

Count it all Joy

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[0:00] James chapter 1, James chapter 1 from verse 1 through 4. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad greeting.

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 situations are grim and you don't know what to do, you can have joy no matter what.

God says you can. God says you ought to have joy. God says you should count it all joy. Now some of this I'm preaching to myself because I'm not particularly 100% well and Julie's not well tonight.

[1:06] And there's lots of things, we all have our struggles and worries and I'm sure amongst us here tonight there's people that are going through tougher things than I'm going through right now. And I'm not meaning to discount that tonight.

All I can do is be the messenger of God to you and say what God says to you, count it all joy. You might think how can I do that? You don't know how hopeless my situation is.

You don't know the tears I've cried. You don't know the grief I feel, the hurt I'm carrying. No matter what, God says to you this, count it all joy.

We don't have to understand it. We don't have to reconcile it. We don't have to explain it or justify it or try to reason it.

God says count it all joy. He tells you that. And I'd like to urge you reasons why you can count it all joy. Why you can take heart tonight even though the situation is hard for you.

[2:03] You can have joy no matter what. God says you can. You can rejoice in time of trial. God uses affliction for his purposes.

Sometimes we don't know till eternity we may not yet know. Why? God uses affliction for his purposes, for our good, ultimately for his eternal good, his eternal plan, his eternal will.

And it increases our dependency on him, doesn't it? When you've been through it, you think, wow, he was with me. He helped me through that situation. What I've been through, I know, looking back, he was with me.

He has strengthened me. And I'm better for it. Knowing that God is with you. It brings you that hope, that assurance that he is with you in the valley.

Even the valley of the shadow of death. Even through those stormy days and nights. Knowing he is with you, it brings you strength.

[3:03] And it makes your faith stronger. And you're better for it. You're bigger for it. You're mightier for it. You're stronger in your faith. And you're more mature for it. Throughout the Bible, we see many instances, many times where God's people were led through.

From defeat into victory. From trials into triumph. God is with you. And there's a command here. Brother, sister, count it all joy.

A command from God. When you face trials. When you face situations. When you have concerns. We are not supposed to complain.

Whinge. Whine. Doubt. Fear. Be angry. Discontent. No. Not that. Joy. Count it.

Count it all joy. Count it all joy. Count it all joy. That's a command from God. You think, wow, how can I do that? Paul knew what it meant. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6.10.

[4:08] As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. It's interesting. James, Peter, Paul. They all have this same antidote to trouble.

Rejoice. Rejoice. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. How can I get you? How can you get your head around that? I'm sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

Paul tells you. You read 2 Corinthians 6. What Paul went through. There's a whole list. A whole shopping list of terrible things that Paul had to go through. How can we handle life's challenges and problems?

When we're feeling like life is hard. See them as opportunities to increase your sanctification. He's doing a grace work.

He's doing a grace work in you. Life's hard. It can be tough. Going through, trying to understand, trying to help other people deal with devastation. You know, preachers, pastors, ministers of various kinds, pastoral care workers.

[5:12] You see the hurt. You see people injured and bruised and crying out and despairing. And it's tough even seeing others in trouble and strife.

And your heart goes out to them and you wonder, how can I help you? James tells us when you fall into diverse temptations. It means various trials.

These trials, these diversities are diverse temptations. Trials and testings and trauma. Temptations. When things are hard for you.

When you're falling into that. He's saying when. Not if. It's going to happen. You know, maybe it already has happened for you.

Maybe it's Monday morning. It's going to happen. Whatever the case, when you shall fall into diverse temptations. It's not that he says if. He says when.

[6:08] It's assured. As the rain falls on the just and the unjust. It's going to happen. Brother, sister, surely those things will come. And so do not be dismayed. Disappointment.

Sickness. Death. Unemployment. Accidents. How will we respond to that? James tells us God's prescription. God's command counts it all joy.

Rejoice. What do we see through the record of scripture? We see when God's people endured such suffering at times. Beaten up for the name of Jesus. Can you imagine that?

You're in the very centre of God's will. Preaching to people. Telling people the gospel news. And you're beaten up for the name of Jesus. By the authorities of the day. We see that in Acts 5. From verse 40. Acts 5. 40 through 42. The authorities of the day. They called the apostles.

[7:06] They'd beaten them. They commanded them. That they should not speak in the name of Jesus. And let them go. They said this is the law. You've broken the law.

The law. The government. Government authority says. Don't speak in Jesus name anymore. And they let them go. Verse 41. And they departed from the presence of the council. Rejoicing. Rejoicing. Jumping for joy. That they were counted worthy. Worthy. To suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple. And in every house.

They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Rejoicing. They were counted worthy. Rejoicing. Even though they were black and blue. And bruised. And beaten. And torn. And bleeding.

They were blessed. They were counted worthy. Counted all joy. Rejoicing. Counting all joy. They rejoiced.

[8:01] And they didn't stop doing what God had put on their hearts to do. We often can. We don't often thank God for our trials do we? When trouble comes. We like to thank him for the blessings as they are.

But the heartaches. We don't always thank him for the difficulties. We're willing to praise him for his goodness. But sometimes we fail to even count that even the adversities of life are blessings in disguise.

There was a Scottish preacher, George Matheson. He had a problem. He realised he was not as ready to praise God when things went wrong as when they went right. But in time he began to lose his eyesight and he changed his thinking.

He struggled for some months with this weary burden until he reached the point where he could pray, My God, I have never thanked you for my thorn. I have thanked you a thousand times for my roses but not once for my thorn.

I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensated for my cross. But I've never thought of the cross as itself a present glory, teaching me the value of my thorn.

[9:12] Now, one day we'll be in eternity, brother, sister. We'll be in glory. And these things of earth will grow strangely dim, won't they? When we count our blessings, we should include the weaknesses, the hardships, the adversities, the burdens, the trials.

God's growing you. If we do, we might find that God has used those things to make us the man, the woman that we are in God. By him, for him, unto him, to help us to grow spiritually.

We're stronger for it. It's a blessing even though it doesn't seem like it at the present. Because in those difficult places, his grace is there. And he'll give you the grace, the sufficiency of his grace, the all-sufficiency of his grace.

And in our trials, we turn to God. If everything was right and rosy and easy and breezy, sometimes we wouldn't even stop to pray, would we? We'd just get nonchalant.

We'd just get kind of blasé and carefree. And it wouldn't drive us to prayer. But sometimes those thorns, those hardships, those anxieties, those pressing situations, people we care about, off-track, situations of life that are burdening us down, it drives us to prayer.

[10:36] It drives us to depend upon him, upon his grace, that his strength will be made perfect in your weakness. As it says for Paul, 2 Corinthians 12. The Lord says, my grace is made perfect in weakness.

That's 2 Corinthians 12. So count it all joy. When you praise God, count your blessings and thank him even for your thorns, that he can help you bear it.

And adopt a joyful attitude. You can count it all joy. Now you might say, preacher, that's easy enough for you to say. You don't know what's going on for me. Look, I don't want to discount your situation, whatever it be.

You've got some pressing things happening. We all have. I want to assure you, God's promise is for your good. And God's word declares, count it all joy.

No matter what, no matter how you feel, count it all joy. Don't question, just do it. Count it all joy.

And you can have steadfast joy that he is doing a great and glorious work.

[11:38] There's the completion yet ahead that will make it clear to you why it's happening now. We don't know in the present often why, but ultimately we will know.

Ultimately we will see his purpose fulfilled. And we can rejoice. Think of Paul and Silas. They could pray and praise in prison. And much of the New Testament letters of Paul are written in privation, in prison, in suffering.

Paul suffered. But we can have much of his writings in our hands tonight. And Paul could pray and praise in prison, in stocks, in chains, in fetters, bound and locked up for the gospel.

Paul could say rejoice in the Lord always, always. And through faith in Christ we can experience victory. I urge you tonight to put it into the equation.

Now, my dad was an accountant and as much of his career was in accountancy. Now, I'm not very good with maths, I must say. I wouldn't say I'm anywhere close to his capacity with mathematics and counting things and financial records and such.

[13:07] But one thing the Bible tells all of us to do, whether you're an accountant or you're a bit of a dummy like me, count it all joy. Count this. Reckon this.

Add this up on the list, on the ledger, on the accounting of your life that you can count it all. All. A double L. Now, you can check the dictionary and find what the meaning of all is.

It means all. It means everything. Everything. Count it all joy. When you're surrounded by trials, when you're going through tribulation, when you're facing adversities, when you don't know how you're going to cope with what tomorrow is holding in store for you, how are we to deal with life? Count it all joy. Just simply that. You don't have to explain it or justify that. God changes our response to joy. Joy, it counts it intuitive, isn't it?

It's contrary to what we would ordinarily respond to a situation that's adverse. Count it as joy. How are we to deal with life?

[14:14] He wants to change us from complaining to shouting and joy and rejoicing. There was a man called Bailey who visited a farm block where

there were growing oranges in this orange grove, and the irrigation pump had broken down.

And the season was unusually dry. It was a time of drought. And the trees all around were beginning to die for lack of water. And the man giving Bailey this tour took him to the orchard. And there was an orchard there where the irrigation was sparing. They hadn't irrigated it as heavily as the other neighboring blocks. And the farmer said to Bailey, these trees could go without rain for another two weeks.

You see, when they were young, I frequently kept water from them. This hardship caused them to send their roots deeper into the soil in search of moisture.

Now mine are the deepest rooted trees in the area, while others around are being scorched by the sun. These are finding moisture at greater depth.

[15:20] That can be for us too. The strongest saints are the ones who've been through the fires. The strongest saints are the ones that have been through the tests and the tribulation. Because they go deeper in God.

There's a depth there. There's a depth. There's a quality there. They go deeper in God. They put their roots down deeper and they're stronger for it. Because they've learnt to depend more on God. You see, brothers and sisters, you see our fellow missionaries in privation, leaving the comforts of the western side of the world, going to countries where there's much lack.

And you see, particularly years ago, in the early stages of the missionary endeavour, where they were really totally dependent on God to supply their need.

And we see the strength there. The strength of character. You see, Christians in countries, in communist lands, in countries where there's restricted access to faith and worship, we see that they are glowing brightly and strong.

[16:29] Their faith is strong. And yet we that have everything pretty much, let's face it, we've got everything laid on, don't we? Even the welfare system is bearable.

We can get by in Australia, even on a low income, really. Generally speaking, as much as it's tough. We've got the basic needs met in Australia, but how can we learn from our brothers and sisters in lands where they're really at the tough end of life?

We need to go deeper too, don't we? Learn to go deeper. And that's what trials can help us to do, to get in the word, to focus on God's purpose. No matter what your situation, Jesus is with you.

He is with you. He's not left you. He is with you. He's holding you. He's marching by you. He's standing strongly for you. And he's got his arm around you.

And he will help you and strengthen you to get through this. The testing of your faith, it says, produces patience. Your faith must be tested. And when the heat is on, someone will see how you're managing with that.

[17:46] And it will be a witness to them, won't it? It will. Because, friends, you're not alone. There's others out there suffering like you. And they see that your faith is strong, that you're holding steady, that you're carrying on, you're keeping cool, and the heat is on.

Look at Joseph in the Bible. What happened to Joseph? His own brothers, his own brothers, his own flesh and blood, sold him as a slave.

They would have killed him. Treated like that by your own brothers. Joseph had a lot of, you could say, he could have had a lot of hang-ups, couldn't he?

About rejection, about suffering, about forgiveness. God was working out a plan with Joseph, wasn't it? He was working out a plan. And God's plan meant suffering for Joseph.

God wants me to suffer? Sometimes it can be. Sometimes it means, yes, sometimes. It was so for Joseph. It was so for Joseph. We see in Psalm 105 from verse 17.

[19:03] Psalm 105 from verse 17. We know about Joseph. It says, God sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant. Sold as a slave. That's how valuable he was to his own kinfolk.

Sold like a common slave. Verse 18 of Psalm 105. Whose feet they hurt with fetters. He was laid in iron. Here he was with his big clunky chains around his arms and legs.

He was laid there in a prison cell. Verse 18. Until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him. God tried him.

Verse 20. The king sent and loosed him, even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. And he, the ruler of the people, the Pharaoh, made him lord of his house and ruler of all his substance, to bind his princes at his pleasure and teach his senators wisdom.

Of course, we know the story of Joseph. He faced these hardships as his brothers ill-treated him. God extended grace. And we saw that Joseph was elevated to a place of authority in the land.

[20:13] And through his wise counsel, Egypt was sustained and had store in time of famine. And then Israel was blessed too as they came. Jacob and the sons came and were sustained by God.

And then, still dressed as an Egyptian, in Genesis 50, verse 20, he confronts his brothers. And they're packing it because they know, well, we don't deserve anything off of Joseph, what we've done to him.

And, you know, they knew that they were done for without forgiveness. And Joseph extended grace to them. In Genesis 50, verse 20, You meant it as evil.

You meant to harm me. But God brought good from that evil. Yet God brought good to me and to you through that evil, that hardship, that hardness.

And trials help us to trust. God's working something out. Maybe it's a Joseph situation. That ultimately something will come to pass that will show what God is doing here.

[21:29] And you can depend upon God. And trials can help us get more empathy and sympathy, more compassion for others. The comfort wherewith we are comforted. We can comfort others.

You can know the God of all comfort. There's people just like you going through just like what you're going through. And you can be used of God to minister to them. Amen?

You can. You might be learning through your suffering how you can bless and help others. Because you can relate. And they can identify with you.

Because you've been there. You've done the hard yards. And your hearts are more prepared for ministry. That's a blessing, isn't it? Wow. Might not seem a blessing right now.

But what you're learning, you can help others through what you're learning. And think of many great works that have been done through the people of God. Many great ministries have unfolded in time of great suffering.

[22:27] For example, Pilgrim's Progress. Wow, what a book. A blessed book of an allegory of the Christian life. It was penned in a prison. John Bunyan was locked up for the gospel's sake.

Because he didn't conform to the establishment church. And he dared to preach the gospel when he wasn't authorized by the Church of England. But God brought fruit from his suffering.

And so he can for you. It's true that strength grows only by exertion. Think, as it's been reckoned, about astronauts. I was reading about astronauts as they go into space.

They're sitting in a chair like some of us sit in office desks at times. And you're sitting there in a sedentary way without activity. And your muscles weaken.

And you get weaker for it. In that comfortable chair, you get weaker for it. That's true with these astronauts. For example, there was a Soviet astronaut, or they call them cosmonauts, that returned to Earth in 1987, nearly a year in orbit.

[23:30] And he was in good health, which hasn't always been the case for those record-breaking voyages. Because five years earlier, there was two cosmonauts that came back to Earth after 200-odd days in space.

And they suffered from dizziness, high pulse rates, heart palpitations. They couldn't walk for a week. And after 30 days, they still had to have ongoing therapy for atrophied muscles and weakened hearts.

So their muscles suffered atrophy. In other words, they kind of went to sleep and weakened. They lost strength because they weren't active. Now, we hear the stories how you have a knee operation or a hip operation.

Don't stop walking. Keep those muscles walking. You know, straight after you have an operation on some limb or other, they say, doesn't matter if it hurts, keep working it.

Because you don't want it to go, you know, weaken and atrophize, whatever it is. You know, you've got to keep moving it, even though it hurts you. Otherwise, you'll get atrophy.

[24:35] So in other words, it kind of virtually dies off. You lose strength. You sustain weakness. And at zero gravity, these astronauts have the muscles of their body begin to waste away because there's no resistance.

So the Soviets have designed some special suit where they can, it almost forces them to exert themselves because that helps them to keep stronger. And it can be so for you and me that that exertion, that hardship, that effort and that intent that you had to be pressed at times in life, it actually makes you stronger.

It keeps you stronger. That struggle, sometimes that struggle is what we need. Amen? The struggle is what we need. If everything was easy and breezy, we'd grow weak.

And spiritually, we can weaken too. You know, the story has been told as you probably heard it before of someone that saw a moth emerging from a cocoon. And it looked like the little moth was having trouble, so they thought they'd help it by trimming the cocoon, you know, cutting it so the moth could come out easy, snipping it with some scissors.

And the moth emerged easily then. But its body was large and swollen and the wings were small and shriveled. And in a few hours we see the result was that that creature, the moth, the wings that should have spread out in natural beauty, could not.

[26:04] And it lived its life with its swollen body and shriveled wings. The constricting cocoon and the struggle necessary to get out of it was necessary to force the fluid from the body into the wings.

There was no mercy cutting the cocoon to help the moth get out. The struggle was exactly what the moth needed. And it can be for you and me, brother and sister, that that struggle is what we need. It's actually helping us. And a testing works for us. We see that in 2 Corinthians 4 from verse 16 of Paul, how he tells how this outward man perishes.

You know, I look at myself in the mirror and I see some old photos of myself. When I used to have black hair and more of it as well. And you think, my body is weaker than it was then.

And our outward man perishes. You know, even such a fine specimen as this one here is getting weaker, weaker and weaker every day. And such. And look, I'll be honest, some of you are looking a little less, a little hard for the wear that you had too.

[27:11] Now let's face it, brothers, sisters. Now we're not getting any healthier here. You know, maybe we need to have some exercises, some star jumps or something to keep us all in shape here. But, no, brothers, sisters, the fact is that our outward man perishes.

You know, you might get an extreme makeover or go down the gym. But look, it's inevitable that the outward man perishes. Yet the inward man is renewed.

Day by day. Brother, sister, that's what counts, isn't it? The inward man. That it gets renewed day by day. Friends, we've got to get the perspective right.

Paul was saying our light affliction. What did Paul suffer? Everything imaginable just about. He's saying it's light. It's nothing compared to the weight of glory.

It is eternal, the weight of glory. And the things that God has prepared for them that love him. Eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man. The things that God has prepared for them that love him.

[28:28] The present trials are working for you, believe it or not. And 1 Peter, we see the word suffering or allied words of such a sense of suffering or trial occur some 16 or more times.

Peter knew what it was. When Peter wrote his book, this was the time of Nero. They were burning Christians as kind of light poles along the street in Peter's day. The Caesar of the time, Nero, was killing Christians left, right and centre and blaming Christians for the burning down of Rome. There was great suffering there. Peter says rejoice. He's saying the same thing as James. Count it all joy. God is making gold.

Gold. You're gold tonight. 1 Peter 1.7, it says that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold, which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold, which perisheth. Though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

[29:42] It's just around the corner. Jesus is coming. Get ready. For the meantime, the trial of your faith is much more precious than of gold. Wow. You're gold quality tonight.

And we're not promised a trouble-free life. Brother, sister, your trials can be a heavenly gold mine. I like to think when I do some digging in the garden, I just think I'm going to hit that nugget.

I'm ultimately going to find that nugget. I'm not talking about that kind of gold. Maybe there is some gold out there. Maybe it's all in Diane's block. You can dig away and dig away.

Ultimately, you strike gold. But friends, it tells us that the trial of your faith is much more precious than of gold. That's going to perish. This is something much, much more glory. 1 Peter 4, verse 12. Peter writes, beloved, think it not strange. This is not strange. It's normal. Concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice.

[30:42] There's that word again. Peter's just like James. Count it all joy. Rejoice. Jump for joy. Wow. It's kind of counterintuitive, isn't it?

That just doesn't make sense. You don't get joyful when you're suffering. James says you do. Peter says you can and should rejoice. But rejoice as a command again inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad with exceeding joy. Wow, there's something in store. Amen. Exceeding joy. And the best thing for us is to be partakers of the divine nature. For the meantime, we're partakers of his suffering. James says you have to learn how to count.

One of the first things you learn, isn't it, as a kid, how to count. This is something you've got to learn as a Christian. Count. Count it all joy. Every circumstance.

Every situation. Count it all. A double L. Count it all joy. The three Hebrew children. Look at what they went through. As the heat was applied, as they're in that burning, fiery furnace, heated up seven times more than normal.

[31:51] When you come out of the test, it produces something gold. And God is building integrity into your life as a result. And you'll be a stronger witness as a result of it.

You know, 1 Peter 3, we like to quote verse 15, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. With meekness and fear. But we forget the verse before that which says, But, and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Be ready. It's when they see the hardship that you suffer for righteousness' sake. And you know what it is.

Some folk here have shared with me in the workplace. They're after you because you're a Christian. You won't shut up about Jesus. Now you should use a bit of wisdom. We all should. But we don't shut up about Jesus.

[32:51] We've got to tell the world. And in the workplace too. There's times and seasons and opportunities with tact and wisdom and finally an appropriate time and place and person to share the hope that is in you.

And if you're persecuted, if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you? You're doing God's work, God's will. And they'll ask you, why have you got this hope?

Why is this hope in you? You can tell them. Jesus. He's my reason for joy. And it's God's will. Count it. Trust him and count it all joy no matter what.

It's faith, isn't it? Faith is saying, yes, God tells me to count it all joy. So that's exactly what I'm going to do. I'm going to trust him. I'm going to do what he says in the book. Count it all joy.

And the hotter the fire, the purer the saints. You know, you see these men and women of God in persecuted lands. They're gold. See people that have gone through the tough times.

[34:01] You see senior saints who've been through great hardship and yet are glowing, shining, vibrant, brilliant Christians. Consider that your life is in his hands.

And trust him with it. Be that yielded vessel, that body on the altar. Trust him. Someone has put it in this way with a kind of poem, if you like.

The things God has planned. Reflect on these words. The things God has planned. It's sometimes very difficult for us to understand the wisdom and the love behind the things that God has planned.

But we wouldn't have the rainbow if we didn't have the rain. We wouldn't know of pleasure if we've never tasted pain. We wouldn't love the sunrise if we hadn't felt the night.

We wouldn't know our weakness if we hadn't sensed God's might. We couldn't have the springtime or the yellow daffodil if we hadn't first experienced the winter's frosty chill.

[35:17] And though the brilliant sunshine is something God has made, he knew too much could parch our souls. So he created shade. So God's given us a balance.

Enough joys to keep us glad. Enough tears to keep us humble. Enough good to balance bad. And if you'll trust him, if you'll trust in him, you'll see.

Though yesterday brought sorrow, the clouds will part and dawn will bring a happier tomorrow.

Friends, there's a sense where there's rain and the sunshine.

And count it all joy. God's producing something gold. Gold quality. God's producing something in you. And you might not see even, even nevertheless, you might feel, look, I don't see it right now.

I don't always see it right now. And I can't always reconcile what happens in life. I can't give you a theological down pat answer on why situations are not good for some people.

[36:24] But I can assure you what God says to you. Count it all joy.

Simply that. Just determine that. Count it all joy. Four words.

James says you can know something about trials. He says, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. You can know something here. You can know that the trying of your faith will produce something.

It will work patience. And when you get patience, you learn. You know, sometimes impatience is a bad thing, isn't it? You know, I get impatient, don't you, when you're in a queue, when you're in traffic and you're running late, when things are frustrating, when people bug you, when you get given a run around from someone who's supposed to be helping you.

And patience is a quality that, it's something you grow to get, isn't it? That you learn. I can be, I can wait. I can take time.

I can relax and rest and trust. I don't have to get frustrated and mad and angry and concerned. I don't need to lash out and fire off some email or some post and vent and swear.

[37:41] Because I've learnt to be patient. I've learnt to trust. I've learnt to be calm. I've learnt to trust that he knows what he's doing, even though I don't right now. And those bumps on the road are there, but we will get there.

We will get there. It's a journey. The bumps on the road are in your way, but you're heading in the right direction. And you can say, God will not abandon me because he's promised you. He says, I will never, never, ever, ever leave you, never forsake you.

I am with you always, he says. So let patience do its work. When the heat is on, keep cool. Trust in the Lord. Let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

God's doing a work. And you will gain from it. You will be perfect, it says. Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and wanting nothing, entire.

He's going to bring wholeness to you. There's completion. He's going to complete what he started. How does it go? He that has begun a good work in you, he's going to complete it.

[38:47] We're still a work in progress. We're not finished yet. I've still got a few rough edges. Believe me. He's not finished with me yet. One day, we'll be completed.

The complete work will be done. We'll have that wholeness. When we get a whole new body, you don't have to worry about those extreme makeovers that you're planning. You've got to get an extreme makeover in heaven, amen? You'll get a new body.

And he's going to bring you to that place of perfection, of completeness, that maturity. And for the meantime, he's using situations now to grow you. Friends, just to wrap it up here.

God's working at work in you. You're a work of his making, of his good pleasure. You're a vessel, chosen, a vessel for his will, for his usage, for his service.

And this light affliction, it's working for us. Wow. It doesn't seem like it. It's actually working for us. It's actually for our good. It's working for us.

[39:48] And there'll be a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It's just around the corner. Wow. Aren't you looking forward to it? You

know, if I'm not here next week, I've already, you can rejoice that I'm there.

I'll beat you to it. Amen. An eternal weight of glory. Wow. I just can't wait. You know, I might not be here next Sunday. You know, I just want to be there, don't you? To be with Jesus.

Nothing else really matters. And for the meantime, the trials and adversities repair us, make us more complete. It's a completion. There's a wholeness. Think of men and women of God.

Think of a man called Richard Wurmbrand. We've possibly got one of his books in here. Tortured for Christ. There's different ones like that. He's just one example. And we may not necessarily agree with his theology on every fine point.

But this man, he was spent 14 years in a Romanian jail. Preaching the gospel was his crime. And what did they do to him? They smashed four of his vertebrae, his ribs.

[40:52] He was burnt or cut. 18 holes in his body. You know, they burnt hot pokers into his skin. And they could not defeat him. And he says that alone in my cell, cold, hungry and in rags, I danced for joy every night.

What a testimony. They couldn't put him down. They couldn't keep him down. They couldn't make his faith die. It just got stronger. And during this time, he turned to a fellow prisoner, someone that he led to the Lord before they were both arrested.

And he said, have you any resentment against me that I brought you to Christ? You know, you wouldn't be here if I didn't tell you the gospel and you didn't trust him and get saved. And this man said, I have no words to express my thankfulness that you brought me to the wonderful saviour.

I would have never had it any other way. These two exemplify what it means to be rejoicing, counting it all joy.

Even as they were on the edge of death and suffering severely for their faith, merely to believe they were suffering. Yet God gave them grace.

[42:06] And he can give you grace, brother, sister, whatever you face. Today, tomorrow, next week, God will give you the grace to say, yes, I don't care what it feels like. I'm going to count it all joy.

I'm going to believe God. I'm going to obey God. And I'm going to count it. And this joy that we have, it lasts forever. This salvation that we have is eternal. And these circumstances are just light and temporary.

And you cannot be defeated by troublesome circumstances. We won't let that defeat us. We are saved. And we will count it all joy. We'll trust our Lord. And we'll trust the eternal realities that matter, that are beyond this present circumstance of stress and trouble.

God is greater than all of that. And I can trust him that he's doing something good. And I'll look back and thank him for it. And I'll thank him for it even now. Even though I can't fathom it right now.

He'll boost your faith in the present for the future. And he'll give you blessing. My brethren, count it all joy. Let's pray.

[43:19] Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you are so full of grace and truth.

And Lord, life is hard. We pray for all here tonight and hearing this. Lord, any that are suffering stress and trouble and trial, help us, Lord, to see beyond the present circumstance.

Help us, Lord, to believe and trust that you are doing something. And we can trust that you are in charge. That you are working that which is best for us.

You are working that which is the good for those who love you. For those who are called according to your purpose. That it is all good. And Lord, we can look beyond the pain, the difficulty.

Our heart is injured and hurting. We're wounded, Lord, yet you are our healer. You are our burden bearer. Lord, we can cast our care upon you.

[44:20] We can know your carrying capacity. There's no limit. You can carry all of our burdens. There's not a weight limit, Lord. You can carry all of our weight.

All of our burden. Lord, we pray, sustain us. Lift our hearts. Lord, help us even to jump for joy, even in what is going on. Even to jump for joy.

Even to count it all joy. Knowing you have your purpose and we can trust you. That you are doing your will in our lives. And help us, Lord, as we can face these things with peace and with forgiveness.

With grace and with patience. Lord, we pray if there's any here in the hearing of this that know you not, that they might find the peace that passes all understanding.

That can keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. That peace that is found at the foot of the cross. When we lay our burden of sin down. When we lay our hearts open to your spirit to fill us, to save us.

[45:28] When we receive that precious gift of your saving, Lord, because you died on the cross for our sins. Lord, to know the grace that you extended there. And that grace extends still as we live the life you've called us to live.

That your grace is sufficient for us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.