

EASIER SAID THAN DONE

James 1:2-8

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Someone had a bumper sticker that read "When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade!" Everyone has had something suddenly happen that they felt totally helpless. Well-meaning friends try to encourage and help by saying things like, "Don't let this get you down," "Keep your chin up," and such but of course none of those words were of any help. Turning trials into triumph is not easy to do but James writes that through faith in God and Jesus Christ, one can experience victory when trials and temptations come.

I. COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN TRIALS COME (1:2)

1. Everyone will at one time or other experience trials:
 - It is not "if" but "when" trials come.
 - Christians are not immune to difficulties and trials and should expect them sooner or later:
 - Jesus said so in John 16:33
 - Paul said the same thing in Acts 14:22
 - No trial is the same as the last one, they are varied:
 - Being a human being brings some trials such as:
 - Sickness, accidents
 - Disappointments, death
 - Being a Christian brings trials at times - 1 Peter 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:12
 - Not only the world brings trials, but Satan is against Christians and will oppose each one.
2. How is the Christian to respond to trials and difficulties? By "counting it all joy?"
 - The scriptures point out some Christians who were able to "count their trials as all joy:"
 - The apostles did - Acts 5:41
 - Paul did - Romans 5:3; Philippians 2:17-18
 - The early Christians did - 1 Peter 1:6-8; 4:12-14
 - For the Christian, the first step in turning trials and difficulties into triumph is to IMMEDIATELY THANK GOD AND PUT ON A JOYFUL ATTITUDE.

II. TESTING ONE'S FAITH PRODUCES PATIENCE (1:3)

1. Knowing the value of trials can make it possible to have a joyful attitude:
 - Christians need to remember that:
 - Trials test their faith.
 - Faith tested can usually bring out the best in a person:
 - As fire purifies gold, so trials help the Christian - 1 Peter 1:7
 - As training helps the athlete become stronger, so trials make the Christian stronger.
 - Knowing the value of one's trials, one can then have joy:
 - Testing, trials work FOR the Christian, not against him/her - 2 Corinthians 4:17
 - Rightly using one's trials helps mature that person.
2. One strong thing trials do is to help produce patience:
 - Romans 5:3-4
 - "Patience" means to remain, to abide, to show steadfastness in the face of great difficulty, it is to continue on even though it is rough, despite the circumstances.
 - Steadfastness can come only through experiencing trials.

III. EVENTUALLY PATIENCE WILL TURN TRIALS INTO VICTORIES

1. To truly, completely turn trials into triumph, patience must be allowed to do its work:
 - Most people can't wait to get through trials and difficulties.
 - There are times when it is best to wait and work through the trial or difficulty patiently:
 - instead of grumbling and complaining
 - patiently endure the trial/difficulty doing good despite the hardship.
2. After patience has done its work there is then "maturity:"
 - "Perfect" does not mean sinlessness, but "completeness, wholeness and maturity.
 - In the Scriptures, "perfect" refers to:
 - Those who have attained spiritual growth in Christ.
 - Those who have reached full maturity and understanding in spiritual matters.
 - Those who are no longer "babes" and immature persons in Christ.
 - "Maturity" comes only when patience has had time to do its work:
 - As athletes go through endurance training to enable them to perform to their fullest:
 - To be a mature athlete requires letting patience do its work.
 - The athlete patiently works out harder and harder each time.
 - If the Christian wants to "run the race well" then he/she needs to develop patience.
 - Such patience comes only through a form of spiritual "athletic training"
 - Trials and difficulties which one's faith is tested is spiritual training.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO GO TO GOD FOR WHAT HE/SHE LACKS - (1:5-8)

1. If the Christian lacks wisdom, let him/her go directly to God and ask for it:
 - God has promised to liberally give to His Children.
 - God will not scold or deny a Christian for asking for wisdom or anything else.
 - Solomon asked God for wisdom and it pleased God - 1 Kings 3:7-12
2. What kind of "wisdom" should the Christian ask God for?
 - Wisdom is different from knowledge:
 - Knowledge involves information, facts, and such.
 - Wisdom is the ability or insight to properly use those facts in the best way.
 - Not understanding the difference can cause problems:
 - Some think that this passage (James 1:5-8 teaches that God will give knowledge related to His will in answering prayers.
 - Knowledge comes ONLY through God's Word and the Christian must study God's Word to know the will of God.
 - Wisdom to properly use God's Word can be received through prayer.
3. Wisdom used in turning trials into triumph can come through "proper" prayer.
 - "Proper" prayer is that which is asked in faith and having no doubt.
 - When one doubts what he/she is praying for will be answered, it usually isn't.

CONCLUSION:

1. To turn trials and difficulties into triumph:
 - One must have the knowledge and viewpoint that trials and difficulties can accomplish much good.
 - One must let patience do its work in making it through trials and difficulties.
 - One must use the wisdom God gives in answer to prayer

2. Yes, it is easier said than done, but trials can become a source of joy for the Christian.