

HAPPINESS IS ENDURING TRIALS

JAMES 1:12

Introduction:

Trials are inevitable. The very nature of the world makes them inevitable.

The purpose of God in our lives makes them inevitable. The persistence of the Adversary makes them inevitable. Our own fallen nature makes them inevitable.

Trials come in many forms. Some come as adversity. Some come as temptations to do wrong. Some come as challenges from the Lord—like Abraham's experience with Isaac.

The blessing comes to us when we endure, bear up under, remain steadfast in these trials.

The basic idea is that the person maintains their fidelity to and trust in the Lord Jesus regardless of what life brings. Nothing sways them from this path of discipleship which they have chosen.

These are the ones who know full blessedness in this life and in the life to come.

I. BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE TRIAL.

James gives special attention to what happens during the trial in the larger context. In deed he urges us to welcome the trials that come to us

like we would welcome a friend. Their visit with us will result in good while they stay with us—though it is likely that their visit will be brief.

1. Faith is confirmed. (1:3)

During the trial our faith will be confirmed. “Knowing this that the trying of your faith works patience.” “Trying” means testing in order to decide if it is genuine or not. Is my faith the real thing, or is it just a passing emotion in my life? I cannot know for sure until it has been subjected to the trials of life.

If it will stand up under the pressure of adversity, then it may be the real thing.

If it will stand up against an onslaught from the accuser, then it may be the real thing.

If it will stand up to the temptation to do wrong, then it may be the real thing.

2. Character is developed (1:4)

It is during the trial that godly character is developed. “But let patience have her perfect work: that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

While we are enduring the trial, our faith is being matured and our ability to endure is being increased. We are moving toward spiritual maturity. None of us ever quite achieve full maturity in this world, but a few months under the

pressure of adversity that move us toward it. It will wean us away from the stuff of the world, and will make us more complete in our trust.

3. God is revealed (5:11)

This is another good thing that happens during our time of endurance.

“Behold we count those happy who endure. You have heard of the patience, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” Job is an appropriate example for us. It is true that Job was tried like few men have been tried, but it also true that Job had a deeper experience of the goodness of the Lord than most men. While he was enduring his trial, God revealed himself to Job in the glory of His creation and wisdom. Given the opportunity Job would probably go through it again for the opportunity to know the Lord better.

It was while being tested that Paul learned of the sufficiency of God’s grace. True spiritual happiness comes then because of what happens during the trial.

II. BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE TRIAL.

But the emphasis of James goes deeper than this. “When he is tried” can be translated, “when he is approved.” “Tried” means that the person has been subjected to the test, and has proven to be the real thing.

1. A divine approval is received.

“When he is tried” can be better translated “when he is approved.” Or “having been approved.” Think about receiving a special smile and word from the Lord when you stand in His presence.

2. An enriched life is enjoyed.

“Life” is in apposition with “crown”. The crown is the fullness of life, the eternal life fully experienced. This manifests itself in inner contentment and outer usefulness. Such a person becomes a tremendous influence for the kingdom of God by just who they are.

There may be a sense in which this is experienced in this life. Surely every life that endures is made better, while everyone overcome by temptation or defeated by trials suffers a great loss.

Another dimension is added to this when you remember the reference to love. He has given this promise to those that love Him! When your love has been recognized by the One you love, what greater blessedness could there be!

Our response to temptation is an accurate barometer of our love for God.

3. The crown of life is received.

There may be an eschatological dimension to this. Crowns are also associated with the coming of the Lord. Other promises would seem to indicate that good things will happen when the Lord comes to those who have been steadfast in their endurance of the trials of life.

We do know from things revealed in the book of Revelations that saints in heaven have crowns, and some of them lay them at the feet of Jesus. What a day it will be if we have something to lay at the feet of Jesus.

You can probably never influence a generation like a Billy Graham, but you can demonstrate your love for the Lord in steadfast loyalty when trials and temptations come your way—then you will have the crown to lay at His feet.