

Turning Trials Into

Triumphs

James 1:2-12

Pt.1



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Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*,
vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 337–341.

Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker that reads:
“When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade!”

It is easier to smile at that statement than to practice it, but the underlying philosophy is sound. It is biblical.

Throughout the Bible are people who turned defeat into victory and trial into triumph. Instead of being victims, they became victors.

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James tells us that we can have this same experience today. No matter what the trials may be on the outside (*James 1:1–12*) or the temptations on the inside (*James 1:13–27*), through faith in Christ, we can experience victory.

The result of this victory is spiritual maturity.

If we are going to turn trials into triumphs, we must obey four imperatives: count (*James 1:2*), know (*James 1:3*), let (*James 1:4, 9–11*), and ask (*James 1:5–8*).

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Or, to put it another way, there are four essentials for victory in trials: a joyful attitude, an understanding mind, a surrendered will, and a heart that wants to believe.

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Count - A Joyful Attitude

(James 1:2)

James 1:2 (NKJV)

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

- Outlook determines the outcome, and attitude determines action. God tells us to expect trials.
- It is not “if you fall into various testings “but “when you fall into various testings.”

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The Believer Who Expects His Christian Life To Be Easy Is In For A Shock

Jesus warned His disciples:

John 16:33 (NKJV)

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

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The Believer Who Expects His Christian Life To Be Easy Is In For A Shock

Paul told his converts that :

Acts 14:22 (NKJV)

strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

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- The keyword is count. It is a financial term, and it means “to evaluate.”
- Paul used it several times in Philippians 3. When Paul became a Christian, he evaluated his life and set new goals and priorities.
- Things that were once important to him became “garbage” in the light of his experience with Christ.
- When we face the trials of life, we must evaluate them in the light of what God is doing for us.

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This explains why the dedicated Christian can have joy during trials: he or she lives for the things that matter most.

Even our Lord was able to endure the cross because of “the joy that was set before Him” (*Heb. 12:2*), the joy of returning to heaven, and one day share His glory with His church.

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV)

looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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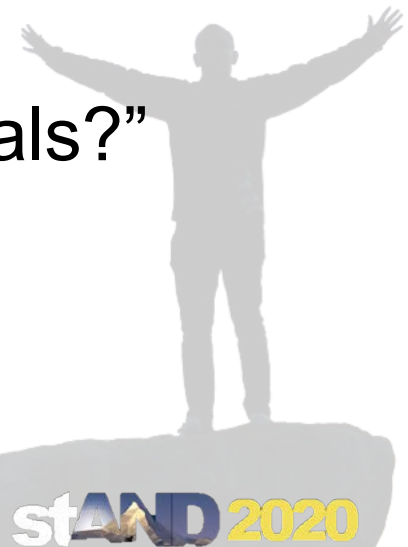
Our values determine our evaluations

- If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us.
- If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to “count it all joy.”
- If we live only for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better.

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- So, when trials come, immediately give thanks to the Lord and adopt a joyful attitude.
- Do not pretend; do not try self-hypnosis; simply look at trials through the eyes of faith.
- Outlook determines outcome; to end with joy, begin with joy.
- “But how,” we may ask, “is it possible to rejoice during trials?” The second imperative explains this.

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Know - An Understanding Mind

(James 1:3)

James 1:3 (NKJV)

knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

- What do Christians know that makes it easier to face trials and benefit from them?
- Faith is always tested. When God called Abraham to live by faith, He tested him to increase his faith. God always tests us to bring out the best; Satan tempts us to bring out the worst.

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- Testing works for us, not against us.

The word testing can be translated as “approval.”

Again, Peter helps us understand it better:

1 Peter 1:7 (NKJV)

that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

You will discover some things about yourself when life tests you.

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- A gold prospector brings his ore sample into the assayer's office to be tested.
- The sample itself may not be worth more than a few dollars, but the approval—the official statement about the ore—is worth millions!
- It assures the prospector that he has a gold mine. God's approval of our faith is more precious because it assures us that our faith is genuine.

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Trials work for the believer, not against him. Paul said:

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NKJV)

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

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- What does God want to produce in our lives?
- Patience, endurance, and the ability to keep going when things are tough.

Romans 5:3–4 (NKJV)

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

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In the Bible, patience is not a passive acceptance of circumstances. It is a courageous perseverance in the face of suffering and difficulty.

- Immature people are always impatient; mature people are patient and persistent.
- Impatience and unbelief usually go together, just as faith and patience do.

Hebrews 6:12 (NKJV)

that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

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Hebrews 10:36 (NKJV)

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

Isaiah 28:16 (NKJV)

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.

- God wants to make us patient because that is the key to every other blessing.

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- The only way the Lord can develop patience and character in our lives is through trials.
- Endurance cannot be attained by reading a book (even this one), listening to a sermon, or even praying a prayer. We must go through the difficulties of life, trust God, and obey Him.
- The result will be patience and character. Knowing this, we can face trials joyfully.
- We know what trials will do in us and for us, and we know that the end result will bring glory to God.

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- This fact explains why studying the Bible helps us grow in patience.

Romans 15:4 (NKJV)

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

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