

## When Your Faith Is Tested by Life...

**Intro:** Life has many trials and allurements to do wrong! All of us are confronted every day with the challenge of temptation as well as life's hardships. Satan has lots of ways to test our faith; and at times we may feel that he is "piling on" and our faith will break under the load. Maybe we could wish that God would just make him leave us alone, but that's not his will. Instead he wants us to learn how to respond to when our faith is tested. His word tells us what we need to know.

So, where can we learn the right way to face these things? In James 1 we read an excellent paragraph on how to meet the challenges. My lesson is, "When your faith is tested by life..."

**Rejoice for the spiritual growth it can produce.**

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (Jas. 1:2-4)*

*Throughout this paragraph James will use the Greek word "peirasmos," and it simply refers to a test. Sometimes it is used of the trials that test our faith and cause us to abandon our faith. Sometimes it is used of allurements to sin which test our faith and our resolve to do the will of God. Maybe James is especially thinking here of the former. We do indeed "encounter various trials." Life has numerous ways to make us hurt and cause us to crumble under the pressure. You may be going through such a time right now!*

*"Consider it all joy!" James uses a tense that means to do something once and for all! Really? That seems counter-intuitive! But hear James out. It is a mindset that God commands of us! Make up your mind that you will encounter your trials with joy.*

*We can do that because trials have a useful purpose: they test or prove our faith. James uses a term that described the process of determining the quality of gold. How do we know how genuine we are, if we are not tested? Peter thought his faith was invincible and superior to that of his fellow-apostles; but he hadn't been tested. And as you know, when he was tested he discovered that he was not as strong as he thought he was! So life's tests reveal the quality of our faith.*

*Trials not only have a useful purpose; they have a useful outcome or result. They produce endurance.*

*And endurance in faith results in spiritual maturity.*

When our faith is tested we are able to become more "perfect." It refers to the completion of what may be lacking in us. 1

When our faith is tested we are able to become more "whole." The experiencing of tested may add something to us that has been missing, so that we are now "whole."

How will we be able to get stronger, if we are not tested? It is the process of testing and resistance that strengthens and perfects us. For that reason we can count it all joy.

Let me share a quote I hope will help: “Joy is more than a mood, or an emotion. Joy is an understanding of existence that encompasses both elation and depression, that can accept with creative submission events which bring delight or dismay, because joy allows one to see beyond any particular event to the sovereign Lord, who stands above all events and ultimately has control over them.” (Ben Witherington, commentary on Philippians)

***So when you are tested by life, don't murmur and complain; but “consider it all joy.”***

**Pray to God for wisdom to handle it.**

***Our temptation and trials often presents us with real dilemmas and questions. What should I do? How can I handle this? What purpose can this have in my life? And we can seek to rely upon our own answers or we can pray to God for answers. James urges the latter.***

***But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (Jas. 1:5-8)***

***We can find the answers we need in trial and temptation through faithful prayer to God. We need to...***

***Pray persistently!***

“Let him keep asking”

***Pray with a believing and sincere heart! James marshals the teaching of Jesus about the characteristics of answered prayer.***

We need to pray in faith=with trust;

We need to pray without doubting=self division; the doubting man is like the surf tossed back and forth by the wind;

double-minded=dipsuchos, double souled; and

unstable=unsteady, fickle, staggering

***If it is important to know how to pray properly, it is also important to know how God answers prayer.***

James says God will respond by giving you wisdom, generously and without reproach. If there is anything God wants to give us it is His wisdom. He will give it to us in abundance, liberally and generously; He will give it “without reproach;” he will not rebuke our need to ask for His help.

Let faith work and God will show you the answers you need.

**Keep your emphasis on the spiritual rather than the physical.**

*But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. (Jas. 1:9-11)*

***Often when we are tested by life we begin to compare ourselves with others; and we become resentful that we must endure what others do not. Why do some people seem to have more than their “fair share” of trouble? Why did some apostles like James die a martyr’s death while others like his brother John lived a long life? Those mysteries we cannot answer, except that God can be glorified in either circumstance.***

***What we can do is focus on what we have with God, rather than what others have that we don’t have! Robertson points out that the gospel is the great “leveler of men”. Regardless of your earthly circumstances you can rejoice in your spiritual condition.***

Let the poor exult in their exaltation. Though of low station in this life, the poor Christian has been exalted to heavenly places to reign with the Lord. He sits with the king. Even in difficult times, in this he can rejoice.

The rich should not glory in their wealth or power for these will be taken away. So they are urged to rejoice in what cannot be taken away, their humiliation. They have been made servants of Christ and with it the hope of eternal life.

***So, when you’re tested set your thoughts on your relationship with the Lord. Think about what you have with Him right now!***

### **Keep your eyes on the prize.**

*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. (Jas. 1:12)*

***The blessing is for those who endure. It is the same word James had used earlier. The trials that produce endurance will enable us to be blessed eternally.***

***We need to have the attitude of Paul:***

*“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13–14)*

***Keep your eyes on the prize—the crown of life.***

***Cf. the Olympic medalists who sacrifice and labor for years for that one special moment. Think of the joy in their faces and the exhilaration of victory. Think of some victorious moment in which you have shared. And then think of knowing that you’ve won the most important contest of all—the contest of life! Cf. the runner who said, “I want to win”.***

*“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.” (Romans 8:18)*

*Five minutes in heaven will make you forget all the trouble you've ever experienced on earth.*

**Conclusion: God has made us a promise!**

*“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

**No temptation is too great with His help. Using these principles will help us “when your faith is tested by life.”**