boss was shooting away and he killed several and he wounded some others. And the wounded ones began to take off. And the boss shouted at the young man, "GO AFTER THEM BEFORE THEY GET AWAY."

When the young Christian came back with the ducks, he began to laugh. The boss ask, "WHAT IS WRONG. WHAT IS SO FUNNY?"

The young man answered by saying that he finally knew why Satan doesn't brother you and why he bothers me. It is because you are like those dead ducks. You are dead. And Satan goes after the live ones, like me...

And that is so true. According to the Bible, one who is not a Christian, who has not experienced new life, regardless of his church background, if he hasn't got new life in Christ, if he doesn't have a personal relationship with Christ, he is dead, just like those ducks.

And as a result, Satan, isn't interested in you. He already controls your life. Whether you realize it or not. But, the Christian is constantly being bombarded by Satan in his effort to defeat the Christian, and to make him appear to be a totally depressed, discouraged individual that no non-believer would want to be.

Now, what do we do about trials? James was written to a group of people as you will notice from Vs 1: a group of people who were under persecution. "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed or scattered abroad, greetings."

Why are these people scattered: Because of persecution. They are not even in their home land, They are scattered abroad because of persecution.

O.K...In chapter 1 beginning with Vs 2, (1A) we are going to look at HOW TO LIVE WITH FAITH AND TRIALS. And (1B) first of all, James deals with the subject of THE TRYING OF OUR FAITH. And that is what we are going to look at today. THE TRYING OF OUR FAITH.

I believe James is saying three things concerning the TRYING OF OUR FAITH. (1C) Number one, James is saying in Vs 2-8 that the trials of our faith result in valuable experience for us. The trials that we face as Christians result in valuable experiences for us. And I think that this experience falls into three areas. It falls into the areas of JOY(Vs 2), patience (Vs 3), and Faith(Vs 5)

(1D) Notice Vs 2, "consider it ^{all} ~~a~~ joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." This word "trials" is referring to "testings." It is not talking about the doing of evil. It is talking about the testing of our faith.

The little word "all" means "every little specific thing." The whole panorama of events and things that could possibly happen to you. "CONSIDER IT ALL JOY, MY BRETHREN." And especially when you ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS." The word "encounter" means "to be submerged in all kinds of testings."

So, James is saying to count everything...everything..JOY...

Now, that is difficult to do, especially when tragedy hits our lives. Death in the family, serious illness, physical handicaps, financial pressures, mental and emotional strain, divided homes, bad relationships between employees and employers, and difficult situations between members of the church. But, our Lord is saying through James "COUNT EVERYTHING AS JOY.

Problems and trials---WHY DO THEY COME? They come because they result in a valuable experience of JOY. After all, the keynote of the Christian life is JOY. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is LOVE, JOY. Paul says "to rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say REJOICE.

How can a christian live a defeated life when his joy should go far beyond the outward circumstances? Do you know what I mean? You see, the kind of joy that James is talking about goes behind mere happiness. It is more than that.

For example: the little boy who receives a piece of candy is happy because he received candy. But, that is not what God is talking about.

And yet, many of us will not be happy. We will not have JOY until God chooses to give us candy which we think are blessings.

Dear friends, when you go through a trial, God will bring blessings. He is bringing valuable experiences in JOY. The kind of JOY in a person's heart regardless of what the outward circumstance might be.

Do you understand? You are happy in the Lord. WHY? Because you are in the Lord. As the Psalmist says: "IN THEIR PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY.

Dear friends, the testing and trials come into our life because God wants to us them to produce experiences of JOY in our life.

(2) But, trails also gives us ^o valuable experience in PATIENCE (Vs 3-4) We read, "knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance(or patience) and let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

I would like you to notice the word "Perfect." The word "perfect" is not in the sense of "I do not sin." The word "perfect" has the idea of "complete." or "a finished ^{or mature} product." God is saying, let patience have its complete ~~work~~ ^{or mature work}

Now, what are we like? We get down in a bed of affliction and immediately we start complaining. Many times when I talk with people in the hospital they ask: "Why, did God let this happen to me?"

What did James say, "Let patience have her complete work." For we will understand later. "Let patience have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Isn't that a wonderful state to be in - not desiring anything. Wanting nothing. Lacking nothing.

Testings and trails ^{or} gives us valuable experience in patience. It reminds me of the patient that ask his doctor: "Doctor, how long do I have to lie here in this bed?" The doctor answered: "I think, only, one ~~day~~ ^{day} at a time."

~~How~~ many of us need to learn that lesson. We can only live today. ^{Right?} We cannot live a year from now, or a month from now, or a week from now, or a day from now. We can only live today. Let patience have its perfect result. THE TESTING OF OUR FAITH PRODUCES PATIENCE.

(3) ~~But~~ there is a third area where we get valuable experience. Beginning at Vs 5 down through Vs 8. We get valuable experience in the area of FAITH.

Now, faith rest on our understanding of wisdom. We need wisdom to know why we must go through the things we go through. Where do we get wisdom?

(READ VS 5 AND 6 UNTIL YOU COME TO WORD FAITH)

Faith...The trying of our faith results in valuable experience in Faith. Because it takes faith to believe that God is working His plan through us. Thus, there is a need for wisdom. "And unless there is within us, that which is above us, we shall soon yeild to that which is about us." What a need there is for faith and wisdom from God to understand this.

Now, let me ask you a question? WHAT ^{Does} ~~DOE~~ IT MEAN TO ASK IN FAITH? Maybe you are here, today, and you have heard before: "Only have faith and you will receive salvation in Christ." WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ASK IN FAITH? HOW DOES A PERSON ASK IN FAITH? WHAT IS NECESSARY?

I believe two things are necessary for a person to ask in faith. (1) First, you must believe God for what He says. Vs 5 says, "Let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously."

Question: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?

You see, many christians do not. We pray, but we do not believe that God can supply the wisdom and strength that He has promised. WE MUST BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL DO WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL DO. That is what it means to ask in faith.

(2) Secondly, we must not doubt.....(READ Vs 6-8)

So many of us doubt. Oh, we want to trust God, but we doubt. And notice the person who doubts is characterized by three things according to this passage. Three things.

(1) First, according to Vs 6, he is driven and tossed by the wind.

And when the winds of trials and persecution comes into our lives, we are easily tossed about. WHY?..Because we doubt. Our confidence is not in the living God. Our interest is divided. We say we believe God, but in our hearts we doubt. "Don't be like him who doubts, because he is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."

(2F) And secondly, "he will not receive anything from the Lord.

Vs 7 says: "For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord."

You ask, why doesn't God answer my prayers? WHY? Because we doubt. Because our confidence is not in God. Our confidence is covered with doubts. Thus, we find ourselves relating to our circumstances instead of God. Can the doctor take care of this, and can my friends help out, and we go to everybody, except the Lord. ASK IN FAITH THEN you will receive from the Lord.....

(3F) And the third characteristic of the man with doubts is found in Vs 8
"HE IS UNSTABLE IN ALL THAT HE DOES.

Instability in the life of a christian is a hinderance to the life of Christ in a Christian. Many non-christians look at Christians who are unstable and say: "No thanks, what do I want to be like that for."

My friends, a heart that is trusting God, that has its faith in the power of God, is a stable heart, a confident heart, and a heart that is consistent in its witness of Christ.

So remember The testing and trails come to produce valuable experience in the areas of joy, patience and faith.....

(2C) The Second thing, I would like to share with you about the trying of
your faith is that it requires a careful evaluation of the things that
happen to us. Please notice Vers 9....(READ 9-10)

Then God gives us an illustration in Vs 11.....(Read Vs 11)

WHAT IS THE POINT? The trying of our faith, the *Things* that we go through requires a careful evaluation of what really counts ~~in life~~ *with God*.

The ~~rich~~ *rich* man will assume that because of his wealth, that this is a sign that he is successful with God. And it is not so. For it will fade away.....

And the poor man will often assume that because he is poor, God is not blessing his life. That is not true, because the world is passing away,

Paul said in 2 Cor. 6:10.. "as having nothing, yet possessing all things."

Or, take 2 Cor 12:10, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Or, take 1 Tim. 6:7, "For we have brought nothing into this world, so we cannot take anything out of it either."

Or, 1 John 1:17, "And the world is passing away."

Do you understand?

How, our hearts need to be reminded that the things of this world do not count with God. That the worldly possessions we have we should enjoy. If God has given them to you, then thank God for them. But, listen, dear friends, that is not going to get you into heaven. You are not going to take it with you. And *when* ~~when~~ trails come, Christians often say, "How can this possible be the blessings of the Lord?" And the reason we act that way is because we haven't really evaluated what counts with God. This is a very important principle *for 1997*

(3C) Then there is a third thing that I would like to point out to you from Vs 12. The trying of our faith rewards our patient endurance. Vs 12 says, "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

What a wonderful promise. God has crowns for his people. He is going to reward us with crowns. And it says that the crown of life is promised to them that love Him. That is to the person who will endure testing. Are we not reminded of Romans 8, where Paul said: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Dear friends, are you suffering under some load or heavy burden today? May I remind you that God gives us testings to produce valuable experiences in the area of joy, patience, and faith in our lives. He gives them to us to cause us to evaluate what really counts in life. And God has a special reward for those who endure testing. Who bear up under the trails they are going through.

I would like to suggest to you two areas and needs for decisions. There is the trail and the burden and the heavy heart of the person who has never known the relief that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as saviour. You may be here today and you are experiencing a great burden on your heart. The burden of sin. And you are wondering if God could ever forgive you. If God could ever love you enough to cleanse your sin. And you have heard this message.

The point is: will you ask in faith? Will you ask Jesus by faith to come into your life? Even though you don't understand all the fine points, even though you wonder whether God could really do this? Will you say, "I will not trust my feelings anymore. Right, now, I will receive Jesus for what He has already done for me." Will you make that decision?

And my Christian friends. If there is a burden or trail that is bothering you, and it is eating away at your heart, may I remind you that God has a special reward for you. God wants this test that you are going through to produce valuable experiences of joy and patience and faith. God wants us to give careful evaluation of what really counts in life. And would you right now, lay that burden at the foot of the cross. "Casting all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you[?]"

Would you rest in the Lord and wait on Him? Will you trust Him and say, "thank you, Lord, for being in my life? Thank you, Lord, for being everything to me." Will you make this sweet commitment?

May God help us to see that the trying of our faith is working everything that God intended for us.

SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER