

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sermon Series: Pressure Points
To be used with: Session One; The Pressure of Trials
Sermon Title Possibilities:
 When You Suffer
 Joy in Trials
Scripture: [James 1:1-4](#)

Connection to Unit Theme: We often think of suffering as something that happens to us apart from God's rescue plan. James 1:1-4 helps us see that it is part of God's redemption. The pressure that we experience from various trials actually produces in us growth into Christ-likeness. Through a joyful trust in God we are able to overcome our trials.

Introduction:

In 1967 Joni Eareckson Tada jumped into the Chesapeake Bay. Having misjudged the depth of the water Tada emerged forever changed. She would from this point forward be a quadriplegic—living her entire life in a wheelchair. Tada has written extensively of her experiences. She has been an inspiration to man. She is a picture of our text in James 1:1-4. She models joy in the midst of suffering. Furthermore, she shows that God often has a good purpose in our suffering. On one occasion Joni discussed having her wheelchair in heaven. She said:

I hope I can take my wheelchair to heaven with me -- I know that's not biblically correct, but if I were able, I would have my wheelchair up in heaven right next to me when God gives me my brand new, glorified body. And I will then turn to Jesus and say, "Lord, do you see that wheelchair right there? Well, you were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble, because that wheelchair was *a lot* of trouble! But Jesus the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on *you*, the stronger I discovered you to be. So thank you for what you did in my life through that wheelchair. And now", I always say jokingly, "you can send that wheelchair to hell, if you want."

Where does that type of joy come from? Ultimately, we know the answer to that question is that such joy can only come from God. James 1:1-4 helps our answer to that question become more specific. These three truths will help believers have joy in the midst of trials.

- I. **Believers will experience trials** Notice that James 1:2 does not say, "Consider it a great joy, my brothers, *if* you experience various trials". No, it says, "...*when* you experience various trials".
 - a. Suffering is part and parcel of the Christian life.
 - Seen in Jesus (John 16:33).
 - Seen in Paul (Romans 8:17).
 - Seen in Peter (1 Peter 4:12).
 - b. This truth prepares us for all types of suffering.
 - God is sovereign over all the "various trials"

By telling us that we *will* suffer the Lord is giving us grace. It keeps us from going into shock and asking foolish questions when suffering comes upon us. When we know that suffering is part of God's plan we will be better prepared to trust His sovereign goodness. We are reminded that God knows that we are going to suffer—but he also knows that our suffering has a purpose.

II. Believers will grow from trials Verses 3-4 give us the reason *why* we should be joyful in the midst of trials.

- a. The furnace of suffering reveals our approval before God
 - In verse 2 James refers to our suffering as a trial.
 - In verse three he calls it “testing”. The word in verse 3 is one that refers to the act of proving the worth of something.
- b. The furnace of suffering produces endurance
- c. The furnace of suffering results in our greatest joy; namely conformity to Christ
 - Endurance isn’t the final goal, maturity and completion in Christ is our final goal
 - Paul speaks similarly in Romans 8. Nothing that God works all things together for our good, and this greater good is Christ-likeness. James is saying something similar

III. Believers will overcome trials The fact that “endurance must do its complete work” helps us see that God will finish His work. Believers will endure these trials, for our good and His glory.

- a. Our response to suffering matters
Our joy (1:2) and our cooperation (1:4) is important as we respond to our suffering
- b. Our response reveals our heart
James 1:5-8 will build upon this theme. Those with a God-ward orientation will trust in the self-giving God in the midst of suffering. Those with double-minded hearts will doubt his goodness. Our response in the fire reveals if we have faith that will endure.

Conclusion: We will all face seasons of suffering--believers and unbelievers. Yet, none of us will experience the full weight of suffering as Jesus experienced it. He experienced suffering so that He could ultimately redeem our suffering. Through Christ suffering can actually become a means to joy.

What is your response to suffering? It reveals something about our hearts. Do we trust in the goodness of God? Is our faith one that is strong enough to endure the furnace of suffering? If you are suffering know in this season that God is inviting you to trust His goodness. If you are not in a season of suffering this is the time to develop a robust theology of suffering. Then don’t be surprised when God calls you to use it.

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