



August 27, 2023

“Joy”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King's Kids.

News:

★ Wednesday at Alêtheia starts September 20 ★

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If we Christians truly _____ the church, we will be _____ for that by non-Christians.

Saul and Stephen (Acts 7&8). James (Mark 3:21, 31-35).

The first Christian council in about 48 A.D. (Acts 15).

“James the L_____,” and “James the J_____” and more affectionately, “Old _____ Knees,” was יַעֲקֹב (yā-ākōv) in Hebrew, Ἰάκωβος (ēyā-kō-bōs) in Greek, _____ in English. Wycliffe rendered the Latin as James.

James is the handbook on how you _____ Christianity. The best subtitle really is, “A Faith that Works.”

Even so, there is a profound _____ behind the practical outworking. The Bible is always, “Principle then Praxis.”

JAMES 1:1–5a, ¹James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. ²Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ^{5a}But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...

With Christ as your brother, are you, first and foremost, His _____? That is the basis.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

To put it the way James did in verse 1, it _____ the second named owner to the status of the first.

The twelve dispersed tribes are the true Jews connected to Jesus Who is the True Israel... it is the _____.

Entire, complete, and full “joy,” consider it! It’s a _____.

What is Joy? In Greek it is χαρά (čhä-řä), a noun based upon the verb to _____, which is the active praise and worship predicated on the utmost gratitude, which itself incorporates a deeply profound humbleness.

Biblical joy is based entirely upon God’s Agapê love _____.

Since, joy starts as the intellectual acceptance God’s love for you, the thing that hinders joy is your _____ to accept God’s love.

What is the result of choosing joy in the face of difficulties? It produces _____.

The word in verse 2 for trials is πειρασμός (pā-řäs-mös). It means a _____ kind of test, normally translated as temptation.

God flips the dynamic... testing is δοκίμιον (dö-kē-mē-ön), which is a _____ test designed to produce success.

The test is really about perception... Perception is really about what you _____...

It produces _____. _____ is our old friend ὑπομονή (hü-pö-mö-nā), meaning to “Remain under.”

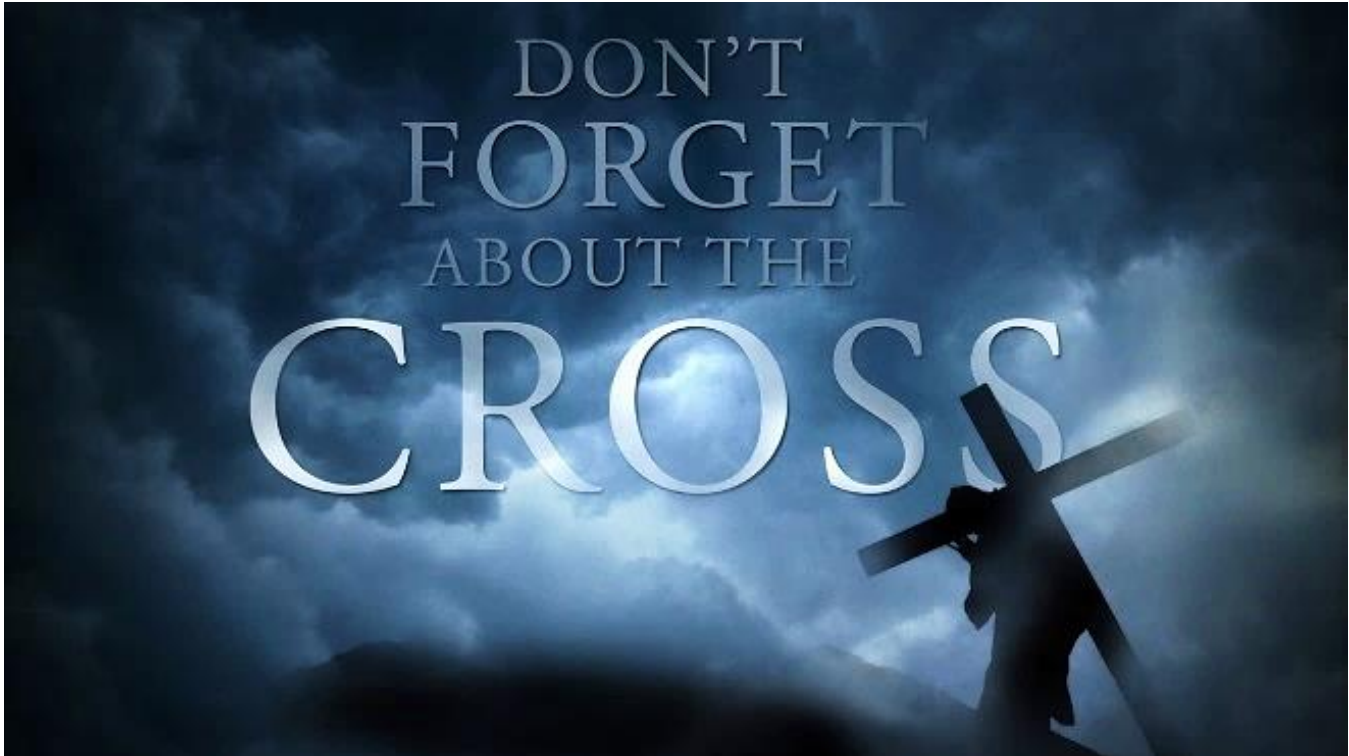
This is a greater understanding of His love for us even in the midst of the most difficult, dire, horrible circumstances... So, we know it is going to be okay and that is a deep and abiding joy. That is a _____ that won’t disappoint.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



I wanted to do something a bit different today since much of our crowd is up at the lake. In our study of John, we have recently seen that if we Christians truly love the church, we will be hated for that by non-Christians.



That was the case in the first century. The original persecutors of the church were Jews. Remember that Jesus Himself, all of His Apostles, and nearly all of the early Christians were also Jews. It was Jews fearing a change, fearing a corruption of what they were comfortable with, who murdered Jesus, and so many of His followers. Fear turns human beings into inhuman monsters.



The most well-known Jewish persecutors of the early church was a dude named Saul. Saul was part of the mob who brutally murdered Stephen as recorded in Acts 7&8. Saul met Jesus and became Paul, the Jewish Apostle who wrote about half of the New Testament.

Another Jewish persecutor was a dude named James. James was the brother of physical Jesus. He rejected his brother's ministry and claims. He persecuted Jesus while He was still alive, mocking Him, calling Him crazy, and trying to take Him into custody. Carefully read Mark chapter 3 (Mark 3:21, 31-35).



James, who knew Jesus for his whole life, finally met Jesus - the Risen Jesus - and he went from a persecutor of Jesus to the leader of His church. He convened and presided over the first Christian council, in Jerusalem in about 48 A.D. (Acts 15).

It is that James, an educated and devout Jew, turned Christian who wrote the eponymous Bible Book, James. Imagine the insights that James had. He knew Jesus better than nearly any other person ever had and now with his eyes open to the Truth, he would have been able to connect all the dots from his nearly 30 years spent with His big brother.

“James the Lesser,” as he liked to be called, in deference to John’s brother, the Apostle James, was the leader of the Jerusalem church until he was murdered by his fellow Jews in 62 A.D. You might remember that when the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea He was first questioned by the Roman Governor Felix, then by Felix’s successor Festus. Paul appealed his case to Rome. Later on, Festus died in office unexpectedly and so it took some time for the emperor Nero to appoint a new dude, and time for him, a guy named Albinus, to arrive. In the temporary vacuum of Roman power, the High Priest Ananus, son of the former High Priest Annas, and brother-in-law to the former High Priest Caiaphas, had James assassinated.

James was also called “James the Just” and more affectionately, “Old Camel Knees,” due to his near-constant praying on his knees. His actual name was יַעֲקֹב (yă-äkōv) in Hebrew, coming over to Greek as Ἰάκωβος (ēyă-kō-bōs) and into English as Jacob. John Wycliffe, a Catholic priest, and Oxford Seminary Professor published the first English New Testament in 1382. It was Middle English to be exact. He rendered the name as James, and it has stuck ever since in English translations. In Welsh it is Iago, in Spanish it is Santiago, and in French it is Jacques.

A man or woman's dedication to a thing is dependent upon their personality coupled with their experience. The ole nature versus nurture dichotomy ends up being a mixture of both. What that fusion creates is belief, opinion, worldview, perspective.

What our belief or worldview creates is the activity of our mind, our mouth, and our body. Our opinion or our perspective creates the thoughts swirling in our brain, the words falling from our lips, and the actions flowing from our being.

For men like Paul and James, their belief was extreme. Because of their personalities and especially their experiences, persecuting and then meeting Jesus... when they became Christians, it was entire. For people such as them, there is no second-guessing, there can be no casual flippant faith, there is no chance of anything less than a complete and full devotion. These folks are serious about Christ and so about His church - they are earnest and resolute about Christianity.



The Bible Book of James is the most American and least American Book of the Bible all at the same time.

It is the least American because, 1) it encourages endurance in suffering... Americans don't like pain. 2) It discourages wealth... Americans love money. 3) It encourages silence... Americans want to be heard. 4) It encourages obedient self-sacrifice... Enough said.



It is the most American in that it is arguably the most practical Book in the Bible... It is the handbook on how you DO Christianity... Americans are extremely pragmatic, we are all about the praxis of a thing, give us the how, not the why, show us the practical application, baby. Spoon-feed us some well-defined, easy to follow, steps to personal growth, self-esteem, and happiness. I'm always saying, "BE a Christian..." Well, this is the guide on how to do that.



The best subtitle for this book of “James,” really is, “A Faith that Works.” Here’s what most people miss... There is a profound reason behind the practical outworking... Even in James, God gives us the principle first and the application second... We just need to look a little harder. But, as I like to say, the Bible is always, “Principle then Praxis.”

James 1:1–5a, 1James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. 2Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, 3knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in

nothing. 5But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God...

James wastes no time at all getting into some very heavy stuff... For Him it's, "forget about the hors d'oeuvres, the soup, the salad, the vegetables, and the potatoes - just pass the meat." Yet the principle precedes the command. What is the principle? James, the physical half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ and the most respected leader of the Christian faith at the time called himself the slave, not bondservant, the slave of God and of the co-equal Lord Jesus Christ. That is the basis - that is the principle. With Christ as your brother, are you, first and foremost, His slave?

Well, we don't like that very much and maybe that's why we Americans are wired the way we are - we're too prideful to think of ourselves as slaves of anyone, even slaves of God.

Perhaps we are so action-oriented because we don't want to think about the underlying motivators of our behavior and the implications that follow. When talking about Christianity we must go against our national character and traditional instinct and with the light of the Holy Spirit examine closely the ideas behind the activity that God requires.

There is a ton going on here and we in no way have the time to plumb the depths of it, but for today I just want us to see the command, the flow of the argument and then really appreciate the principle behind it all.

It will help us with what we're learning from Jesus in His Farewell Discourse in John's Gospel.

God + The Lord Jesus Christ

James

Quickly, if, 2,000 years ago, Fred's Godly slave, said, "I am the slave of God and the slave of Fred," you would think that would be factually accurate and would be surprised when the Jews stoned Fred's slave for blasphemy. It would be okay to say that you were the slave of Fred and that you were also the slave of God, but to put it the way James did in verse 1, it elevates

the second named owner to the status of the first. James declared that he was the slave of two equal owners God and Jesus.

The twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, References the true Jews around the globe wherever they may be. Remember, Jesus is the True Israel and His church is the true Jewish nation - the 12 Tribes of True Israel... In other words, he was addressing the church - the Christian Body of Christ.



Entire, complete, and full “joy,” consider it! It’s a command that is preceded by the content putting greater stress on the fullness of “joy” and then softened with “my brethren,” showing that we’re all in this together. It’s a command for James as much as for the

church - all Christians throughout time are in the same boat.

What is Joy? In Greek it is χαρά (čhä-řä), the second element in the Fruit of the Holy Spirit from Galatians 5. It's a noun based upon the verb to REJOICE... contextually it is in reference to rejoicing in the Lord.

As a verb, again contextually, to rejoice is the active praise and worship in the extreme due to the recognition of the worthiness, the goodness, and the incredible grace given... That means it is predicated on the utmost gratitude. That kind of gratitude incorporates a deeply profound humbleness.

In order for you to be truly awed by a gift - I mean dumbfounded by the cost, the sacrifice, and the generosity involved in giving you that gift, to the point that you are genuinely overwhelmed with gratitude... Well, that means that you are simultaneously deeply humbled by it as well.

The noun form translated as Joy is the basis behind that profoundly humble, heartfelt gratitude that results in praise, worship, and thanksgiving. It is the underlying attitude, demeanor, and disposition that enables and causes rejoicing. Biblical joy is often misunderstood by

people today. So many folks confuse this joy with happiness and think of it primarily as an emotional state, or even as merely the temporary and elusive emotion itself.

It's not entirely different from how our Founding Fathers understood happiness 250 years ago, but it is light-years away from how we define it today. Joy is something that is derived from and molded by our point of view. We choose joy, or we don't.

I did this little experiment a few years ago and thought it might be helpful again. I would like you to close your eyes - no peeking - you'll only cheat yourself... I want you, with your eyes closed, to think of a red rose. Yes, the flower. Think about a beautiful, vibrant, dew covered, red rose.

Construct the rose in your mind's eye. Conceive of its red color and delicate shape. Concentrate on the silky texture of the rose's petals... Forget about the stem, the thorns, and the green leaves. Just focus on the flower, the elegant petals of vivid red and imagine the soothing fragrance they give off. Focus all of your attention on the fragile flower; see it grow clearer, crisper, and more defined in your mind's eye. Let the red rose fully bloom and recognize that the more time

you spend concentrating on it the more developed the red rose becomes... the more real it is to you...



Now, my friends, open your eyes...

It can become quite real as you think about it... Yet, it was created by you in your own mind. If what you conceived of was similar to this picture it is for a very good reason... The rose that you envisioned was based upon your actual previous knowledge, experience, and emotional responses to red roses in the past.



That's like joy. Joy doesn't really exist outside of our own mind. It can only be internally constructed through contemplating, focusing, and concentrating on our actual previous knowledge, experience, and emotions of our past.

I know about God from other people and my own contemplations confirmed by the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit. I have experienced God in a variety of ways from the general revelation of nature all the way down to the personal revelation in my own life through miracles, encounters, and observations.

I have been emotionally moved by praise and worship, in helping others, in being helped by others, in flashes

of insight and in a many other ways as a Christian. Now, if I store up and treasure these things in my heart and meditate on them with my mind, the more real they become to me. This is the basis for Biblical Joy... Who God is to me, internalized by me, and then reflected externally from me.

Biblical joy is based entirely upon God's Agapê love received. It is an attitude that knows that everything is okay regardless of how it appears to human eyes, because it is based on knowing through considered experience that God is on His throne and is in control. God knows what He is doing and is orchestrating everything perfectly at all times... God is God, God is good, God is.

Joy is the ability to genuinely rejoice in the Lord, thanking Him, loving Him, praising Him, worshipping Him, and trusting Him, in every situation no matter how bad it appears to the world. It is acknowledging God's perfection when non-Believers cannot possibly comprehend why you would. It's because you know what they don't know, and that knowledge results in trust that is based on considered experience and it is called joy.

Since, joy starts as the intellectual acceptance of the Truth that God loves you, and therefore holds you and will never let you go... The thing that hinders joy is our inability to accept God's love. The amount of joy you have is equal to the amount of God's love that you have embraced.

Joy is that underlying disposition that allows a person to thank God no matter what – to praise His name even when all seems lost, to Worship Him even when there seems to be no hope. To love and accept from Him whatever He pours out... even when there is no understanding at all concerning His plans and purposes, it is to say, Blessed be Your Name.

We are commanded by God, the Holy Spirit, through James, to reckon, consider, and count "it" nothing but joy... What is it? Various trials. "Various trials" is the "it" we are commanded to consider nothing but joy.

Meaning that whatever happens in this life we are to trust Jesus because we have come to know Jesus and we have come to know Jesus because we worked at the relationship! See that? We have been engaged with God and with His people and we have represented both Him and the church to non-Christians and we have meditated on those experiences and catalogued

them in our mind to the point where we know the faithfulness of God can be counted on - we trust in that so much that we are not shaken, we are not tossed to and from like windswept waves.

What is the result of choosing joy in the face of difficulties? It produces more joy. The testing of our trust results in God proving again that He is trustworthy. The testing of our joy results in God proving again that our joy is not misplaced, not irrational, but quite the opposite. The testing of our faith results in God proving again that He is ever faithful.

That strengthened faith and resultant increased joy enables us to go on, to persevere, to endure. That endurance is what enables us to finish well. To stand before a holy God with a clear conscience. What more could you possibly hope for? What could possibly be better than that?

There are some very interesting things going on in the Greek that I want to very quickly point out.



The word in verse 2 for trials is πειρασμός (pā-rās-mōs). It means a negative kind of test, normally translated as temptation, trouble, tribulation, or difficulty... it is the horrors of life; the destructive, evil, bad, painful, frustrating, and life-shattering stuff. One of Satan's names is the related πειράζων (pā-rä-dzōn), meaning the Tempter. It is one who tests, or sifts, or assesses, by way of tempting. It is the type of test designed to prove inadequacy, deficiency, weakness and produce failure. Like stretching a rubber band over and over to see how many times it takes to get it to fail.

What Christianity tells us is that if we will trust God, He can take the evil and use it for good. In verse 3 the word testing is the completely opposite word for

determining value and is almost always translated as it is here, as “testing.”



TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

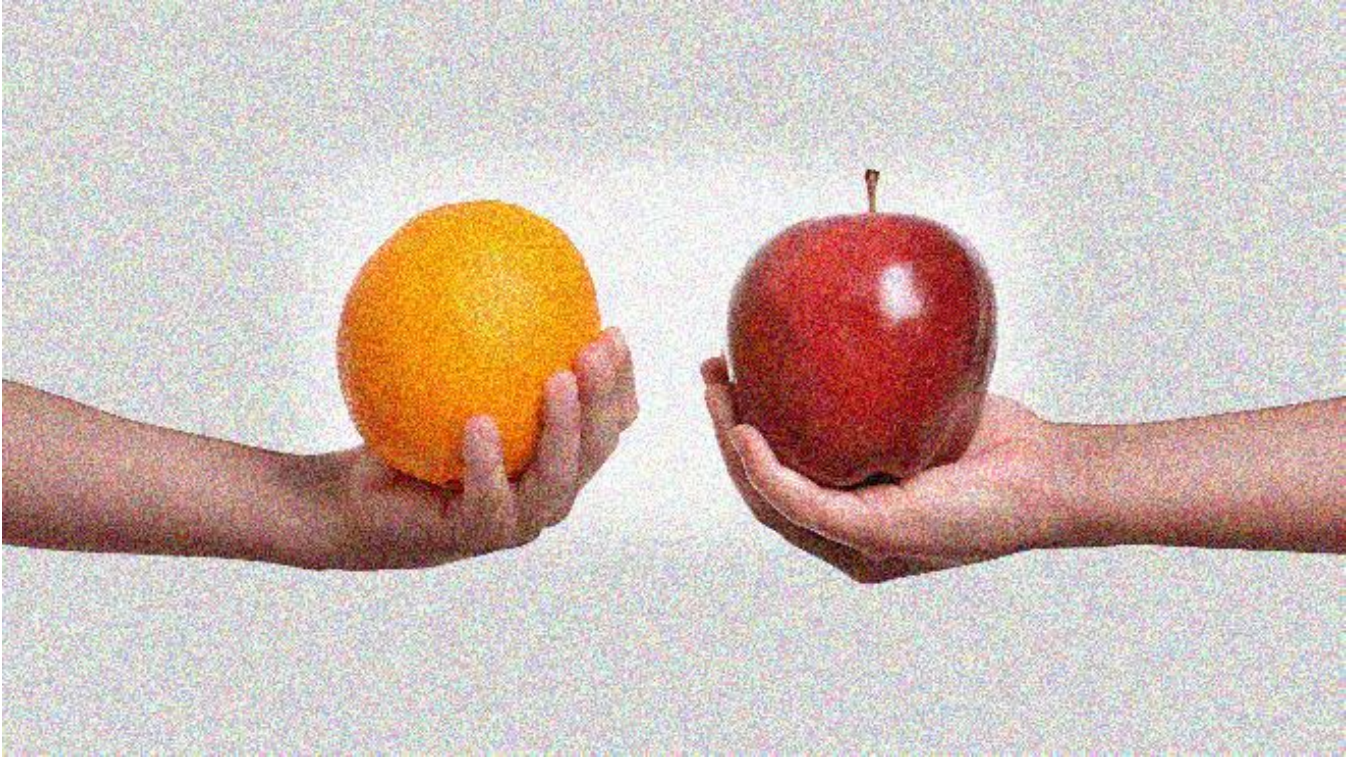
A B L E S S I N G I N D I S G U I S E

God flips the dynamic... testing is δοκίμιον (dō-kē-mē-ōn), which is a positive test designed to prove competence, adequacy, strength and produce success. God takes the evil “trial,” seeking your destruction and wants to flip it to become a “test,” that proves your competence, faith, and ability in Him.

That’s what is intended by the last phrase of the Lord’s Prayer. “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil.” Temptation is πειρασμός that evil kind of testing to the breaking point and beyond.

The phrase means... Father, as You lead me through my life there will be various trials, there will be temptations, there will be traps set for me by Your enemies. Do not allow me to fall prey to them - turn them into positive tests of You in me building my trust, building my joy, building my faith, and thereby delivering me from Your enemies. The evil in general and the evil one specifically. The evil within me and the evil outside of me, the physical evil of this world and the supernatural evil beyond.

It's about faith and faith is really your ability to own God's love which can be measured by your joy. Well, Scott that sounds great, but how am I supposed to believe more? How can I receive more of the love that God has already poured out upon me? How can I have more joy?



Teddy Roosevelt said that “Comparison is the thief of Joy.” That is only true when we do what is typical. When we typically compare ourselves to others who we perceive to be doing better. I have a sore back, I compare my plight with a guy who doesn’t have any back pain and so, I feel cheated. I don’t compare myself to the guy who has scoliosis, bulged discs, and fractured vertebrae. If I compare myself to that dude, I feel fortunate,

The test is really about perception... Perception is really about what you choose... What you choose to focus on. Is the glass half empty or is it half full?



To get that perspective, God wants us to run to Him, to lean on Him, to fully rely on Him... When all you can see is the empty part... you do what eight-year-old Norman does... pray.

“Pray, NOT to align God’s will with yours,
BUT to align your heart to His.”



Verse 5, “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God... Well, that’s prayer. When we take the verse out of context, we think God loves to grant general wisdom. No, God will not make you generally wiser just because you pray... You’ll actually need to work for general wisdom. What James was saying is that is in the midst of the trial you can’t see God - you can’t let go and trust Him - pray for His wisdom to see the problem for what it is and see the opportunity that it presents for you and for the church and for the Kingdom. Whatever the issue, “we know in part,” but God knows all - just trust Him (I Corinthians 13:8-12).

Let the strength found through prayer enable you to pass the test and realize through that process that He is faithful and that His proven faithfulness will further strengthen your faith until you become a hero of the faith like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Rahab (Hebrews 11).



It “Produces,” which is to say it, “Brings out in us,” endurance. Endurance is our old friend ὑπομονή (hü-pō-mō-nā), meaning to “Remain under.” It is a military term describing the action required of each and every man in the Greek Phalanx formation... It is to remain locked in position under the extreme pressure from the charging enemy to throw down your weapons, turn around, and run in the opposite direction as fast as your legs will carry you.

Life will beat down upon you to the point where you want to do practically anything to get out from under the pressure... but pressure is precisely what is needed to mold you into the image of Christ Jesus our

Lord. Remain under - ὑπομονή. Do not waver or fall... Do not run away... ὑπομονή by trusting in Jesus!

Now this work of endurance has the end goal of making you mature... making you a grownup Christian... So, if you allow it, God will use these trials to build your faith as well as to build the faith of those around you, both that of Christian brothers and sisters when you allow them to minister to you, and that of nonbelievers when you allow them to see you stand firm in a strength that is clearly not your own.

Ephesians 4:14, “As a result, we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed here and there by waves and blown about by every wind of doctrine. We will not be influenced by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”

A couple of chapters later in that Letter the Apostle Paul says... “A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you

will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground” (Ephesians 6:10-14).



So, what have we learned today? When, not if, but when, we undergo evil, difficult, trials, and tribulations we are to recognize them as opportunities for God to flip the script, turning them into lessons, tests, encounters, and experiences if we will allow it.

Tests that become victories over evil as God wins them in us and through us giving us the substance for increased joy. The conviction that He is there, that He deeply cares, that He is able, that He knows what He's doing, that He has you and that He has the situation you are so concerned about. It is trust built by a choice

to turn the inevitable evil of this fallen and depraved world into good.

Faithfulness in the midst of trial... God's faithfulness to us, the faithfulness of our brothers and sisters in the Lord... and yes, our own faithfulness all working together to strengthen our faith – our trust in God and our surrender to His purposes...



We recognize that part of His purpose for us is that our increased faith builds and brings out our endurance... Our ability to stand firm in the Lord under even greater pressure... an endurance that gives us assurance that we will not falter because through testing we have learned the secret... We stand because, “The Lord is able to make us stand” (Romans 14:4). As Jude, the

brother of Jesus and James said, it is God, “Who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (Jude 24).

This is a greater understanding of His love for us even in the midst of the most difficult, dire, horrible circumstances... So, we know it is going to be okay and that is a deep and abiding joy. That is a Hope that won't disappoint. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Romans 5:3-5, “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”



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