

Finding Joy When Life Gets Tough

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[0:00] Count it all joy. How can we cope when trouble comes our way?!
James 1 verses 2 through 4.

! My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations.

Life's filled with trials and challenges. Some of you know that more than others. For all of us, every day, our faith is being tested. And our patience and perseverance will hopefully come through that. You might say, well, I've not had much trouble. Well, trouble will surely come. Trouble will surely come. We all can be sure of that, that situations will crop up, circumstances out of our control, the mysteries of life, anxiety, pain, loss, difficult things, life's problems.

[1:13] We're all subject to that ever since Adam. James says, count it. Consider this. Look at this. And he says, count it joy.

Count it all joy. James urges these times where we face trials and tests to view these moments not with despair but strangely with delight, with joy.

How can we do that? It's a bit of a tough thing to exposit this to you, to declare this to you, but to take it as read that we can, when trials and temptations and tests of various kinds come our way, yet we can count it all joy.

We can wonder, why would anyone rejoice in difficulties? Why would you rejoice? James gives us this profound reason. He says, because God's working in these trials.

The trying of your faith is going to produce. It's going to work patience. And through life's refining processes, God's perfecting us.

[2:24] He's doing a work. And James 1 verse 2 says, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations. It means different trials and tests.

James says, when you fall into such things. Notice James does not say, if you fall into trials, but he says, when.

So, in other words, we can expect it to happen. One thing's for sure in life that trials will come. It's a certainty. And diverse temptations, we could think of it.

It could be a variety of challenges, maybe emotional, physical, spiritual, relational. James says, count. Count it. And count it joy.

What does that mean? When you have troubles, count it joy. When you have heartaches, count it joy. When you have burdens, count it joy.

[3:21] When you have sorrows, testings, loss, count it joy. And it might be easy for me to say, you might say, preacher, you don't know what's happening in my time, in my home, in my circumstance.

There's a truth that our trials are not accidents, but God is working despite the present pain we might feel.

That God has allowed some things into our life that ultimately he's going to use them to accomplish and to do his will. He's going to bring a refining.

He's going to bring his comfort. And there's going to be a patience. There's going to be a perseverance that will come about.

And when we look at life, we can always wonder at times, why is this happening? And yet when we have this kind of focus that God gives us grace to have joy in the circumstance, we can have a different approach, a different angle, a different perspective.

[4:27] And when we have that, that different meaning to it, it helps us to travel through those things. When you look at life's experience, people might generally have the reasoning that, well, I've got the things

that make me happy in this column, the happy experiences, the happy column, the things that I'm happy about, and over here I've got the column, the things I'm not so happy about, the not so happy column.

But James has put everything in the joyful column, the joyful column. It says, Count it joy. Again, this is hard to unpack without, you know, trying to grapple with it myself when loved ones of mine are going through trials and testings and myself from time to time.

But God says this, he says, Count it all joy. Put it in the joyful column. Be glad when you fall into various trials in the sense that God is with you through the drama, the pain, the challenge, the adversary, adversities.

James says, when you're surrounded by trials, don't get depressed. Don't get down and frustrated. Don't complain. Don't talk about why me, why now. James says, Count it all joy.

In other words, consider the trials that you face with a joyful attitude. When it says, count it all joy, it's got the sense of complete joy. In the sense of a fullness of joy, a pure joy.

[6:05] We see Paul showed that in his life. For example, 2 Corinthians 7 verse 4. Paul says, I'm filled with comfort. I'm exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

And the context there, there's troubles going on for Paul. He's going through great tests and stress and suffering. But he says, I'm joyful in the tribulation.

I'm joyful in that trial, that test. In all of our affliction, he's saying, I've got this overflowing of joy. I'm exceeding joyful.

It's kind of counter-cultural, isn't it? Because we are used to having the thought, when life is full of happy things, that's when I'm going to be joyful.

But God says, no, I put it all in the joyful column. That God is with you and his joy is with you even when the happenings aren't how you'd like them to be. In Romans 15, 13, it says, May the God of hope fill you with all joy.

[7:10] When you think about it, really, joy is a gift from God. And he gives it to us by his spirit. It's one of the fruit of the spirit. Love, joy, peace. It's one of the fruit, of the nine fruit of the spirit.

And it's possible for us to have joy even through a time of trial. Why? Because our delight is in God. Our delight is in God, not the happenstance of life, not the goings-on of life.

Our delight is there. It's Christ. It's our Lord. It's his saving. It's our saviour. And our joy, our delight, is our God, the wonder of who he is, that he helps us not go around hopefully moping and complaining.

Mind you, sometimes I humanly do. I do that complaining, that whinging, that moaning, that groaning. But joy is counter to that. It's an act of the will, isn't it?

When we say, I'm going to counter it, all joy. Think about it, brother, sister, tonight. You've got no control over the test that you're going on, going through right now.

[8:15] You've got no control over some things that are happening. But you have got control about joy. You can determine that. You can decide that. My joy doesn't come from what's happening.

People would kind of confuse happiness with joy. Sometimes we may not be very happy, but we can still have joy. Can you get that? There's a bit of a contradiction there, that we may not feel happy, may not be about feeling happy, but we can still have joy.

We can still have God's joy. Because the joy that we know as safe people, it comes from Him. It doesn't come from what's happening to us. Joy doesn't come from our circumstances.

Maybe you don't feel joy, but you can count it all joy. You can get joy even though you're not happy. So I'll try to unpack that a little.

Whatever I'm going through, I'm going to count it joy. So, brother, sister, and for some of you this is real. You know, I've had situations of late, tragic circumstances.

[9:21] I've got a funeral to prepare. Very sad, very sad circumstances. And it's hard to communicate God's comfort and to even relay some kind of joy in God when trouble comes.

and we're thrown off guard when difficulties come, a sudden trial. But yet, brother, sister, trials are part of our Christian experience.

And the Lord Jesus told His disciples to expect it. We see in John 16, 33, He says, These things I have spoken unto you that in me you might have peace.

In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. He's saying we can expect in this world, in this earthly world, to have some tribulation, some tests, some trial, some difficulty, but yet, He says, be of good cheer even in that.

So sometimes God doesn't remove the trials and the troubles of life. And we can, at times, we can come to see the challenges we face not as stumbling blocks in our path to cause us to fall, to bring us down, but to see them as building blocks, as stepping stones.

[10:41] And you can have joy in your heart despite the trouble that might be happening right now. Joy to the world. The Lord has come. There's joy to your heart.

And think of it, brother, sister, when you think in the scheme of the continuum of life, well, life is just a little speck here. Man, you've got all eternity.

All eternity. And, brother, sister, if you're saved here tonight, you can say, I'm going to a city whose builder and maker is God. And there's a better home there.

There's a better climate. We don't have to worry about climate change if there is such a thing.

There's a better climate there. There's a better home awaiting there. Amen? And the joy of the Lord is your strength, the Bible tells you.

You can think of some of the old Sunday school songs, I've got joy, joy, joy deep down in my heart. Joy deep down in my heart to stay. It's joy, isn't it?

[11:40] And think of those songs, there's truth there. Bible truth. And brother, sister here tonight, it could be that you're laboring under a heavy burden. Can I urge you prayerfully to yield your burden unto the Lord.

You don't have to carry that. It's a wonderful truth of scripture that it says, cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee. And when you think about it, if you get that burden, whatever it is, here's your burden and it's weighing you down, it's a heavy burden, you've been carrying it maybe for a lifetime, for many years even.

A burden, could it be for unforgiveness, could it be some hurt, some grief, some heartache and that burden, you're carrying it, you see it, it's there with you every day, you think about it.

It's always in your thoughts and you're constantly coming back to it and it's coming back to your thinking, to your mind, you're reminded of your burden, whatever that be. The Bible says, cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee.

And if you've let it go, it's no longer there. It's no longer there capturing your worries and making you dwell on it. If you've cast it, you no longer have the burden.

[12:59] And really that's what happens when we trust the Lord, isn't it? Some might think, oh look, you don't know my past preacher, all the sins, all the mistakes, all the way I've fouled up through life and the grievous sin that I've committed.

If you've asked God for forgiveness, it's no longer there anymore. It's gone. You're not holding it anymore. Cast your burden, you don't need to carry that heavy burden. Know God's forgiveness, know God's release.

Cast thy burden on the Lord. If you've cast your burden, you no longer have it. It's not there anymore. You don't need to dwell on it or go back to it. Think of the purpose of trials. In verse 3 it says, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

So when you have these difficulties, these different trials, James says, know this, the trying of your faith is working patience. Trials can test and strengthen our faith.

As I say, they can be like stepping stones to new levels of faith. 1 Peter 1 uses similar terminology to James 1.

[14:09] It tells how trials can test and strengthen our faith. Like fire refines the gold. As we've heard from some of those songs that we sung of the refining process, the producing, God's producing something.

It may not be very pleasant at the time that the production is happening, but ultimately there'll be something of joy.

We see 1 Peter 1 verse 6, wherein ye greatly rejoice, talking about trials, though now for a season, and if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations or tests, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold, which perisheth, that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory of the appearing of Jesus Christ.

He's telling us here the trial of your faith, there's a gold being produced here. It's going to be a gold quality faith. And think of it, brother, sister, and we know it's true for believers in other lands, especially, when they go through great trials and testings for their faith, God gives them a great strength of faith and endurance.

And He gives us that steadfast spirit. There's times in your life where God has to test your faith. It's not always pleasant, but it's an opportunity to expand your faith.

[15:36] It's an opportunity to get stronger. Can we see trials that way as a way to grow? Can we shift our perspective and see, hey, maybe it's the trial of my faith. God's doing something and I'll be better for it.

And you can trust Him in the meantime to fight your battle. Trust Him to work it out. Trust Him.

Depend on Him as you go through. And God will give you the grace to endure suffering.

He'll sustain you through it. He'll give you the power to get through. He's not going to give you more than you can manage. And He'll keep you firm and steady through the trial.

God is the one who can see you through hardship. think of ways you can make this real for you.

How can you, for example, practice gratitude?

Maybe you could actively list the things to be thankful for, even amidst struggles. Have that gratitude. It can reframe your thinking. It's easy to lack patience, but ultimately there'll be that patience, that perseverance.

[16:43] We don't always like waiting on the Lord, but yet it's all part of His plan, isn't it? Patience. Sometimes we pray, Lord, give me patience, and give it me right now.

But for us to get patience, we've got to go through some testing beforehand. We don't always like that part. And yet we can have patience to walk with God regardless of what the circumstances are. It doesn't matter. We could have, as some churches would promote this idea that you become a Christian and then suddenly you become a potential everything gets laid on and you never get sick or unhealthy and you always have wealth and prosperity.

Of course, the Bible doesn't say anything like that. And so when people have that kind of false idea, they fall to bits when trouble comes their way. But thank God, no, God helps us in the real world when real life happens to us and we've got to get through.

We can walk with our Lord and we can keep obeying him and trusting him no matter what. And it says that there's a patience, there's a perseverance that comes. It tells how God has got his timing and plan and we can wait on the Lord.

[17:59] Another thing about the trials is there's a result. There's a result. Verse 4 says, let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire wanting nothing.

So there's a work here, there's something God's producing, there's a result. And it's patience, isn't it? It's going to have a perfect work. Now the word perfect here, it doesn't mean that we're going to become perfect.

You know, that's, ultimately you will be, one day you will be perfect, believe it or not. One day when we see his face, we'll have a perfect body, a perfect mind, everything will be restored to a sinless state and God will help us, one day we will be perfect when we see his face.

But this word perfect here, it's got the sense of maturity, of spiritual maturity, of completeness, of fully developing of character. It's not the idea of a sinless perfection which is a false idea.

It's saying there's a maturity. And brother, sister, God wants you to grow. He wants you to mature, to get full age. And trials will bring that maturity.

[19:10] So in them you don't always appreciate them, but he's working at perfecting and maturing, that our faith will get stronger and firmer.

Think of it as a storm makes the tree stronger. The roots grow deeper. It's the same with the trials we have as believers. And trials are going to make you more powerful.

seeing 2 Corinthians 12 verse 9, Paul is there praying, Lord take this thorn that's in my flesh. He prayed and prayed and prayed and God says, 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. Paul saw that the trials, as God tells him, that they would make him stronger.

And he says, my grace is enough. My grace is sufficient. So trials will bring you to that new level of maturity. You think of, for example, Job.

[20:14] The circumstance of Job and his own wife, the one who should have been his best supporter, says, curse God and die. fire. And you see, circumstances like a man called Horatio Spafford, funny name, Horatio Spafford, he saw great destruction, the ruin financially in the Chicago fire and then not long after, to lose four daughters of his in a shipwreck.

And he just got a telegram from his wife, Anna. Two words, saved alone. She was saved, but the little ones passed away.

And yet, he found the grace to write, it is well with my soul. Now, joy is possible by God's grace. And trials also help us to encourage others.

Think of it, as you might suffer some great hardship and trial and test, there's others that you'll come across that you can relate and be compassionate and comfort them.

So think of this truth of cancer, all joy. God says rejoice, and again I say, rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord, again, again, again.

[21:39] The devil wants to rob you of joy. If we focus on the happenstance, what's happening to us, sure enough we can get pretty low and despairing.

When trouble comes you think this is horrible, yet we can cultivate joy. The devil wants to rob you of joy. God says, rejoice.

Always. So there's nothing outside of that when you think about it. Rejoice in the Lord always. And this book, Philippians 4 verse 4, it's a book of joy and of rejoicing.

Paul wrote it in prison. He's in a dungeon. He's in privation. He's in this confinement in a miserable prison. Yet Philippians, the book that he wrote, is full of joy.

Have a look at it. God's doing a work. Even as Paul is in prison, as we see the case where he and Silas were in prison, as a classic example of finding joy in suffering.

[22:46] As it tells us, in the circumstance, it says that the mob was attacking Paul and Silas, they were in great peril, and the magistrates there were tearing off their clothes, commanding the people to beat them.

And it says, verse 23, when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast Paul and Silas into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who having received such a charge, thrust them into their inner prison.

He made their feet fast in the stock, so these unpleasant metal bars that held their feet, and held them in that discomfort of that confinement in the prison cell.

And it says, verse 25, and at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them.

Of course, there was a great earthquake and release, and the jailer got saved, as you read further, at midnight. What's that noise?

[23:54] Someone's praying, someone's rejoicing, someone's singing. Who would believe it? These ones held in confinement, in suffering, they've been beaten, black and blue, many stripes, their backs bleeding from the lash, and here they are at midnight.

Paul and Silas prayed. sang praises. What an example of joy. A real practical example, isn't it? You think of believers in other lands, that's reality for them.

Think of some practical ways that you can count it all joy. For example, some little tips to maybe outline how you can practically count it all joy.

joy. Start your day with gratitude. Before you get out of bed, thank God for at least three things, even if they're small. Your life, your health, having a home.

Count it all joy. Have some gratitude when you wake up in the morning. Another suggestion, keep a joy journal. Write out some points, moments of joy, lessons you've learned.

[25:09] Remind yourself of God's ongoing work. And at the end of the day, write down how you saw God's goodness that day. Maybe it was a blessing in disguise too.

How can we count it all joy? Trust God's sovereignty, his overall, his overarching, every trial is under his control and is part of his plan for your good. All things work together for good.

Romans 8, 28, for those who love God and accord according to his purpose. Sometimes, brother, sister, as much as it's hard to reckon it, sometimes God's will is suffering.

You know, there's some churches that say it's never God's will for you to suffer, it's always God's will for you to be healed. The Bible doesn't teach that. Sometimes it's actually God's will that he allows suffering as clearly happened with Job.

Sometimes we just got to get through that and trust ourselves to the Lord. We see 1 Peter 4, suffering according to the will of God. It says entrust yourself to the Lord.

[26:13] Entrust yourself to the faithful creator. Commit yourself to God. Notice in Genesis 15, we know of course the example of Joseph as it came to the crunch as he addressed his brothers who had meant it for evil, the selling of him into slavery.

God meant it. Notice that. It was intended, intentional. God meant it unto good. In other words, it was God's plan. God meant it. It wasn't something that was an accident.

It wasn't something that just happened to come about. God meant it. God designed it. Sometimes God designs the troubles that ultimately they'll be a blessing.

Friends, know that God is in control of your situation. God says, blessed other persecuted for righteousness sake. When men revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, it's almost not unusual for me to be reviled, for people to say something against me, to say something to curse me, simply because I'm a preacher.

And it happens for all of us as believers sometimes, doesn't it? When you can be mocked and scorned, oh, you're one of those nutsers at church for you, you're one of those people, you're one of those crazy Christians, you can get that.

[27:44] But God says there's a blessing even in that, even when you cop that, for Christ's sake. In Romans 5.3 it says, Paul says we glory in tribulations. He actually says we rejoice in suffering.

It's counter-cultural, isn't it? That when you get suffering, when you get hey, glory, so I must be doing something right. In Acts 5.41 it tells how the apostles were beaten and then it says they left the council, they were rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

They told them don't speak anymore in the name of Jesus. Jesus. So after they got bashed up and treated so badly, later they kept on doing it because we don't stop talking about Jesus, even though we're going to suffer shame, even though we're going to suffer harm even for the name of Jesus.

And there's something happens, brother, sister, when you count it all joy, even in the test. Some more pointers, how can we make this real? Speak joyful affirmations, for example, when you're in it, say God is with me in this, God is with me.

Say this trial is temporary, but God's work in me is eternal. You can have that kind of mindset, can't you? That, hey, I'm going to be joyful and I'm going to speak, I'm going to confess scripture, I'm going to believe God, I'm going to have the reframing of my thoughts, hey, what's God teaching me in this?

[29:16] Maybe I'm actually going to learn something good, this is going to help me. Replace complaining with rather statements of trust, like this is hard, but God is with me.

Yeah, sure, this is hard, this hurts, but God is with me, God is with me, I'm going to confess who I am in Christ. And know that joy comes not from the pain, but from knowing that God is producing something, he is working something, and it could be something eternal that we're not even aware of.

Maybe we won't know until the other side what it's all about, but God's grace is sufficient for every trial. And when you think about it, really, trials are temporary, aren't they?

this little speck of our lifetime compared to all eternity, it's really, it kind of puts it in perspective, doesn't it? And the eternal reality, the eternal God sustains us.

We see Paul again, again in the context he's talking about a whole lot of suffering, he calls it light affliction, but really it was very tested, going through shipwreck, and times of hunger, of privation, of imprisonment, of beatings, and he says, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

[30:48] And friends, we think about the eternal things, there's a weight of glory. Our light affliction is just a momentary trouble, in the scheme of eternity. Think of our Lord, what he suffered for us.

Notice in Hebrews 12, it says, he endured the cross, despising the shame, why? Because of the joy that was set before him. Jesus had joy on the cross, believe it or not.

Why? Because he knew the purpose of his suffering. Jesus had joy on the cross because he knew you would trust him. Jesus had joy on the cross because your salvation was purchased by it.

And it puts eternity in view, doesn't it? Beyond the suffering, pain can be a teacher. And it's teaching us to adopt that eternal perspective, to focus on faith over feelings.

It doesn't matter what we feel like. We've got joy, unspeakable and full of glory. Our joy is by faith. It's our trust in our Lord, not in our circumstances.

[31:49] If it was all about the circumstances, we wouldn't have joy. Some of the time, certainly, wouldn't we? And so we can have joy, it's by faith, as we trust in our God, not our circumstance.

And how can we strengthen that? Regular Bible study and prayer will help you to grow that faith, to grow that faith level, to grow that faith such that you're going to get through as you build that faith, as you fellowship.

For example, as you ask others for prayer, let others pray for you. When you feel too weary to pray for yourself and pray through, that's about fellowship, it's about encouraging one another.

Maybe when you're suffering, help others, that can help you, believe it or not. When you're feeling like you're struggling, help others, because there's always someone worse off than you, amen?

And that can give you unexpected joy. I mean, you think of it, brother, sister, there's some people, that come, you may not be aware of this, but there's some people who attend this church, sometimes Sunday mornings, they are homeless.

[32:55] They're actually living down at Fremont Park, under a bush.

That's the reality. What have we got to complain about? Brother, sister, that's the reality. And so we think of fellowship.

How can we have that encouragement, that mutual encouragement? And there's a merry heart that's going to come. When we get together, we're going to have some time of laughter, of joy, of a cheerful heart.

And how do we pray when we're suffering? Lord, I don't understand, but I trust that you're working for my good.

I don't understand, but I trust that you're working. Hardships can drive us to rely more on God. It increases our God dependence. And that's a good thing, isn't it?

It's a good thing to depend on God. Another way to increase your counting of joy is to memorize the word of God. And think of, for example, verses like this one.

[33:57] And you can say this, hey, look, everything's hopeless right now, but I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. You can take a note of that verse.

You can confess it during a trial. You can meditate on words like Psalm 34 when you're going through tough moments. For example, Psalm 34, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear thereof and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears. Notice that. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Think, well, if the praise of God is continually in my mouth, then there's no place for murmuring, moaning, whinging, backbiting.

If the praise of God is continually in my mouth, then I can't have the other stuff coming out of my mouth at the same time. Think of that. Another way to increase your counting of joy is sing some praise songs.

[35:07] Now, you don't have to join the orchestra or meet some standard that we might set for you to serve, but you can sing praise songs. Amen? You might be a bad singer.

It doesn't matter. Sing praise songs because music has a unique way of lifting the spirit, doesn't it? And think of some of these psalms. Psalm 34. You can sing, you can shout these words in your car while you're driving along and sing some hymns.

Play some worship sounds so that you can be reminded of God's promises. And the trials that we face, they're an opportunity for us to grow, for our learning.

You could think really as the Bible tells us of the master potter, doesn't it? Tells us of the potter's house, of the master there, as he takes that clay and he pounds it and molds it and kneads it and shapes it and presses it and casts it on the wheel again and then he does it again.

He does it again. He takes that clay and he consoles it, he prods it, he pinches it and we might feel if we're that clay, ow, that's a bit uncomfortable getting prodded and pressed and pounded, to be stuck in a hot oven, all the things you could imagine to make a fine piece of pottery and then he starts painting on us and putting this heat and then we see that there's a result from the potter's hand, don't we?

[36:49] As someone has pictured it, I'll quote these words, as if the potter was saying, I know it hurt when you were rolled and patted but if I'd left you alone you would have dried up, I know it made you dizzy to spin you around on the wheel but if I had stopped you would have crumbled, I knew it hurt when it was hot in the oven but if I hadn't put you there you'd have cracked, I know the fumes were bad when I painted and brushed you over with the, the whatever it is, the lacquer, but if I hadn't done that you never would have hardened, and you've not had any colour in your life and if I hadn't put you back in the oven the second time you wouldn't survive for very long because the hardness would not have held but now you are a finished product and you are what I had in mind when I first began with you.

He's making that beautiful pottery, there's a picture there of the beautiful pottery that he's making. You've been through some pain, the divine potter has moulded and shaped you and yes it hurt, those hurtful times, those hard times but yet there's a result now and as it were of that pure gold, the trying of your faith.

Whatever you're going through you can trust the Lord and you can even thank him for those moments, for the potter's wheel. You are God's design, think of it.

It's an amazing thought isn't it? To think of that picture of the potter, that hey maybe we're still along that production line somewhere and there's still a bit of work yet and he's going to make us again as it were.

God is working something out for his eternal purposes. That's the sense of trials isn't it? And that there's a joy even knowing that actually we're in his hands one way or the other.

[38:50] Sometimes when it hurts, when life hurts, that we'll see God's purpose. What is God teaching? What are the lessons? What are the lessons I can learn? And so trials can refine your faith because God's producing something.

We see Philippians 1 verse 6 it says he's performing a good work. He's going to keep performing it. He's begun it and he will perform it. It's a sense where we're still a work in progress.

So when you face life's challenges count it all joy, he's shaping you to be conformed to the image of his son. See James 1 tells about enduring. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.

It says when he has tried he's going to receive a crown of life. Notice the one who stood the test, there's going to be a reward. What about you and me today as we think maybe there's going to be a trial Monday morning, maybe before Monday morning.

And that's a reality. You don't need to be flippant really because that is the reality. We could face that. A phone call. You know, something happens and we think, oh no, it's not what I wanted.

[39:59] It's not going to make me happy. But yeah, I can have joy. Can you think of that? Whatever happens to me may not always make me happy. But, I can have joy.

I can have joy. Knowing that God's hand is working on me. That his purpose is overarching. That his strength is mine to receive. That his joy is mine. Even though my joy is lacking. And we can trust him. Think of maybe some joy triggers. It's another kind of suggestion of sticky notes of uplifting Bible verses. You know, get a little sticky pad. You know, those post-it notepads. And place those sticky notes around you. Uplifting Bible verses. That will encourage you. And you can dwell on them. And refocus. And take heart. Can we learn to be like Habakkuk? We know the circumstance there.

[41:03] As it's popularised in a chorus. It tells, as Habakkuk says, although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labour of the olive shall fail.

And the fields shall yield no meat. He's saying there there's no food. He's saying the flock should be cut off from the fold. And there should be no herd in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will join the God of my salvation. Even though the happenings of life are woeful. And it's horrendous. There's no food. I'm in great need.

Yet I will rejoice rejoice in the Lord. Gold is going to come out of your test. Nehemiah, it says, the joy of the Lord is your strength.

It's his joy. The joy of the Lord is your strength. God's joy will sustain you, brother, sister, in whatever life's curse balls are thrown at you, that the joy of the Lord is your strength.

[42:03] And again, rejoice always. Have that heart. Hey, the Bible says I should rejoice now. And rejoice in the time of trouble. And rejoice in the next trial.

And rejoice in the next time of suffering. And rejoice when I'm not feeling happy. Rejoice in the Lord always. God helping us will do that. Amen? They'll have that constant, it's a command really.

There's no option. This isn't optional. It's a command. It's not dependent on circumstances. And 1 Thessalonians 5 says similarly, Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing in everything. Give thanks. There's nothing outside of the scope that we can have that heart to look to God even when situations are dire and dreadful.

Because when you look at it, the trials are temporary. It's just this little bit. The trials are temporary, but the joy is eternal. The joy of salvation. Weeping may endure for a night.

[43:04] But God says, but joy comes in the morning. After the dark clouds, the sun's going to come through. Even when we can't see the sun, it's still shining. And then, even though we're overwhelmed by clouds, the sun is still there and it will break through for you.

Joy lifts us from the temporary pain to the eternal purpose that God is working it all out. Even though we can't fathom at some of the time, that we can, as he commands us to, count it all joy. Know God's with you. It's not denying the pain. It's not denying the difficulty. It's not, as some would falsely teach, saying, I'm healed when I've got the back pain going on or whatever it is.

It's not confessing something that's not true. But it's saying that even when my back's hurting, even when I'm feeling lousy, I can count it all joy. But Jesus is my joy.

And I can trust in God's sovereignty, his purpose. It's a conscious decision. We anchor in his promises that we can find peace there. It's faith. And one day we know God shall wipe away all tears.

[44:14] One day there'll be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Think of it, brother, sister, in the light of eternity, one day this will be just an eye blink.

And know again, God is doing a good work. Be confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work will perform it. He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

And I know some of you can testify, hey, I've had some troubles but I've got through. I've had some serious health problems but I've got through. God's helped me. God's helped me to get through. Because he's begun a good work. He's going to perform it. He's going to complete it. He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Even though a dread trial might strike you, he said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Even in the trial, he will never leave you. He will never forsake you. And it's got a sense of, there's a double emphasis there. It's like a very emphasised statement.

[45:20] Rejoice because your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Troubles will come from time to time, yes. But he is holding you. He's embracing you. He is for you.

He is with you. Trust God's process and be patient and learn that patience. Find your joy in God, not in the happenstance. Don't worry, hey, if trouble comes, don't look to that.

Look to him. Thank God for his grace. Psalm 61, 2, it says, from the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee.

When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. That's Psalm 61, verse 2. Let us pray.

Lord, we thank you. These things are hard to grapple with. Lord, we know humanly we can despair and be inclined to count trouble as unhappiness and sometimes it is.

[46:26] Yet, Lord, we can count joy in the circumstance, knowing that you're above and beyond it. Lord, that you're holding us steady and sure. We have the joy of our salvation, the joy of Jesus, of knowing you, that you've saved us, we're yours and we're in your hand, those that have trusted you and that there's nothing can take us out of your hand, that we have a secure salvation as we trust you.

Lord, help us to hold on to that, the hope of your word, to hold on to the promises of scripture. When trouble comes, Lord, help us not to be overwhelmed, but lead us to the rock, Lord, that is higher than I.

Help us to find our joy in you, our Lord. Help us to see trials can be an opportunity to grow, to exercise our faith, to learn patience. Lord, help us to see it as lessons from you, the master teacher. Help us, Lord, to see life's pressing times as really your hand on us as the master potter. You're shaping us and making us the people we need to be.

Lord, give us grace. We know there's loved ones here. There's people perhaps watching as well that perhaps life is tough right now. There's grief, there's loss, there's sadness, there's heartache.

[47:47] Lord, help us to see beyond that, to see that we can lean on your strength. And Lord, that we can cast our burden, whatever it is, upon you and know your sustaining power.

Lord, we praise you for these things. Help us, Lord, in these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.