

From: NeilUher2@yahoo.com

Page 1 of 8

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Subject: Lacking Nothing - James 1:2-4

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

James 1:2-3

At some time or another, all of us will face certain trials in our lifetime - maybe you are going through some trials right now; maybe you have just went through some trials - whatever your case may be, trials are certain to come which is why James writes, "When you fall into various trials;" and not, "if you fall into various trials..."

The Apostle James is encouraging some believers as they too are facing trials. James writes,

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

Notice that he doesn't say, "... count it all joy when you fall into various sins" - James is not advocating lawlessness - rather, he says, "... count it all joy when you fall into various trials,"

We don't usually consider trials a "joy," do we? Now the trial itself is not the joy, but its what ^{the} trials produce - that's what should give us joy.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." James 1:2-3

First, notice that in every trial, it is our faith which is ^{being} tested. Second, ^{these} various trials test our faith, which in turn produces ~~the~~ patience.

The Greek word translated here as "patience" is "hypomonē". Interestingly, the Greeks would use this word to describe a soldier returning ^{home} from war. If there was some great ~~event~~ ^{catastrophe}, even though everyone else would be in a panic, the soldier who wouldn't get swept away in the uproar would be considered to ~~have~~ "hypomonē". In today's language, we might say he "kept his cool." How? Because this soldier was in war before, everything he was made of was stretched ~~beyond normal limits~~ ^{beyond normal limits}. The things he saw, heard, smelled... he was tested: now, as part of his character, he has gained a level of "hypomonē", more deeply than those around him.

ὑπομονή

Well beloved, the same thing holds true with us. In different ways, our faith is constantly being tested: the loss of a loved one, no employment, nowhere to live, prison, sickness, the list can go on and on. In everything in life, in our every circumstance, our faith - or our trust - is constantly being tested, and through this "refining process," we grow in godly patience - or "hypomonee".

Take a few minutes to reflect on some of the trials you may be facing right now. Maybe you feel all alone in this, or that your situation just seems impossible; what are you doing about it now? What should you be doing about it?

First, we should make sure we are obeying God's commandments. Second, we should be taking our cares to the Lord in prayer (1 Peter 5:7). Third, we should be trusting God, which is the fountain for all the others. Without trust there is no ^{real} obedience, no ^{real} repentance, & no ^{real} prayer. It is our lack of trust that causes us to fret about and depend on our own solutions; rather than on God's.

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, their trust in God was extinguished - it was the day faith died. The fountain from which all grace flows was dried up like a desert.

Thus, mankind became "dead in sin" (Eph. 2:1). Adam and Eve ran and hid from God (no trust), and sewed fig leaves together to hide their nakedness (depending on their own solutions). That's where we all begin, but - thankfully, by the grace of God - it's not where we ^{all} end. God loves us too much to leave us there, so He continually sends trials our way - not to destroy us or harm us - but as a means to an end; to increase our trust in Him, and produce patience in us.

We doubt God's love for us a lot, don't we? We ^{often} get depressed and start the whole "why me?" cycle. It's through this destructive cycle that we resist God's work in our life; James goes on to write,

"But let patience have its perfect work,"

Meaning, don't resist what God is doing for your good (Rom. 8:28), just continue trusting God - He knows what He's doing, so

"that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking nothing." (Jam. 1:4)

God wants to bring His people to maturity in

the faith. God has a specific purpose for your life, so He uses various means to develop your godly character so that you will be better equipped to serve Him. Will you let that sink in for a ~~minute~~ ^{minute}? God is working to produce greater levels of patience in you. ~~Consider~~ Consider the bigger picture.

Actually, "hypomonē" is better understood to mean "perseverance". Patience gives the idea of passively waiting for something, but perseverance is actively ~~to~~ persisting in a purpose in the face of obstacles or discouragement.²

Do you remember when Jesus and the disciples were in the boat and a great storm came upon the sea? Jesus was sleeping and the disciples were fretting about, afraid they were going to die. They woke Him up and said, "Lord, save us! We are perishing."

There they were, in this massive storm, the boat is getting tossed around and filling with water; but the whole time, they had Jesus right there with them. Was Jesus just so tired that He didn't know they were in this storm? I don't think so. Then

² cf. A.H.C.D.

how was He sleeping while the disciples were panicking? Answer: Trust. Jesus' trust was so great (actually perfect) in the Father that He wasn't worried one bit. Beloved, there are many storms that will come in our life, but always remember that Jesus is in the boat with us. Whatever happens to us happens to Him.

I once read about some new technology that would enable pilots to fly planes ~~remotely~~ remotely. The pilots wouldn't even have to be in the plane, they could control it right from a command center on the ground. Of course this would raise concerns with the passengers, would pilots become less cautious? If a 737 full of passengers is going down, would the pilot make the same rescue attempts as if he were on the plane himself?

Well beloved, God hasn't left us here on our own, He is in the boat with us; and since nothing can happen to Him, nothing can happen to us. We don't have to worry or fret about, we just have to trust Him with our life - and if we trust Him with what is most important to us, shall we not entrust everything else to Him as well? If He is faithful with the diamond, shall He not also be faithful with the box?

"But He [Jesus] said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?'" (Mat. 8:26)

Although we can fool other people, God sees our heart

so he sees right through ~~any~~ ^{any} hypocrisy. People could look "cool" on the outside, but ^{have} a storm ~~is~~ raging within. Only a rich trust in God can still the storm in our soul, and it's the heart which God is most concerned with. Controlling our outward behavior isn't the object of our perseverance - instead, the object of our perseverance is a person, Jesus Christ Himself; "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). How do we look to Jesus if we cannot see him? Is it not by faith? Isn't Jesus Himself the object of our faith? We look to Jesus by trusting Jesus, we trust in His blood to forgive our sins, we trust in Jesus through our present trials, and we trust in Jesus to receive us at the end of our life or upon His Return. "The just shall ~~live~~ ^{live} by faith" the Bible says. ~~They shall live by faith~~

~~They shall live by faith~~ We must live our ^{whole} life by faith - not ~~based~~ on our circumstances, but in our Saviour - Jesus Christ. When we live this way, we lack nothing.

"But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:4

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, the Apostle Paul describes some of the trials he and the other Apostles

went through to minister the Gospel to other people. Afterward, he writes that he and the other Apostles were, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. 6:10). This seems like a contradiction, how can he have nothing and everything, at the same time?

Paul didn't have perfect health, he didn't have a house or a car, and he definitely didn't have ~~any~~ ~~cell~~ cell phone (this probably baffles some people today ☹); but what Paul did have beloved, what he did have - and wouldn't let anyone or anything shake him away from, was a person - Jesus Christ. How did Paul have Jesus? By faith, a sincere trust deeply rooted in his heart, come what may, he could never let go, he could never look back. Trust encouraged him when he was down, trust strengthened him when he was weak, it was trust in a loving Saviour that persuaded Paul that he was "lacking nothing". This is what James prayed for his readers, and this is my prayer for you - that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, ~~that~~ through faith, you ~~will~~ ~~do~~ trust that you also, are, "lacking nothing."

Gratefully your servant for Jesus' sake,

Heidi A. Wherry