

PAIN AND PROBLEMS

OPEN: James writes this letter to Jewish believers who were facing persecution, hostile governments and forces of evil...

- Our challenges pale in comparison to the struggles they faced...mauled and eaten by hungry lions, burnt at the stake for refusing to deny their faith, imprisoned...
 - James has something to share with us that will help us face our pain and problems.
- ❖ Life is hard, we live in a fallen world and sin has stained every part of this fallen universe.
- Right now, in our own ministry, I think of:
 - ✓ A mother who is grieving the passing of her son who committed suicide.
 - ✓ A grown woman who is finding it difficult to forgive her father who sexually abused her.
 - ✓ A couple that are in the midst of a “hateful divorce.”
 - ✓ A businessman whose company is not turning a profit or earning the amount of money needed to live on.
 - ✓ A senior in high school whose football hopes have been sidelined because of ankle surgery.
 - ✓ The news...cancer has returned and chemo is required.
 - ✓ The disappointments of life are many...as the saying goes “into each life some rain must fall.”
- ❖ Jesus told us: **John 16:33 (NLT) - ...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows...**

- Trials are not electives in God’s school, they are required courses.
- They are the means by which we grow spiritually.
 - ✓ Spiritual growth is not instant or easy, there are no shortcuts.
 - ✓ There is no growth without struggle. No pain, no gain.
 - ✓ How we respond to trials will determine our spiritual growth.
 - ✓ We get to know God and encounter His grace as we go through trials.

❖ Be a student not a victim when it comes to the trials of life.

- The victim talks about how life is unfair, they ask: “why did this happen to me?”
- The student says: “it doesn’t matter why it happened, but what is God trying to teach me, what can I learn?”
- The victim feels sorry for themselves and has no time for others.
- The student focuses on helping others and has little time to feel sorry for themselves.
- A victim begs God to remove the problems of life so they can be happy.
 - ✓ The student has learned through the problems of life that God alone is the source of all true happiness.

1) We need the **proper perspective** when it comes to handling the pains of life.
(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)

James 1:2-4 (NLT) – (Pastor to read from the Bible)

- Consider it all joy...count it all joy...consider it an opportunity for great joy.
 - ✓ You got to be nuts! This is not the natural response to trouble...meaning a supernatural response is required.

- ✓ One translation reads: **When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your life, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! (J.B. Phillips).**
- ✓ We must make a deliberate choice to see the trial as an opportunity to grow.
- ✓ You will talk more about this in your small group...(how does joy and happiness differ? If God is sovereign, what does it mean when problems come into my life?)
- Since you will be discussing this passage, let me highlight one word:
 - ✓ But first...how do you go on when sorry has paid you a visit? What do you do when tragedy strikes and you feel like giving up?
- a) **Remind yourself of the promises of God. (Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)**
 - Get in the Word, stay in the Word even when you don't feel like it.
 - The Spirit of God will use the Word of God to comfort you in your darkest hours.
- b) **Give thanks for what you can. (Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)**
 - Even if you cannot give thanks for 99% of what is happening, focus on the 1% and thank God for that.
- c) **Refuse to give in to bitterness and despair. (Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)**
 - Make a conscience effort to trust God, don't give in to anger, but by God's grace choose the higher road.
 - Do not turn away from God.
- d) **Choose to believe in God. (Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)**
 - Believe in His goodness, His love and kindness. Faith is a choice made in the heart.

- If you want to believe you will believe and the Holy Spirit will be there to help you.

e) **Make up** your **mind** to go on with life. *(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)*

- Grief is good and proper, but you can't go back or re-live yesterday...you must go forward.
- Even if we want to go back, we can't and we can't stay where we are. God is calling us onward, forward, moving out by faith into the unknown future.

❖ What good are pains and problems? How does God use them in our life?

- The early church called “**patience**” the queen of all virtues. They believed if they possessed this one virtue, they could survive anything.
- The word patience is the Greek work “hupomeno” – hupo = under and meno = to stay or abide, to remain in one's spot, to stay put.
- When used in reference to military life, it described a soldier that was ordered to maintain a position even in the face of fierce combat.
- They were to stand their ground against the attacks of the enemy.
- They were to stick it out until the enemy realized they couldn't be beaten and they decided to retreat.
- Hupomeno means steadfast, consistent, unwavering and unflinching.
 - ✓ Regardless how heavy the load gets or how much pressures I'm under, I'm not budging one inch.
- The King James uses the word patience, but we would understand it as endurance.
 - ✓ Staying power, the ability to hang in there, doesn't give up.
 - ✓ This is “battle tested” faith, it withstands the fire from the enemy and does not cut and run.

- ✓ Theologian William Barclay says: in the early church, the martyrs gained the respect of unbelievers because in the moment of death, they had this quality.
 - To the very end they died, with their faith intact. Of them it was said, “they died singing.”

- Don’t focus on your problems, get your eyes on God, stand your ground, hang in there!

- ❖ The end result of enduring faith is spiritual maturity.
 - ✓ You can’t learn this in a book; it is the product of a “fire tested” life.
 - ✓ The great danger is we want to short circuit the process by running away from our problems.
 - ✓ It takes time and trials to develop Christ-like character...

- ❖ To the bewildered in the room; when trials come, there is something we can know and something we can’t know:
 - a) **We can’t always know why things happen the way they do.**
 - No matter how hard we try to figure things out there will always be mysteries in life.
 - ✓ The greater the tragedy, the greater the mystery.
 - ✓ God does not always explain Himself to us.
 - ✓ Some things we will only understand when we get to Heaven.
 - b) **When hard times come, we can know that God is at work for our benefit and for His glory.**
 - ✓ **Romans 8:28 (NLT) – And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.**
 - Sometimes we will see and understand what God is doing and when we can’t, we will have to exercise faith.

2) What do you do when you don't know what to do?

- James addresses that in vs. 5-8.

3) What if I told you there is a future reward at the “banquet ceremony” in heaven for those who patiently endure (vs. 12)...would that encourage you?

CLOSE:

- As long as we live in this fallen world, there is going to be struggles, problems and pain.
 - ✓ You cannot fight against this reality. Your arms are much too short to box with God.
- Knowing you will forget more than you remember, can I give you just two words? When hard times come and knock you down, what should you do?
 - ✓ Pray and Stay.
 - ✓ Don't run, hide or shake your fist at God.
 - ✓ Arguing with the Almighty is not the answer.
 - ✓ Don't try to bargain your way out of trouble...you have nothing to bargain with.
- Pray: Seek God's face, spend time with the Lord. Listen for His voice.
 - ✓ Ask God: What are you wanting to teach me?
 - ✓ Speak Lord, I'm listening.
- Stay: Wait, be patient, don't rush God.
 - ✓ Refuse to run away.
 - ✓ Affirm by faith that God is at work, even if you don't understand what He is doing.

- ✓ Don't do anything foolish or hasty.
- ❖ You can't choose your trials nor can you avoid all of them, but you can choose how you will respond to them.
 - ✓ Will it be:
 - Joy or bitterness.
 - Forgiveness or anger.
 - Faith or fear.
 - Love or hatred.
 - Mercy or revenge.
 - Peace or worry.
 - Hope or despair.
 - ✓ Our perspective makes all the difference our trials are not sent to make us fall, but to help us grown and soar to new heights.

Next week: Dealing with Temptation.

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Message Notes
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