

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Trials and Testing – Part II.*"

Augustine said, "*Trials come to prove us and improve us.*" This quote lists the two steps when it comes to trials:

1. First, they prove or test our faith. They reveal the genuineness of our faith. This is what we discussed last week.
2. Second, they improve or refine our faith. That's what we're going to discuss this morning. Trials are painful, we don't like them, but there are some wonderful ways God uses them in our lives.

Please look at **James 1:2**...

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials

We're going to look at this verse piece-by-piece, but we're going to skip the words **count it all joy** and come back to them later. For now, please look at the word **when** and this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: TRIALS (PART I) SHOULD BE EXPECTED...

Notice it says **WHEN you fall into various trials** instead of "*IF you fall into various trials.*" We're going to face trials. They will come.

- In **Acts 14:22** Paul [said], "**We must through MANY TRIBULATIONS enter the kingdom of God.**" Paul meant there are going to be many trials on our way to heaven.
- **1 Thes 3:3** **No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that WE ARE APPOINTED TO THIS.** We're appointed – as believers – to experience trials.
- If you remember Pastor Doug's sermon from two weeks ago, he preached on **1 Peter 4:12-19**, and **1 Peter 4:12** says, "**Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING HAPPENED TO YOU.**"

The word for **strange** means, "*surprised, astonished or shocked.*" So we're told:

- Don't be surprised by trials.
- Don't be astonished by trials.
- Don't be shocked by them.

Instead, expect them. Don't think it's strange when they come.

But what do we often say when we experience trials?

- *How could this happen?*
- *Why is this happening?*
- *Why me?*
- We might even say, "*Why would God...?*"

In other words, we act surprised, astonished or shocked – we see trials as something strange – but based on Scripture, we should say...

- *Okay, I knew this was coming, I expected this.*

- *Since I was prepared for a trial, how would God have me face this?*
- *I know trials are part of the Christian life, so how can I handle this in a way that glorifies God?*

We should go through this life understanding we're either experiencing a trial or we're going to experience a trial. People who expect the Christian life to be easy and carefree will be in for a shock.

This is why it's terrible to tell people, *"If you become a Christian your life will be perfect."* If you tell people this, there are only three possibilities:

1. They'll be upset w/ you later, possibly feeling like you lied to them.
2. Or they'll be upset w/ Jesus for not making their life perfect like you said He would.
3. Or they'll think Christianity is untrue. They'll say, *"If Jesus was real, He wouldn't have let this happen to me."*

Instead we need to be honest w/ others and ourselves when it comes to trials...and I hope these sermons might equip us to do that.

Here's what Jesus ACTUALLY said. In **John 16:33** He told the disciples:

- **In the world you will have a trouble-free life.**
- **In the world YOU WILL HAVE tribulation** or trials.

Now there's one other thing we sometimes think – and it's tragic when we think this – we go through trials and we say, *"What did I do wrong?"* And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: TRIALS (PART I) SHOULD BE EXPECTED (PART II) BUT NOT BECAUSE YOU DID SOMETHING WRONG.

Job's friends didn't understand this lesson. The main point they were trying to make to Job was, *"You're suffering terribly b/c you've done some terrible things."* Eliphaz was the first of Job's friends to speak, and he summarized their arguments in **Job 4:7** when he asked, **"Whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?"** Basically, he said, *"When have bad things ever happened to good people?"*

As a side note, when people are suffering, don't be like Job's friends. Don't lecture them. Don't preach to them. Don't tell them, *"This is why this is happening."* Don't say, *"God is doing this b/c..."* Instead, be a good listener. Pray w/ them. **Rom 12:15 [says] mourn w/ those who mourn.**

The best thing Job's friends did took place at the beginning of the book BEFORE they started speaking: **Job 2:13 They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.** This is probably one of the most instructive verses in Scripture regarding dealing w/ people who are suffering.

At the end of the Book, God showed up and listen to this: **Job 42:7 The LORD said to Eliphaz, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for YOU HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF**

ME WHAT IS RIGHT. In other words, “*You were all wrong when you said, ‘People only suffer for doing things wrong.’*”

It’s not accurate to say, “*Bad things happen to bad people.*” It’s accurate to say, “*Bad things happen to ALL people.*”

Please listen to these examples...

During Jesus’ ministry two events took place that led to the deaths of a number of people:

1. Pilate murdered some Galileans.
2. A tower collapsed killing 18 people.

In both situations, the disciples thought these people died b/c they were worse sinners than anyone else. But listen to what Jesus said...

Luke 13:2 “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³I tell you, NO; 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, No.”

In Jesus’ day many people – including the disciples – thought if something bad happened to someone, it must be b/c there had been some sin. In **John 9** a man had been born blind. Because he was born that way, the disciples knew it couldn’t have been b/c of his sin, so they thought it must’ve been his parents’ sin. Listen to this conversation between Jesus and the disciples...

John 9:2 His disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, BUT THAT THE WORKS OF GOD SHOULD BE REVEALED IN HIM.

These words of Jesus’ are important. Whenever trials take place God wants to work and reveal Himself through them. But it doesn’t have anything to do w/ people sinning.

I received permission from someone to share this...

This past week a woman wrote me about a miscarriage she experienced, and she asked if it was b/c she was being punished. It was heartbreaking. Miscarriages are already painful enough and then on top of that you wonder if it’s something you did that caused it?

Please listen to me carefully – and just to let you know ahead of time I received permission to share all these examples...

- When you have a miscarriage that’s not your fault; you’re not being punished.
- When the old wall heater in the Criss’ house caught on fire and burned some of their house down and destroyed much of their stuff, that wasn’t their fault; they weren’t being punished.

- When the Bauskas learned that Andy had leukemia, that wasn't their fault; they weren't being punished.
- When the Pettas learned that David was deaf, that wasn't their fault; they weren't being punished.
- When the blood in Scott Steenbarger's liver backed up so much it burst in his stomach, that wasn't their fault; they weren't being punished.
- When the Ordways learned Jonah had a rare genetic disorder – *glycogen storage disease* – that wasn't their fault; they weren't being punished.

The point is we suffer trials on this side of heaven and we'll continue to throughout our lives, but...

- It's never our fault...
- It's never b/c we did something wrong...
- We don't have to wonder if God is punishing us.

Now maybe you say, "*Well then why do we experience trials?*" That's what I'm hoping to answer in these sermons.

But before we move on I need to make one very important clarifying point...

As tragic as it is when people experience a trial and say, "*Is this my fault? Am I being punished? Did I do something wrong?*"

It's equally tragic when people sin, are disciplined by God and then turn around and say:

- *How could this happen?*
- *Why am I so unlucky?*
- *Why do bad things keep happening to me?*"

Without recognizing they're suffering b/c they DID do something wrong.

The lesson says, "*Expect trials, but not b/c you did something wrong.*" If you're suffering BECAUSE you did something wrong, that's not a trial. You're being punished and it is DIRECTLY related to something you did wrong. You're not in a trial, you're being disciplined by God for your sin.

We want to make sure we don't confuse trials w/ discipline or discipline w/ trials. I'll talk about this in a future sermon when we discuss discipline, but for now I just want to make sure we understand when we sin, and God punishes us, that's not a trial. That's what God is doing b/c He loves us and He wants us to repent. This isn't my opinion, this is exactly what Heb 12 says.

Let's continue w/ the verse...

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials

Please notice the words **fall into**, and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: TRIALS (PART III) ARE UNPREDICTABLE, BUT NOT ACCIDENTS.

Even though we should expect trials and we can prepare for them, we can't know when they're going to take place: they're unpredictable.

The Greek word for **fall into** – or other translations say **face, meet** or **encounter** – is *periptō* (pr: perry-pipto). It only occurs three times in Scripture and each time it describes something that's both difficult and unpredictable...like trials...

1. It occurs here in James 1:2.
2. It occurs in **Luke 10:30** in the Parable of the Good Samaritan: **Jesus said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and FELL AMONG thieves (that's *periptō*), who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.** Obviously what happened to this man was difficult and unpredictable.
3. The word occurs in **Acts 27** when they accidentally crashed their boat into the shore: **Acts 27:41 Striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground.** The word for **striking** is *periptō* (pr: perry-pipto); again, it was obviously difficult and unpredictable when they crashed their boat.

The words *difficult* and *unpredictable* are great words to describe trials, but I don't like the words “**fall into**” b/c they make trials sound like an accident. Like we're sort of walking along and we trip and find ourselves in a trial. Trials might be unpredictable, but they're not accidents.

If you see trials as accidents, then whenever you experience a trial you're going to say:

- *I'm so unlucky.*
- *Why am I so unfortunate?*
- *Why do bad things keep happening to me.*
- And here's probably the worst thing people say if they view trials as accidents: *If only I had done this, then this wouldn't have happened.* When people have this view of trials...
 - They're left w/ guilt and regret...
 - They think they could've prevented whatever they're experience; they might see their suffering as their fault.
 - They beat themselves up, sometimes never being able to forgive themselves.

So we want to make sure we don't see trials as accidents. Let me briefly remind you of something we discussed last week: trials are tests and tests are trials...and here's the question:

- Who is the One who tests us?
- Who is the One who allows trials in our lives as tests?

Please listen to this...

- **Gen 22:1 God TESTED Abraham**
- **Exo 20:20 Moses said, “Do not fear; for God has come to TEST you.”**
- **Deut 8:2 God led you all the way [through] the wilderness, to humble you *and* TEST you.**
- **Judges 3:1 These...nations...the LORD left, that He might TEST Israel by them.**

- **2 Chr 32:31 Regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon...God withdrew from [HEZEKIAH], in order to TEST him.**
- **Psa 66:10 You, O God, have TESTED us.**
- **Job 23:10 He knows the way that I take; When He has TESTED me, I shall come forth as gold.**

God is the One who tests us through trials. There is nothing accidental about trials whatsoever.

I know people don't like to think of trials or tests coming from God – it is troubling to think of God allowing – or worse causing – tests or trials in our lives, but for a moment, let me ask you to please do something...

Please consider the alternative: let's say God isn't behind the tests or trials in our lives:

- Let's say God isn't sovereign...
- Let's say God isn't directing our lives...
- Let's say God isn't in control of what happens to us...

He's just sort of sitting back saying:

- *Why did this happen?*
- *I wish there was something I could do about it.*
- *If only this would've happened instead.*

In my mind that would be way more troubling than thinking of God allowing tests and trials in our lives for our benefit and growth. In my mind:

- If you could only choose one area of your life where you WANT God in control...
- If you could only choose one area of your life where you want God to be sovereign...

Wouldn't it be over the tests and trials you experience?

Imagine people experiencing terrible trials:

- What is the ONLY way they can encourage themselves?
- What is the only way they can experience any comfort?

It's in thinking: *“There are no accidents. God is in control. He is sovereign. I can trust Him. He loves me. I am His child. He knows what's best for me.”*

What's the main verse we quote during these times? We tell ourselves: **Rom 8:28 We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.** When we're in trials, we tell ourselves, *“God will work this together for good.”*

Rom 8:28 is about God's sovereignty. We use this verse when we're in the middle of trials b/c it encourages us to think of God's control over the situation. We use this verse b/c it reminds us the trial we're going through is NOT an accident.

Please listen to this...

After David sinfully numbered the people, God sent the prophet Gad to confront him and make him choose between three different punishments: **2 Sam 24:12 [Gad told David] “Thus says the LORD:**

“I offer you three *things*; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.”...13 Now consider and see what answer I should take back to God who sent me.”

Now please listen to this wonderful response from David after hearing the three choices...

14 David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. PLEASE LET US FALL INTO THE HAND OF THE LORD, FOR HIS MERCIES ARE GREAT; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.”

David was in great distress and where did he want to be? He wanted to be in the hands of God. He wanted God to be in control.

Now when you're in **great distress**, where do you want to be? Where do you want to **fall into**? **James 1:2** says **count it all joy when you FALL INTO various trials**. You want – like David said – to **fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great**.

Let me conclude this lesson by saying this...

The trials in our lives might be unpredictable, but we want to make sure we don't see them as accidents. We want to make sure we see God sovereign over what we're experiencing. We want to trust that God is in control, that He knows best, and that He's always working for our good. When we go through trials, we don't want to ask:

- *How could God do this to me?*
- *How could God allow this to happen to me?*
- We want to ask:
 - *How does God want to use this for my good?*
 - *How does God want to use this for His glory?*

John Broger said, *“Every person in the world will encounter various trials throughout life. Satan seeks to defeat you by tempting you to trust your own wisdom, to live according to your self-centered feelings, and to gratify the desires of your flesh. In contrast, God's will is for you to be an overwhelming conqueror in all of these tests for His honor and glory.”*

Now please look back at **verse 2**...

James 1:2 Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

The words **various trials** bring us to the last part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: TRIALS (PART IV) ARE UNIQUE.

Last week I pointed out some of the similarities between **1 Peter 1:6** and **James 1:2**...

- **James 1:2 Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.**
- **1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.**

James and Peter use the exact same words to discuss us facing **various trials**.

The trials we experience in life are not all the same. We all experience various – or different or unique – trials. Think about the OT and how differently God tested each person...

- God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his son as a burnt offering. This was an amazingly difficult and unique trial; nobody else faced anything like it.
- Abraham's great grandson Joseph faced some serious trials, but he didn't face the same trials as Job.
- Job faced the most painful trial in Scripture, but he didn't face the same trials as David.
- For 10-15 years King Saul chased David around the hills of Judea. No other people went through a trial like that w/ an insanely jealous king trying to murder them.

God tested all these people uniquely and differently.

The trial the Criss' faced is different than the trial the Bauskas faced which is different than the trial the Ordways faced which is different than the trial the Steenbargers faced. God tests each of us uniquely. The question is:

- How do we respond to these tests?
- Do we trust God through them?

Please look at verse 3...

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Notice the words **knowing that** – or most other translations say **you know that** – and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: WE SHOULD KNOW ALL THIS ABOUT TRIALS.

Everything we're discussing about trials is information James expected his readers to "know", and therefore, it's information we should "know."

This is interesting when you consider something...

Most of the epistles – or letters in the NT – are instructive in nature. They're teaching. I don't want to sound too simple, but you usually teach people what they don't already know: if they already knew it, you wouldn't need to teach them. There's the occasional time the NT writers say, "*I want to remind you...*" but for the most part the epistles were written to provide people w/ knowledge or they didn't already have.

That's why **Jam 1:3** is somewhat interesting. He says **knowing that** – or **you know that** – **the testing of your faith produces patience**. In other words, James isn't teaching them new information. He's telling them information they already know.

I've shared w/ you before that there are some weaknesses w/ the English language. One weakness relates to the word **know**. For example, I use the same English word when I say, "*I KNOW my dad*" or when I say, "*I KNOW of Abraham Lincoln.*" Obviously I *know* my dad much differently than I *know* President Lincoln. We add the word "*of*" to try to identify the different types of knowing: knowing someone versus knowing OF someone.

It's identifying how we only have a knowledge of some things, but there are other things we know by experience or relationship. For example, I know OF Japan, but I've never been there, so I know the United States much differently.

In Greek there was a word for knowing OF something, and that's the word *epistamai*, (pr: eh-pist-eh-my). It means:

- "*To put one's attention on, fix one's thoughts on, to be acquainted with.*"
- It's referring to thinking about or observing something without having any personal interaction or relationship with it.

But the Greek word for KNOWING something or someone personally or experientially is *ginōskō*. (pr: geh-know-sko). It means, "*to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of, feel.*" It's a very intimate knowing. It's the word used in **Matt 1:25 [Joseph] did not KNOW [Mary] till she had brought forth a Son.**

And this is the word James uses in **verse 3** for **KNOWING**. He's telling people they KNOW this b/c they've been through trials. They've experienced them. They know what trials are like and they know what trials do. **Verse 3** tells us the two things trials do:

1. First, trials test our faith. This is what we talked about last week. We don't need to discuss it again.
2. Second, they produce patience.

Like Augustine said, "*Trials prove us and improve us.*" Trials prove us by testing our faith and they improve us by producing something wonderful in our lives...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: (PART I) TRIALS PRODUCE PATIENCE...

Unfortunately, I say **trials produce patience** and you immediately think I'm saying, "*Trials teach us to wait.*"

- Like trials are going to make us really great at standing in line.
- Or trials are going to make the DMV an enjoyable experience.

Yes, trials can teach us to wait, but that's not really what the word for **patience** means. Most Bibles say **perseverance, endurance** or **steadfastness**: that's what trials produce in our lives. Trials build faith, strength and character that's able to endure or persevere.

The word for **patience** is *hypomonē* (pr: who-poh-muh-nay) and it means: "*steadfastness, constancy, endurance, perseverance. The characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate*

purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.” And I want to give you an example of a man who really modeled this through some trials in his life...

Horatio Spafford was a devout Christian who lived from 1828 to 1888. He was a wealthy Chicago lawyer with a thriving legal practice, a beautiful home, a wife, four daughters and a son. At the height of his financial and professional success, He and his wife Anna lost their son to pneumonia in 1871. Later that same year the Great Chicago Fire destroyed almost every real estate investment Horatio had.

Two years later Horatio wanted to give his wife, daughters and himself a time to recover following the tragedies they experienced. So he decided they would take a vacation in England where he could visit his friend D.L. Moody and listen to him preach.

But Horatio was delayed because of business, so he sent his wife and daughters ahead, letting them know he would take a different ship and join them a few days later. His wife traveled w/ their four daughters:

- Tanetta was 11
- Elizabeth was 9.
- Margaret was 5.
- And Anna was 2.

A few days later, on November 22, 1873, Horatio received the news that the ship his wife and daughters were on was struck by another vessel and 226 of the people aboard lost their lives, including Horatio's four daughters. Only his wife survived.

Horatio sailed to England to see his grieving wife, and as he made the trip – including traveling over the location where his daughters drowned – he wrote the hymn, “It Is Well with My Soul.” Here's part of what he wrote:

- *When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*
- *Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

This is what *hypomonē* (pr: who-poh-muh-nay) looks like. This is *perseverance, endurance and steadfastness of faith*. This is what trials are able to produce in our lives:

- God brings trials that refine and improve our faith.
- He brings trials to increase the strength and quality of our faith.

Trials are never meant to destroy us or damage us; they're meant to refine us and strengthen us. John MacArthur said, “*God will always use [trials] to produce good in us when we meet the test in His power.*”

Now let me ask an important question...

- Why is it so important to understand God uses trials to refine and purify our faith?
- Why is it so important to understand God uses trials to produce patience in our lives?

Because if we don't understand that, guess what we can't do? I'll give you a hint: it brings us back to the beginning of **verse 2**: we won't be able to **count it all joy when we fall into various trials**.

And this brings us to the rest of Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: (PART I) TRIALS PRODUCE PATIENCE (PART II) WHICH IS WHY WE CAN DECIDE TO VIEW THEM WITH JOY.

Peter says something similar in **1 Pet 1:6 In this you GREATLY REJOICE, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials**

You might think it's odd I chose to focus on the words **count it all joy** this late in the sermon, but I did it this way b/c I think the only way we can face trials w/ joy is if we understand what we've been discussing last week and this morning. The only way we can face trials w/ joy is if we understand:

- Trials prove the genuineness of our faith...
- Trials are opportunities to reveal our commitments to Christ...
- Trials refine and strengthen our faith...

The only way we can face trials w/ joy is...

- If we understand what God wants to do through trials...
- If we understand what He wants to produce in our lives as a result of trials...
- We can tell ourselves...
 - *This trial is...*
 - *Producing patience.*
 - *Strengthening me spiritually.*
 - *Giving me endurance.*
 - *When I come out of this trial I will have a faith that is refined and stronger.*
 - *This trial will help prepare me for situations I'll face in the future.*
 - *I'm going to be able to serve God better as a result of this trial.*

When we think of trials this way – when we recognize they work for us and not against us – then we can face trials w/ joy.

Even notice the word **all**. It doesn't say:

- **Count it *some* joy...**
- **Or find a *little* joy in trials...**

It says **count it ALL joy** when we experience trials. We're to count everything about the trials joy b/c of what we know is being produced in our lives.

William Barclay said, "*All kinds of [trials] will come to us. There will be tests of sorrows and disappointments. There will be tests of seductions, and tests of dangers, sacrifices, unpopularity which the Christian life must so often involve. But trials are not meant to make us fall; they are meant to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not*

meant to make us weaker. They are meant to make us stronger. Therefore we should not bemoan trials; we should rejoice in them. The Christian is like the athlete. The heavier the course of training he undergoes, the more he is glad, because he knows that it is fitting him all the better for victorious effort.”

Now obviously at this point you're saying:

- *This all sounds good, but I don't FEEL joy when I go through trials.*
- *Joy is the exact opposite of what I'm EXPERIENCING when I'm in trials.*
- *The Bible is saying something that doesn't make sense.*

Actually, the Bible is making complete sense. If the Bible said:

- *FEEL joy when you fall into various trials...*
- *EXPERIENCE joy when you fall into various trials...*

Then it wouldn't make sense, but it doesn't say that. I always appreciate how honest the Bible is and it doesn't try to act like trials are somehow enjoyable or pleasurable. Instead – and this is very, very important – it says **count** – or in most Bibles **consider** – **it all joy**. It's not referring to what we feel or experience when we're in trials. It's referring to how we're supposed to see them or view them when we consider what they're producing in our lives.

James is commanding us to view trials the exact opposite of the way they make us feel. Trials make us feel sorrow and sadness, so we can't go by the way we feel. Instead we have to make a conscious decision to face them with joy...

The word for **count** - or **consider** – is *hēgeomai* (pr: hay-gay-uh-mi). It means, “*to lead, to go before, to be a leader, to rule, command, to have authority over.*” Here are a few places the same word is used:

- **Matt 2:6** **Bethlehem...out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.** The word for **ruler** is *hēgeomai*.
- **Acts 7:10** **[Pharaoh] made [Moses] governor over Egypt.** The word for **governor** is *hēgeomai*.
- **Heb 13:17** **Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.** The word for **rule** is *hēgeomai*.

I know that sounds odd for the word for **count** to be translated and used these ways, but it's actually perfect. The word is about *governing* or *ruling*, b/c it's referring to how we have to lead or take control when it comes to trials...as opposed to letting trials lead or take control of us. It's referring to how...

- We have to govern them...
- We have to be in charge of them...
- We can't let them govern or be in charge of us...

We have to be very deliberate in the way we see trials. We have to be very intentional in the way we view them. The word for **count** or **consider** is telling us...

- We have to decide to count it all joy when we experience trials.
- We have to make a mental judgment about trials.

- We have to evaluate trials, and when we consider how God wants to use them for our benefit, we can choose to face them w/ joy.

Trials are opportunities for joy, but I only say “opportunities” b/c there’s no guarantee that we will count them or view them the right way. We can definitely decide NOT to count it all joy. And there’s one thing that determines how we view trials, and this brings us to Lesson 4...

LESSON 4: OUR PERSPECTIVE DETERMINES HOW WE VIEW TRIALS.

Our perspectives are going to determine if we **count it all joy when we fall into various trials**. Our perspectives are going to determine how we view – or consider – trials. Here’s what I mean:

- If we value comfort and ease more than character and maturity, then trials are really going to upset us.
- But if we value character and maturity more than comfort and ease, then we will be able to **“count it all joy.”** This past week Rachel Dye posted a quote on Facebook that said, *“God has a greater purpose than our temporary happiness.”* And that’s true: God is more concerned about us eternally than temporarily.
- Here’s another way to look at it:
 - If we live for the physical – if we live for the here and now – then we’re going to despise trials. They’re going to make us bitter and resentful.
 - But if we live for the spiritual – if we live for the eternal – then we’ll be able to embrace trials.

I’ve mentioned **1 Pet 1:6** a number of times this morning and last week. It’s essentially the companion verse to **James 1:2** and listen to it one more time: **In this you greatly rejoice, THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.**

Now why does Peter say, **“though now for a little while?”** Because if we have an eternal perspective, no matter how long any trial lasts, it’s always only going to last **for a little while**. If we have an eternal perspective, trials will always look like they only last **for a little while**.

2 Cor 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but FOR A MOMENT, is working for us a far more exceeding and ETERNAL weight of glory,

How can Paul say our **affliction is but for a moment?** Because when we consider it in light of eternity – when we have an eternal perspective – it looks like it only lasts **for a moment**.

And listen to the next verse as Paul tells us how to have this perspective...

¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen (this is an earthly, temporal perspective), **but at the things which are not seen** (this is a heavenly, eternal perspective). **For the things which are seen are temporary** (a little while, but for a moment), **but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

Please listen to these other lyrics Horatio wrote, and consider how these words encouraged him during the terrible trial he experienced...

*And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

Horatio was focused on the spiritual; he had an eternal perspective. He recognized what he was experiencing was temporary, but one day his faith would be his sight: he would enter eternity. And this is the perspective we need to have if we're going to **count it all joy** when we experience **trials**.

And as we think about how to face trials, I want us to have an example...

For the last few weeks Abraham has been a great example to us: his faith and perseverance experiencing the very difficult trial w/ his son Isaac. I said he faced the greatest trial in the OT, but I deliberately said "*in the OT*" because Abraham didn't face the greatest trial in Scripture. If I said, "*Who faced the greatest trial in Scripture?*", you're going to say Jesus. Nobody has ever faced a trial approaching what Jesus faced, and He sets a great example for us to keep in mind.

And this brings us to our last Lesson...

LESSON 5: CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE IN TRIALS.

James 1:2 says to **count it all joy when we face trials**, and that's what Jesus did w/ the greatest trial ever experienced: He faced the cross w/ joy.

Jesus obeyed all of God's Word perfectly. Whatever God's Word commands, that's what Jesus did:

- During Pastor Doug's devotional he shared how we're to forgive, and Jesus forgave perfectly.
- God's Word commands us to love, and Jesus loved perfectly.
- God's Word commands us to resist temptation, and Jesus resisted temptation perfectly.

And God's Word commands us to **count it all joy when we face trials**, and that's what Jesus did when He went to the cross. Jesus fulfilled the words of **James 1:2** decades before they were written.

Please listen to this verse...

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus (He's our example; we should set our eyes on Him), **the author and finisher of our faith** (we need to remember He gives us the faith necessary to endure the trials we'll face), **who FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS.**

Jesus counted or decided that He would view the trial of going to the cross w/ joy:

- It's not that the cross itself brought Jesus joy anymore than the trials we face bring us joy.
- Our joy comes from what we know the trials produce, and Jesus' joy came from what He knew the cross would produce.

And here's the question...

If trials produce patience or perseverance – and that's what allows us to face them w/ joy – what could the cross produce that would allow Jesus to face it w/ joy? What could be produced by the cross – and be so great, so beautiful, so wonderful to Jesus – that it would allow Him to endure something so horrific w/ joy?

The answer is...

- It was the joy of knowing it would provide for our forgiveness...
- It was the joy of knowing that if He took the punishment for our sins, we wouldn't have to take that punishment ourselves.
- It was the joy of being able to have a relationship w/ each of us and look forward to spending eternity w/ us.

And what a joy this should be for us as we think about what Christ has done. Horatio said...

*My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

If you've never surrendered your life to Christ, then you can't have this joy. Jesus hasn't provided for your forgiveness and He hasn't taken the punishment for your sins. You'll have to take that punishment yourself.

But Jesus would count it all joy to do this for you; He would count it all joy to have made that sacrifice for you.

If you have any question about whether Jesus is the Lord and Savior of your life, Pastor Doug and I will be up front at the end of service and we would love the opportunity to speak w/ you. We would count it a privilege to answer any questions you might have and be able to pray with you.

LET'S REVIEW THESE LESSONS:

LESSON 1: TRIALS...

- (PART I) SHOULD BE EXPECTED (PART II) BUT NOT BECAUSE YOU DID SOMETHING WRONG.
- (PART III) ARE UNPREDICTABLE, BUT NOT ACCIDENTS.
- (PART IV) ARE UNIQUE.

LESSON 2: WE SHOULD KNOW ALL THIS ABOUT TRIALS.

LESSON 3: (PART I) TRIALS PRODUCE PATIENCE, (PART II) WHICH IS WHY WE CAN DECIDE TO VIEW THEM WITH JOY.

LESSON 4: OUR PERSPECTIVE DETERMINES HOW WE VIEW TRIALS.

LESSON 5: CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE IN TRIALS.

