10 – 6 – 2019 – Message - Hang In There!

James 1: 2 – 8

**Music Video: "Believer"**

I am a mountain mover  
Water walker  
More than just an overcomer  
Cause, I've been set free

I am a gospel preacher  
Heart on fire  
Freedom singing  
Testifier  
Cause, I've been redeemed

I know this is not my home  
I know I don't walk alone  
No matter what comes my way

I have peace through the trouble  
I have joy through the struggle  
Now my hope's in a brighter day

Do you have the confidence shared in these lyrics? These words give a clear understanding of the truth of God's blessings and promises.

As I was looking for images to show some hang in there moments, I came across these. Kind of dyer circumstances.

How many of you live in a state of hanging on? Always dealing with one trouble, trial, drama, obstacle, catastrophe, after another.

The Scripture for today may be familiar to most of us and can be misunderstood. James 1: 2 – 8

*2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your perseverance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your perseverance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

*5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 6 But when you ask Him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.*

*7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.*

The Greek word used here for perseverance is an action word of energetic resistance, steadfastness under pressure, giving of self continually, and endurance in the face of tribulations.

Trials and troubles come to us from every side, but we should not think that this is strange because Jesus told us that we should expect them.

In John 16:33 Jesus said, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows". But then, Jesus goes on to say, "But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Perseverance is vital to growing in your faith, and God wants His people to persevere no matter what happens, so we have to learn how to overcome obstacles, difficulties, trials, and tribulation to experience victory in Christ Jesus.

There is that "victory in Jesus" thing again!

Did I just hear someone say amen?

Notice that James does not say "if" but "when" you face trials of many kinds. Trouble is one of the constants in life. As long as we are alive, we will have trouble. Family trouble, workplace trouble, personal trouble, financial trouble, relationship trouble, spiritual trouble... the list is endless.

Some if not many of the troubles we experience are of our own making. Just as James tells us in verse *14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.*

We do not live in a perfect world and life is not fair. So, the question is, how do we handle the troubles of life when they come?

The first thing God tells us through James is to "Consider it an opportunity for great joy."

We are to consider it all joy as we go through the trial. Does that mean we are to be happy about the pain of the problem?

No. Being happy is a feeling and James says nothing about our feelings when he says we are to consider it an opportunity for joy.

I once heard this saying, "Happiness is based upon the happenings in my life but joy comes from the Lord."

The reason I share that saying is because when we look at trials, troubles, and difficult situations there is usually nothing to be happy about. But we can be joy-filled in the midst of it all because we know God is in the midst of the trouble with us.

In 1 Peter 1: 6 – 7 Paul explains it this way,

*"6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So, when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*

Verse 3 tells us that God allowed the trial into our life to test our faith. Our faith is tested so that we will become mature and no longer a spiritual infant. God wants us to grow up and move from being spiritual babies to become spiritual adults.

Think back to when you were in elementary school or when your kids were in elementary school. Let's say, they each had to take timed math tests on their math facts. Each week they had to answer correctly 30 questions in 3 minutes.

If they were unable, they had to take the test again the next day until they could pass. For those that passed, they would go on to the next level of questions.

For some of us here today, we are still taking the same tests because we have never passed. God is patiently waiting for us to apply His Word to our trial, our obstacle so that we can pass the test and move on in our spiritual development with Him. God wants us to pass the test!

The way God grows us is to teach us through His Word and then test us with a trial so that we can apply what we were taught.

If we successfully put into practice what we learn from His Word, then we pass the test and we grow to the next level of spiritual maturity.

The second step in handling trials in light of God's Word is to ask God for wisdom in the midst of the trial.

Since God has allowed the trial to come, He obviously wants us to learn something or take us somewhere because of it.

Therefore, God tells us to ask Him what we are to learn and how we are to properly respond to the trial. God loves us and as a loving Heavenly Father, He always has our good in mind.

I love the way the Scripture brings the Old Testament forward. As in Proverbs 2: 3 – 6 *3 Cry out for insight and ask for understanding. 4 Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. 5 Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD grants wisdom! From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Even though the trial might be painful and at times more than we can bear, God is there with us through it all.

So, ask God for wisdom, but when He tells you what to do from His Word, you also must do it.

Verse 6-8 says clearly that we are not to be doubleminded with God’s Word. Obedience is not listening to God and then doing it your own way.

You can’t ask God for wisdom, have Him tell you and then do what you want. It doesn’t work that way.

In fact, God says that with that mindset, you will not receive anything from God. To successfully pass the test of trials, you must be obedient to God’s instructions or you will never pass, and you’ll keep coming back to the same kind of situation in life until you handle it God’s way.

The third and final step is to persevere. Perseverance is staying the course even though your feelings say run. Sounds so simple but often it is not.

Again, James doesn’t say if trouble comes your way but when it does. He assumes that we will have troubles and that it is possible to profit from them.

**The point is not to pretend to be happy when we face pain but to have a positive outlook (“consider it an opportunity for great joy”) because of what troubles can produce in our lives.**

James tells us to turn our hardships into times of learning. Tough times can teach us perseverance.

I do not enjoy going to the dentist, I don't know anyone who does. I feel so uneasy when the hygienist tips me back and starts working in my mouth with those tools that are sharp, twisted, and uncomfortable.

Then when the dentist comes in and says that he is going to give me a shot and drill a sensitive tooth with a cavity, I feel like saying " No, thank you, not today..." as if I could with the hands, the gauze, and the instruments in my mouth.

But even though I cringe at the pointed instruments on the metal tray, stiffen with the stab of the needle and sigh at the sound of the drill, I stay in the chair.

I stay in the chair because I know that if I don’t allow the dentist to do what needs to be done, my toothache will not go away, but in fact get worse.

To persevere through the trials or obstacles of life is just like staying in the chair. Even though you want to leave, you don’t because you know God knows what He is doing, and He is working for your good.

James says that if we persevere, blessing will be ours and blessings follow obedience!

As in James 1: 12 *God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

And Isaiah 1: 19 *"If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;*

Luke 11: 28 *Jesus replied, “But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.”*

God wants you to pass the test of your faith. What test are you going through right now? What area is God allowing your faith to be tested on?

Don’t gripe and complain, fuss and fight against what God has allowed to come into your life but Consider, Ask, and Persevere.

If you do, you will pass the test and move to a higher level of spiritual growth, knowledge, and intimacy with God.

2 Thessalonians 2: 16 - 17 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, 17 comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.*