The Christian does not have to be a victim of his circumstance, but can have victory even in times of trials and testing’s.

INTRODUCTION:

Max Lucado, In the Eye of the Storm, Word Publishing, 1991, p. 11.

Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over.

The problems began when Chippie’s owner decided to clean Chippie’s cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She’d barely said "hello" when "ssssopp!" Chippie got sucked in. The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chippie -- still alive, but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do . . . she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

A few days after the trauma, the reporter who’d initially written about the event contacted Chippie’s owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn’t sing much anymore -- he just sits and stares." It’s hard not to see why. Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . That’s enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart.

“Sucked in, washed up, and Blown over” That about sums up how many of us feel at times isn’t? It describes the certainty of trials and feelings of powerlessness that trials bring.

An Army Chaplain had a sign on his door that said, “If you have troubles, come in & tell me all about them. If you don’t have troubles, come in & tell me how you do it.”

James reminds us of the reality that even in the Christian life, there are trials and temptations. However, the Christian does not have to be a victim of his circumstance, but can have victory even in times of trials and testings. James tells us No matter what the trials on the outside, we can experience victory through faith in Christ. How do you respond when Life deals You A Lemon?……..

There are four essentials for victory in Trials:-

Count - A Joyful Attitude ***James 1:2***

Know - An Understanding Mind ***James 1:3***

Let - A Surrendered Will ***James 1:4, 9-11***

Ask - A Heart that Wants to Believe ***James 1:5-8***

**1.** Count - A Joyful Attitude. ***James 1:2*** Count or consider is an accounting term. It means to take stock of. Consider carefully. Investigate fully. Line up all the numbers them add them all up. What are the things we are to consider?

1. Consider the facts about trials: James does not say if trials come, but when they do come. Expect them! Do not hide your face in the proverbial sand. Notice that just because you are a believer, you are not exempt. The book of Proverbs tell us that rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. Satan fights us, the world opposes us and makes this life full of battle!

b. Consider many different trials: James says we face trials of many kinds. This can refer to two things. Firstly, it can refer to types of trials. Emotional trials, trials at work, physical trials etc. Or it can refer to the source of trials. Trials generally come from one of two sources. There are the trials that we experience as a result of living the Christian life.

In fact this is probably what James had in mind as he wrote this letter. His audience was the “twelve tribes” scattered throughout the earth...” He was addressing those believers who had been uprooted from their homes and families just because they were believers. There are still many in our world who are experiencing persecution for their faith.

Christian World Report, says that in China alone, 1100 people are executed monthly just because of their Faith. In some restrictive Nations in the middle east, to become a believer is an automatic death sentence. We need to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are experiencing such trials. It is a reminder to us to be thankful for our momentary window of freedom we presently have to worship God without restrictions, and to be ready for when the door might one day be slammed behind us.
For the most part, we have it pretty good on the western world. Our trials come from another source. They are the unknown, unexpected experiences of life. For the most part people do not have control over such experiences. No one could have predicted or controlled the hijacking of four aeroplanes by some crazed, deluded, terrorists and the subsequent destruction of the Trade Centre with its unbelievable loss of life. These kinds of trials are unexpected. They find you, you don’t need to make your own trials.

c. Consider your response to your trials. James says “***Count it joy when you face them***”. The Apostle Peter also says, “***Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through as if something strange were happening to you. Instead be very glad (rejoice) because these trials will make you partners with Christ in His suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world.”***

Evaluate your goals and priorities –– old & new

Live for the things which matter the most.

Our values determine our evaluations

If you value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us.

If we value the physical and the material more than the spiritual, we will not be able to count it all joy.

If we live for the present and not the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better.

***Job 23:10 When God has finished with me, I shall shine as gold.***

When trials come, don’t pretend, don’t try self-hypnosis, simply look at the trial through the eyes of faith. Outlook determines Outcome –– to end with joy, begin with joy!

But how is it possible to rejoice in the middle of trials?

2. Know - An Understanding Mind James 1:3

What do we, as believers know that makes it easier to face trials and benefit from them?
a. Faith is always tested –– to increase our faith! God tests to bring out our best, Satan tempts to bring out our worst!

1. Testing works for us, not against us!

(1 Peter 1:7 –– the testing of your faith) - the approval of your faith –– it is genuine, These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold and your faith is far more precious to god than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tested by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honour on the day Jesus is revealed to the whole world.

Ills ––A gold prospector brings his ore sample into the assayers office to be tested. The sample itself may not be worth more than a few dollars, but the approval, the official statement about the ore, is worth millions. It assures the prospector that he has a gold mine. God’s approval of our faith is precious because it assures us that our faith is genuine.

God’s approval of our faith is precious, because it assures us that our little faith is genuine faith. Trials work for the believer because God approves of our faith when we trust Him through the trial.

c. Trials rightly used help us to mature

How does God spell maturity? –– patience, endurance - the ability to keep going when it’’s tough to keep going!!!!

Ills –– Kids on a long trip on holiday –– Are we there yet? How long? Too immature to understand the journey. Immature people are often impatient –– they want the blessings of maturity without walking the road of growth.

The only way God can develop patience and character in our lives is through trials! (not reading, prayer, sermons) When we go through trials, when we trust God and obey Him, the result is patience and character.

This is how we can face trials with a positive attitude –– we know what trials will do in us & for us –– that the end result will bring Glory to God.

3. Let - A Surrendered Will James 1:4, 9-11

God cannot and will not build our character without our cooperation. He is a gentleman and will not push, prod, pull or drag us against our wills. If we resist him, the natural consequence will be His chastisement. However, when we submit to him, then He can accomplish His work.

Ills ––God’s goal for our lives is maturity. It would be tragic if our little children remained little babies. We enjoy watching them grow through the various stages of life. There are times when naturally we want to shelter our kids from the dangers of life. But we can’t. Many Christians make the mistake of trying to shelter themselves from the trials of life, and as a result never grow up. How can you tell? Because they keep experiencing the same trial, over and over again.

God has three tasks to complete in our growth: ***Eph. 2:8-10***

a. For us –– this is salvation. Jesus completed his work on the cross.

b. In Us ––We are His workmanship or literally his masterpiece. This is sanctification. God builds our character and we become more like Jesus.

c. Through us –– This is service. He has created us anew s that we can to the good things he planned for us long ago.

God doesn’’t work in us without our consent –– we must surrender our will to His! If we face trials without a surrendered will, we will remain immature infants. James 1:9-11 explores this truth with two classes of Christians –– the poor and the rich.

God’s testing has a way of levelling us all. It is not our material resources that are going to get us through the trials of life, but our spiritual resources. Sometimes God uses a trial to pose the question “Which do you love more - this or Me?” (immaturity)

4. Ask - A Heart that Wants to Believe James 1:5-8

When the unexpected trials of life land on our doorstep, How are we to respond? How are we to pray –– what should we ask God for? James gives the answer, Pray for WISDOM. Wisdom is more than knowledge. Someone has said that knowledge is the ability to take things apart, while wisdom is the ability to put them together. Wisdom is using knowledge rightly. Why do we need wisdom when we are going through our trials? It is popular in charismatic circles to want to pray for more power or strength or deliverance. We need wisdom so we will not waste the opportunities God is giving us to mature. Wisdom helps us to use these circumstances for our good and God’s glory.

Ills –– One day a farmer’s donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway, it just wasn’t worth it to retrieve the donkey. So he invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone’s amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer’s neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed, as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Moral: Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up! Don’t waste the opportunities God gives you to prove Himself.

James tells us what to pray for –– wisdom

He also tells us how to pray ––

• confidently,
• specifically,
• and unwaveringly in faith.

When we do God promises to answer

• generously
• To all
• Without finding fault.

No need for fear –– God is anxious to answer. No need to doubt –– God is faithful to His promises

Conclusion:

So what’s in it for me? –– James 1:12

***Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.***
When a Christian endures trials, there is compensation both now and ahead:

a. Now –– Character, Endurance, Patience

b. Ahead –– a Crown of LifeGod doesn’’t help us by removing the trials, he makes them work for our growth and maturity

Satan wants to use these trials to tear us down, but God uses them to build us up. (Who are you letting control your growth in trials?)

What motivates me to act in this way? James identifies the response as Love (James 1:12)

- Love motivates a joyful attitude –– We love God, God loves us and will not harm us.

- Love motivates an understanding mind –– God teaches us through the trials, and we grow.

- Love motivates surrender of my will –– when love reigns, we can surrender and obey

- Love motivates belief – – love and belief go together. When you love, you trust and ask for help.

Where is your love found? –– God or the world.

What are you trusting in trials –– will it get you through?

God wants us to grow when trials come.

In love to Christ - count, know, let, and ask.