

Suffering

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[0:00] James 1 verse 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that! the trying of your faith worketh patience.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations. In other words, various trials. When trials come, James says, count it all joy. In James 5 he goes on from verse 10, Take my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering, affliction and of patience.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

James says, consider the example of suffering, of affliction, of patience of the prophets of old. Consider Job and the patience or the endurance of Job.

[1:17] Count it all joy. We've heard about counting blessings. Well, counting the blessing of suffering. It's kind of something hard to swallow sometimes, isn't it?

But James says, count it all joy. Because there's lessons we can learn from suffering. There's no suffering in life that is not...

Sorry, I'll say that again. If there were no suffering in life, then we would not appreciate the blessings. Life is a mix of joy and of sorrow, of success and failure, of health and sickness, of life and death.

It's a mixture. It's a mixture. And it's been said that the strongest metals, those metals that are hardest, are those that have been through the hottest fires. God is described by Jeremiah as a potter.

And we are described as clay in Jeremiah chapter 18. And the most pliable clay is that which has been most thoroughly mixed and beaten and rolled, pressed and pushed and pulled on the wheel.

[2:29] Only then, when it's been through that, can the potter, with care and patience, begin to draw it together and shape that clay into a vessel, into something beautiful and useful.

But it's painful to be thrown on that wheel and spun around and stretched and torn. God is making us into a new shape.

Even when, then, if we have to go into that dry, hot place of the oven, the furnace of affliction, the potter is having his way with the clay.

And it will be made beautiful with his hands. Life is filled with these things, brothers and sisters. With various trials and afflictions. I had one very minor one last night.

When I had, if you think I'm winking at you today, I had something in my eye last night. And I had to go to the doctor and they couldn't find it. So, you know, if someone's good at finding specks in people's eyes, you know, I might need your help today.

[3:34] But, you know, there's these things that are sent to try us. Things that make us feel a bit worse for the weather. And that was nothing compared to what I know many of you are going through, even now, even today.

The potter is having his way with the clay. In John 15, we see the Lord, our God, as a cultivator of a vineyard, a vine dresser.

Maximising his harvest. Working with that vine. Pruning the vine. Pulling the dead brush away to be burned. Tying those branches up so that the vine can grow and be nurtured.

And it's only after that gruelling process that the vine can achieve that potential of richness, of fruitfulness.

Sometimes we might feel like the vine dresser is cutting bits off us. Pulling us and stretching us. Maybe burning up some of the dross.

[4:41] The vine dresser is doing his work. Maybe he's tying you to a wire and you're feeling like it's a bit uncomfortable. The vine dresser will hand his way with the branches.

So that the harvest will be fruitful and abundant. In Hebrews 12, 11 it says, Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.

In other words, unpleasant and hard. Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Unto them which are exercised thereby.

For the present, it doesn't seem joyous, but grievous. But afterward, afterward, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

To them which are exercised thereby. Many of you would have heard of Joni Erickson Tardin. She writes of God as a painter, a master artist. She says that along with the brighter colours, God brings the cool, dark contrast of suffering into our life.

[5:47] As a contrast, as a contrast laid up against that golden character of Christ within you. It will draw attention to him.

Light against darkness. Beauty against affliction. Joy against sorrow. God is bringing sometimes those dark shades to brighten the portrait of your life.

The light of Christ can be evident, shining brightly through us. Sometimes set against the backdrop of the dark colours of suffering.

Born through patient endurance. Suffering teaches us. We learn from it. It teaches us to turn to him. To yield to him. To rely upon him.

Our character is refined through those times of suffering. Many qualities are brought out into the light. As the times of suffering are endured.

[6:50] As we learn that patience. As we learn that trust. There may be some times, some experiences will never really understand this side of forever.

Why? Some pain we will not understand. Why? Until we see him face to face. Then we will understand. Then we will know.

Then we will understand everything completely. As to why it happened. Will we find the patience of Job? The patience of Job.

Job had to learn many hard lessons. He found that when everything was stripped away from his life. As we can find.

All we have is God. All we have is God. And God is enough. God is enough. For us.

[7:51] No matter how bad life can get. God's love and grace are enough. God is sufficient. He is. Our sufficiency is of Christ.

This world is just a blink. God's love and grace are enough for you. His presence. His word.

His people. He is for you. He is with you. And when suffering comes. Know that God is. God is. And God is for you.

God is at work. Within you. Despite what you see. Oswald Chambers wrote. If you are going to be used by God. He will take you through a number of experiences.

That are not meant for you personally at all. They are designed to make you useful in his hands. And to enable you to understand. What takes place in the lives of others.

[8:52] Sometimes those hard times. Help you to relate. I know someone was sharing with me. Just this last week. Of business failure. Of absolute getting to the bottom of the barrel.

They can relate to people now. Because of what they have been through. They can relate to the people doing it tough. Maybe before they couldn't. That can happen to us sometimes. Can't it? When we go through those times.

Of testing. Of trial. Of sickness. Of ill health. Of relationship. Concerns. Of all manner of trial. And various. Suffering.

God. Sometimes. Is using that. So you can be a blessing to others too. Yet you may never understand. In Acts 5 verse 40.

We see that suffering for Christ. Is especially a privilege. You know our brothers and sisters. That we remember in chains. As the word tells us. Those that are in bonds. For the name of Jesus.

[9:54] They have got a great privilege. And yet I'm sure for them. That would be very testing. In Acts 5 verse 40. We see. Where some.

They called the apostles. They beat them. They commanded them. They should not speak. Anymore in Jesus name. And they let them go. After they've beaten them. In Acts 5 verse 41. It goes on. And they. The apostles departed. From the presence of the council. Rejoicing. Rejoicing. That they. Were counted worthy. To suffer shame. For his name. And daily. In the temple. And every house. They ceased not. To. Teach. And preach. Jesus Christ.

They rejoiced. That they were counted worthy. To suffer shame. For his name. What a privilege. You might get. The.

[10:50] Absolute. Privilege. Of that. That would be something. Wouldn't it? Our brothers and sisters. Who are martyrs. Do.

Experience that. James says. When you go through. Various trials. When you go through. These various. Testing times. Count it.

All joy. All joy. A man. Described this. Holy joy. Like this. He says. It's a cheerful revolt. Against self. And pride.

Holy joy. That's right. An utter abandonment. To God. A ministry. Of self surrender. sin. 12 we see Paul speaking of the thorn in his flesh.

Something was bugging him. Maybe he had something in his eye. Maybe he had something in his body. Something in his temperament. Something that was causing him grief. And he prayed and prayed and prayed three times. 2 Corinthians 12 verse 8.

[12:25] Prayed that it would leave him. And verse 9 of 2 Corinthians 12. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities in reproaches, in necessities in persecutions in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak then am I strong.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. God's power can be unleashed in your life through those times where you've grown more dependent upon him. When you hear him say, My grace is sufficient for thee.

For thee. Amen. For thee. For thee. For thee. For thee. For thee. For thee. For thee. My grace is sufficient for you as a person, as an individual. My grace is sufficient.

He says to you, God is in charge. He has a purpose in affliction. In your suffering. As much as you can't always grasp it.

[13:43] Spurgeon was such a man acquainted with suffering. Spurgeon wrote, I owe everything to the furnace. Hammer and file.

The best piece of furniture in my house has been the cross. My greatest enricher has been personal pain.

And for that I thank God. That's amazing isn't it? My greatest teacher has been my personal pain. I can sing with the poet, God in Israel sows the seeds of affliction, pain and toil.

These spring up and choke the weeds which would else overspread the soil. The seeds of affliction, pain and toil. Trials make the promise sweet.

Trials give new life to prayer. Trials bring me to his feet. Lay me low and keep me there. Trials enrich your prayer life.

[14:55] Because it draws you to his feet. It draws you to his feet. It lays me low and keeps me there. 1 Peter 4 verse 12 Peter says, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you.

But rejoice in as much as you are partakers of Christ's suffering that when his glory shall be revealed you may be glad with exceeding joy if you be reproached for the name of Christ.

Happy are you for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief or an evildoer or as a busy body in other people's matters.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf. If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf.

There's men and women here today who have been persecuted for being a Christian. They have suffered they fled those countries for their lives. They know what we're talking about here today. [16:22] This is not some theoretical lecture. Some people have to flee for their lives. Their families are in danger. let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Thank God I'm privileged to be amongst people like that here this morning and so are you. They are the world that say they're lucky to be alive.

we know as Christians they're blessed blessed blessed people. I thank God for you my African brothers and sisters here today.

Thank God for you and your testimony to the grace of God. Suffering makes us stronger it helps us mature suffering gives us a testimony to the grace of God his keeping power and I think really all of us have let's face it we all owe it to him I'm going to start winking at you in a minute because it's all suffering helps us to depend upon him it helps us realise our human frailty and weakness suffering gives us a testimony suffering helps us from keeping being prideful and conceited it helps us seek God's presence in the midst of pain someone said this we know the grass grows thicker and greener in the valley than it does on the mountain top so it is with us we grow more in faith and character in the valleys of life than we do on the mountain tops of life the testimony of suffering someone was just talking to me before the service today telling me of awful suffering they endured as a child they stand as a testimony to God that God is able to draw us through those difficult times and still make us strong in faith still making us lean upon him the valleys of life as fire purifies gold as abrasion polishes metal as heat strengthens and tempers metal as boiling water brings out the flavor of tea!

brokenness and pain helping us to draw closer to him helping us to draw closer to that continuing city because here there is none it's all going to be wiped out suffering is

[20:42] God's instrument for growth Job 23 verse 10 a man who knew what he was talking about Job 23 10 but he knoweth me the way that I take and when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold David said in Psalm 66 verse 10 for thou O God hast proved us thou hast tried us as silver is tried we went through fire and through water but thou brought us out into a wealthy place God will take you out of that fire and water and he will put you in that place of abundance that place of blessing in Isaiah God says to Isaiah in 48 verse 10 behold I have refined thee but not with silver I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction

I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction Peter says in 1 Peter 1 verse 6 speaking of salvation he says wherein ye greatly rejoice though now for a season if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations there's a heaviness in temptation in trial you get heavy you get weighed down though you're feeling heavy he says that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing at the appearing of Jesus Christ who having not seen ye love in her though now you see him not yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory count it all joy in the present it might seem like heaviness yet to come at his appearing!

Amen! unspeakable full of glory ye rejoice yet believing ye rejoice how can we manage in the face of suffering how can we make this practical today how can I apply something out of this message this morning what will my response be to suffering when it hits me tomorrow morning when it hits me when I walk out the door what will my response be to suffering will I respond in faith will it be yet believing ye rejoice present tense with joy unspeakable and full of glory will that be the case will we respond in faith some would say suffering could not possibly be God's will for believers some say today if you are suffering if you are sick you are out of

God's will some would say that and hit condemnation on you if you got some bodily affliction or something is not going well for you in the material world of your life yet 1 Peter 4 verse 19 says something different to us 1 Peter 4 verse 19 it says wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God interesting isn't it let them that suffer according to the will of God let them commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing as unto a faithful creator so sometimes suffering is the perfect will of God it might be the perfect will of God that you're in the eye of the cyclone it might be the perfect will of God that you are in that place of turmoil let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing as unto a faithful creator entrust yourself

to

God when you're in the storm entrust yourself to him Romans 8:28 that familiar one it says but we know that all things work together for good that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose entrust yourself to God be as Job when nothing else is left you've got him you've got him he's all you need another response respond in worship 1 Peter 4:16 it says yet if any man suffer let him glorify God on this behalf glory in God rejoice 1 Peter 4:13 but rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy you know that his revealing is yet to come we've heard about that but rejoice present tense in as much as ye are partakers of

[26:12] Christ's suffering that when his glory shall be revealed he may be glad also with exceeding joy count it all joy it doesn't have to make sense up here count it all joy count it all joy our Lord never promised to take us out of difficulties but to keep us through them Isaiah 43 verse 2 a lovely scripture to put in your heart Isaiah 43 verse 2 when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned neither shall the flame kindle upon thee when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee that's a promise from

God for you today you know I saw this little saying lately hey you've got a text message don't miss this one we can miss them can't we this is a text message that you've got to read today amen I will be with thee that's his promise rock solid guarantee 100% in black and white and red sometimes God's word there's a godly discipline that comes and it says before I was afflicted I went astray but now have I kept thy word psalm 119 verse 67 god's word is jam packed with text messages good ones they're not going to be abusive ones they're going to be good text messages that you want to get your teeth into and be blessed by god's word will sustain you god's word has to help to sustain you when you're feeling right you don't have much help it's here it's here in your hands don't neglect it he will help us manage they have no temptation taken you but such as is common to man but god is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able he won't allow a trial that you're not able to get through but will with the temptation make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it most of all know that he is with you now

Matthew 8:23! Matthew 8:23 And when he was entered into a ship his disciples followed him and behold there arose a great tempest in the sea in as much as the ship was covered with waves but he was asleep and his disciples came to him and awoke him saying Lord save us we perish and he said unto them why are you so fearful oh ye of little faith then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm they forgot that he was with them why are you so fearful oh ye of little faith the most important thing to know is in the time of storm Jesus is in the tempest Jesus is in the tempest Jesus is in the boat with you with you with you he will sustain you count it all joy count it all joy he is with you brother he is with you sister he is with you when you are going through trial when your job future is uncertain when your income is tested when you are seeing your health endangered when you are seeing troubles in family and relationships in life in general he is in the boat he is in the tempest go through to the glory of God count it all joy!

In 2 Corinthians 4:17 it puts it all in context it puts it all on a balance as it were of the scales of the weight of the extent of something he says for a light affliction which is but for a moment where Kethor is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory on the scales on the weighing it up side of things this suffering in life is just a feather weight in comparison with the weight of glory of the wonder of heaven I have not seen nor have the ear hurt nor have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love him meantime!

[31:39] Go through! Go through! He's in the boat! He's in the tempest with you! As he did! Let us look to the joy set before us!

Let us count this present testing as really nothing! We will be glorified together with him! Someone wrote this they said don't be so preoccupied with seeking healing that you miss the benefits and lessons of the affliction!

Interesting isn't it? We can get Heal me! Heal me! Heal me! When really He's just saying be still and know that I am God trust me!

This quote goes on it's generally fine to pray for healing but it is far more profitable to pray for the bigger blessings of a closer walk with Christ of greater grace in your life of an expanded ministry in

how you can be a blessing to others there will be an ultimate end to pain in the back of the book Revelation 21 verse 4 Jude God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things are passed away.

[33:08] For the meantime, let's learn the lessons that he wants to teach us. Let's be patient. Sometimes healing won't come.

It may never come. That's right. In his grace he may grant it. And we pray for it. But that's not the focus.

Let us be that clay in his hands. Let us find what is he teaching me. How can I learn? Count it all joy.

Even though it doesn't make sense to count it all joy to your human mind and mine. Count it all joy. Let us know. Thank you.