

Joy in the Fire

Introduction and Review

- We have been addressing joy in trials from James chapter 1 & last week from 1Peter chapter 1.
- Last week we learned that praising God helps us & brings relief in times of trials. It's called **inexpressible joy** (1Pe. 1:8)!
- Inexpressible joy means that it cannot be expressed or explained with earthly words, but must be experienced personally.
- 1 Peter 1:3-7 reveals that God is worthy of this kind of glorious praise filled with joy & gives compelling reasons.

I. The Nature of Trials in Life

- A. Trials are fiery (v. 12a)
The term suggests that trials are unpleasant & painful. Such trials are often unjust, intense & lengthy in duration.
- B. Trials may involve hurtful words (v. 14a)
Verbal abuse can cause serious harm & wounds to people even though they are not readily apparent. Hurtful speech – slander, reproach, reviling, oppressive, etc.
- C. Trials may involve hurtful actions (v. 16a)
Sometimes trials come in the form of deliberate & harmful actions taken because the Christian loves & obeys Jesus.

Examples: Acts & recorded history. Laws against Christian prayer/worship in China & Iran; raids & attacks in India, Africa.... Anti-Christian sentiment is growing in the US – employers, schools, government & religious groups.

II. The Purpose of Trials in Life

- A. Christians are tested for genuine faith (v. 12a, 17-18)
“to test you” is a phrase which means that God reveals true believers through difficult circumstances of life – Job, Sarah, Paul (2Co. 4:7-10; 11:23-28). The testing begins in the church where there are true & false believers (v. 17-18).
- B. Christians share in Christ's sufferings (v. 13a)
Christians represent Jesus in this life. Therefore when people reject Jesus, His word & ways, they also reject Christians who follow Jesus. So we experience some of the world's negative reaction to Jesus (Jn. 15:18-19; Php. 3:10).

- C. Christians experience help from the Holy Spirit (v. 14b)
The HS (who is God) makes Himself available to assist believers in times of trials. He gives encouragement, hope, wisdom & power when we are weak & hurting in trials.

III. Our Response to Trials in Life

- A. Christians are not to be surprised (v. 12)
We are not to consider ourselves exempt from trials because we are Christians. This is false teaching/deception. The bible teaches that trials are normal & to be expected (2Tim. 3:12).
- B. Christians are not to commit crimes (v. 15)
Christians should not attempt to justify criminal activities in times of trials. We should not consider it a trial when we suffer for doing wrong or sinning. That is simply the consequences of our sins – punishment from some earthly authority or God Himself. This damages the reputation of Christ, the church & the guilty Christian (2Sam. 12:14).
- C. Christians are not to be ashamed or afraid (v. 16b, 19)
Christians are not to be afraid of losing our reputations, possessions, health or even our lives in trials. God has promised to take care of us in this life & the next (1:3b-5).
- D. Christians are to rejoice (v. 13)
*Joy comes from a right relationship with Jesus Christ. He has **shared** His righteous life, death & glorious future with us – joy, hope & liberty. Therefore we willingly **share** in His sufferings without regret & with joy (Rom. 8:16-17; 2Co. 4:17)! How is this possible – **GRACE** (2Co. 12:9).*

ILL: Exercise causes me pain. People at gym exert, grunt, strain, listen to music, look in the mirror & enjoy themselves. We go thru same experiences, but with different attitudes. I was only thinking about the difficulty, while they were looking at their progress & great possibilities for the future...

APPL: The same is true with us spiritually. If we only think about our problems & difficulties, then life will be miserable. But if we consider the progress we are making in our trials & the glorious future after our trials we can experience joy.

CONCLUSION

So then my beloved brothers & sister in the Lord, are you ready to breathe a sigh of relief about your personal trials? Are you ready to get rid of the shock of your personal problems; ready to accept that God is actually in full control of your situation? Are you ready to accept that God is testing you to prove to you that you are a genuine believer & that you will love Christ whether you have \$200K or \$2; live in 4 BR house or 1 BR apartment; stable income or no income; family is stable or falling apart...? Are you ready to stop worrying, complaining, anger, comparing your situation to others...? Are you ready to be free to worship & praise the Lord regardless of your circumstance; free to love God & people regardless...; free to give regardless...; free to have real, heavenly joy while you are in the fire? It can be yours today. The Lord Jesus is here to help right now; the Holy Spirit is here to help...; the grace of God is available to you right now. Will you humble yourself & trust the Lord?

If you are not a Christian, the Lord Jesus is here to help today too. He is here to save from the penalty of your sins today; to free you from the fear of death & give you eternal life. Will you believe today?

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[Prepared by Willie D. Woodmore](#)