“God Never Said Life Was Going To Be Easy”
James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to James chapter one. And let's read verses 2-4.

**James 1:2-4 (NKJV)**

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Let us pray.

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Introduction

**ILLUSTRATION** - This is the true story of a basset hound from Tacoma, Washington, named “Tattoo.”

Tattoo just wanted to go for a slow, leisurely walk that evening. Being a stumpy-legged K-9, with his fat belly and long ears dragging the ground, a slow, casual stroll was about all he could manage.

Tattoo never intended to go for an evenin run. But when his owner accidentally closed his leash in the car door and took off driving, poor Tattoo had no other choice.
Terry Filbert, a Tacoma Washington Motorcycle cop noticed a passing vehicle with something dragging behind it. Filbert started tailing the car and soon realized the driver was dragging a basset hound.

Filbert said, “The poor dog was picking them up and putting them down as fast as his little legs could go.” The officer finally got the driver to pull over, but not before poor Tattoo had tumbled a number of times on the pavement.

Fortunately the dog survived without any serious injuries, but his owner did admit that Tattoo hasn’t begged to go for a walk in quite some time.

I want to talk to you for a few minutes this morning about your trials.

**Everyone here this morning falls into one of three categories:**

- Some of you have *just been through something difficult*.
- Some of you are *now going through something difficult*.
- And some of you are *about to go through something difficult and you just don't know it yet*.

Regardless of which of those three categories you find yourself in, the truth is **God never said life was going to be easy**. In fact, the scriptures teach us that our days on earth are filled with **trials and troubles**.

You and I can be traveling through life with hardly a care, and then one day a situation grabs us by the throat and drags us down life’s highway like *poor 'ol Tattoo*, and we wonder how in the world we are going to survive.
In our scripture text, James provides us with three things you and I need to emerge victorious over life's trials.

First of all...........

I. **We Need The RIGHT ATTITUDE (v.2a)**

   **verse 2a** "My brethren, **COUNT IT ALL JOY** whenever you fall into various trials.

   1. I want you to notice, James doesn’t say, “**Count it all FUN whenever you fall into various trials**.”

      Going to Disney World is FUN! Going fishing is FUN! Going on vacation is FUN! Sickness is NOT fun! Family problems are not FUN! Health problems are not FUN! Financial problems are not FUN!

   2. But here is a critical truth we must grasp! And that is while it is never FUN to go through trials, we can still have **an inward joy while we are going through our trials.**

      That **inward joy** is that sense of peace and assurance that GOD is with us in the midst of our trial and He is in complete control, even though it seems as though everything is out of our control, GOD IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL.

   3. Everybody in the world has trials, but the attitude of the **Christian** with regards to life's trials should be **radically different** than the attitude of those who don't know Jesus Christ.
4. Do you **whine and complain** when you go through trials? That's what non-believers do!

Do you **get angry with God and blame God** for your trials and troubles? That's what non-believers do!

Do you **give up, and quit, and throw in the towel** whenever you go through trials? That's what non-believers do!

Do you **resort to old sinful habits to “deaden the pain” of your trials**? That's what non-believers do!

5. As Christians, our attitude.....our response.....our reaction to life's trials should be **radically different** than that of the world.

6. What does James mean when he says, **“Count it all joy?”**

He doesn't mean that **the trial itself** is enjoyable, but rather the **joy** comes from knowing that GOD will use the **trial** we are going through to achieve a greater good in our lives.

7. Our loving heavenly Father allows trials into our lives, not to **impair us**, but to **improve us; not to destroy us, but to develop us**.

When you and I keep the **right attitude** in the midst of our trials we will learn to see our trials as **friends instead of foes**!
Preacher and Christian author Chuck Swindoll shares this wonderful insight about having the right attitude in the midst of life’s trials. He writes........

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, the education, the money, than circumstances, than failure, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.

9. You see, if you and I can keep THE RIGHT ATTITUDE, the attitude of JOY whenever we go through trials, we have won more than half the battle!

Now here’s the second thing we need we need and that is....
II. We Need The **RIGHT EXPECTATION** (v. 2a)

**verse 2a** My brethren count it all joy WHEN YOU FALL INTO VARIOUS TRIALS.......

1. James is telling us when trials come into our lives we shouldn’t be **SHOCKED** or **SURPRISED**, but rather we should **expect trials to come sooner or later**.

2. I would imagine most all of us at times have cried out, “God, why is this happening to me?” “What have I done to deserve this?” We often assume that a difficult trial in our life is God's way of punishing us for sin or wrongdoing, when in reality, GOD may be allowing you to go through that trial for any number of reasons.

   - Maybe your prayer life isn't what it ought to be and nothing will drive you to your knees before God quicker than a difficult trial.

   - Maybe you have been neglecting God's word, and God is allowing you to go through a trial to get you back in the word.

   - Maybe you have a problem with pride and self-righteousness and God is using that trial to humble you.

   - Perhaps God is allowing you to go through that trial to steer your life in a new direction.

   - Or perhaps you have become lukewarm in your faith and God is allowing you to go through a trial to rekindle your passion and love for Him.
3. There may be any number of reasons why GOD is allowing you to go through a trial. The main thing is to understand if you are going through a trial, GOD has allowed it for a reason. You may not understand what that reason is, but just trust HIM. He knows what He's doing!

4. Notice James refers to “various trials.” Trials come in many varieties. In other words, “Trials are never a one size fits all.”

5. GOD uses a wide variety of trials in our lives to mold us, shape up, and mature us into Christ-likeness.

The late A.W. Tozer compared life's trials to three tools: A hammer, a file, and a furnace.

Some trials are like A HAMMER. They come as a quick blow. From the nail's perspective the hammer is a brutal, merciless enemy who is trying to pound it into submission, but the nail forgets that both it and the hammer are servants of the same workman. If the nail would remember that the hammer is held by the same workman all resentment towards it would disappear.

Some trials are like A FILE, which is more painful still. The business of the file is to bite into the soft metal, scraping and eating away its rough edges until the metal is shaped to the workman's will. Like a file, some of our trials are a lengthy process of scraping off our rough edges until we are shaped to the Master's will.
And then some trials are like a furnace, the most brutal and savage of all. The furnace melts away anything and everything that is worthless until all that is left is that which is of the greatest value. Our most difficult trials are like the furnace. The trial is so intense, so difficult, we think it will destroy us, but in the end, all that is worthless and useless in our character has been removed, and what remains is that which is of the greatest value to God.

6. Whether our trial comes in the form of a hammer, a file, or a furnace, it is important to remember all are held by the same hand of God. So when we go through trials we need the right attitude. And we need the right expectation.

And thirdly,

III. We Need The Right Perspective (vs. 3,4)

verses 3,4 “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

1. When you and I go through trials most of us tend to focus on how soon is it going to be over. The sooner the better, right?
2. But what James is telling us is that in every trial **GOD HAS A PURPOSE!** No trial happens by accident or by coincidence. GOD is a sovereign GOD who has a specific goal in mind with each and every trial we go through. And in order to reach that goal, GOD has to take us through a process, and that process may take days, or weeks, or months, or even years until it is complete. That is why it is critically important that we have **THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE** about our trials.

3. **What Is That RIGHT PERSPECTIVE?**

   **(A)** First of all, I need to have the perspective that **GOD IS GOING TO BRING ME THROUGH THIS TRIAL.**

   As I mentioned earlier, God's purpose in trials is not to impair us, but to improve us. His purpose is not to destroy us, but to develop us. His purpose is not to finish us off, but to “finish us to perfection.”

   **(B)** Secondly, I need to have the perspective that **I AM GOING TO COME OUT OF THIS A BETTER PERSON THAN BEFORE.**

   We must trust that no matter how difficult the trial is or how long the trial goes on, that on the other side of the trial we are going to be **A MORE PATIENT, MORE PERFECT, MORE COMPLETE, MORE CHRIST-LIKE PERSON** than we were before!
CONCLUSION

THE STARS shine brightest against the darkness of the night sky.

THE DIAMOND shines the brightest against the backdrop of dark velvet.

THE CANDLE shines the brightest in a room shrouded in darkness.

Likewise, OUR FAITH should shine the brightest in our darkest hours of trial and trouble.

Preacher and Christian author John MacArthur gives us this poignant illustration of the value of trials in our life. Listen carefully.....

To test the genuineness of a diamond, jewelers often place it in clear water, which causes a real diamond to sparkle with special brilliance. An imitation stone, on the other hand, will have almost no sparkle at all. When the two are placed side by side, even an untrained eye can easily tell the difference. In a similar way, even the world can often notice the marked differences between genuine Christians and those who merely profess faith in Christ. As with jewels, there is a noticeable difference in radiance, especially when people are undergoing difficult times. Many people have great confidence in their faith until it is severely tested by hardships and disappointments. How a person handles trouble will reveal whether his faith is living or dead, genuine or imitation, saving or non-saving. (Macarthur J. James. 1998. Moody)

If you are going through a really difficult trial right now our thoughts and prayers are with you. I wish I could tell you it will be over soon, but I can’t promise you that. But here is what I can tell you. God never said life was going to be easy, but He has promised to never leave you or forsake you and nothing can ever separate you from His love!