



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – November 14, 2023

The Lord be with you.

A very wise mentor once advised me that when I was preaching or teaching to people that I didn't know and I wouldn't know what to talk about, he said that it would always be a good idea to talk with them about trials because... Well, most of us are in fact facing trials, so let's talk about trials today and how followers of Jesus think about our trials. I'm looking at the New Testament Book of James chapter 1, beginning with verse 1, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes in the dispersion greeting. Well as greeting tells us that James is writing to people who are facing trials, as it is written to the 12 tribes of the dispersion, the scattering that is, he's writing to Jewish Christians who have had to flee their homeland because of persecution in Jerusalem. They're facing double trial.

First, they're facing trials because they are Jews, they are facing severe anti-Semitism as Jews were hated and persecuted throughout that first century Roman empire, and then once more, they are hated by the Jews for being Christian. So I think it really makes sense that the first thing that James brings up with them is trials. Verse 2, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy. James says, whenever you face trials, what is just expected that we will face trials whenever... So, trials are a part of the human condition, this side of heaven, there's no escaping it. Whenever you face trials of any kind, trials do seem to come at us in all shapes and sizes, don't they? And so James is covering all bases here, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it, James says, consider it nothing but joy. Consider. That is an attitude word, consider is not a feeling word, it's an attitude that we take up when facing trials, to consider it... Nothing but joy.

The Greek word translated consider is *hegeomai*. And the primary, basic meaning of *hegeomai* is to lead the way. It is to be a leader. You see that for instance, over in Matthew chapter 2 verse 10, Acts Chapter 7:10, where it is a person who is a leader, one who was leading the way, but here in James, *hegeomai* is translated as consider as we lead the way, we do not let our emotions lead us when facing trials, we lead them so that in our thinking, we consider it, we regard it, we esteem trials as nothing but joy. So we don't look at our trials as punishment, as catastrophe as a curse, but we consider our trials, we lead the way in thinking about our trials as nothing but joy. Because James says, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. So our trials are not random events, but trials of over a purpose, therefore God-intended purpose as they are producing endurance in us, faithfulness. My son Rett this last weekend he ran the Grand Canyon Rim to Rim to Rim, that's 54 miles up to 10000 feet in 17 hours. That was endurance. And as Christians, we are like athletes in training, and trials are God's way of producing endurance in us, they are accomplishing something in us, James says, so that we rejoice, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its full effect. So that you may be mature and complete. Lacking in nothing. Mature, complete lacking in nothing. That's you... That's me, when God is finished.



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Let me see if I can illustrate this, if I can give you a word picture of what James is talking about, and I think I have it over in 1 Peter chapter 1:6, where Peter says, rejoice, even if now for a little while, you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith being more precious than gold though perishable is tested by fire. So here's the picture of a goldsmith who he wants to have pure gold, and so he puts the gold oar into the fire, turns up the heat, draws off the address and the impurities turns up the heat some more, draws us some more drops and impurities until the gold is pure, that's what God is doing in your life and my life as we face these trials... I like how the JB Phillips version translates this James one passage. When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends, realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance, but let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed. And you will find you have become men and women, of mature character with the right sort of independence, Hey, we can't lose because of what God is up to in our lives.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening, until next time.