

COME TO ME BIBLE STUDY THE BOOK OF JAMES

ENDURANCE WEEK 3

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." James 1:2-3

Walking the country road of a secluded lake that we often go to is one of my favorite things to do. The peaceful serenity of the woods surrounding either side of the dirt road, the sights and sounds of nature tickling my senses and drawing me deeper into a place of calm are what make walking so enjoyable. When I read verses two and three of James 1, I get a mental picture of walking along that tree-shaded road, happily enjoying the sights and sounds, the sweet aroma of nature, God's creation. Unaware of what is in the road ahead, suddenly I encounter, "fall into", a deep pothole in this, until now, perfectly lovely country road! The breath rushes out of my body, thoughts swirling in my mind as I try to make sense of what has just happened. One moment I am on my two feet, standing tall and straight, full of contentment and happiness. The next moment I find myself tumbling down into a deep, muddy, nasty, miry, hole! My clothes are torn from sliding across the rocks in the road, my knees scraped and bleeding, my face, arms, and legs covered in the wet, gooey substance in the hole. My perfect utopia has been shattered by an unexpected hole in the road! How do I react to this sudden interruption in my happy existence? Will I choose to pick myself up, assess the damage, and go on, grateful that I *can* go on? Or do I wallow in self-pity in the pit, bemoaning the rude interruption to my otherwise gleeful existence?

This story is, I admit, a very trite and silly example of falling into various trials. In reality, the various trials we encounter are truly serious, sometimes life-threatening, fearful, sickening, and heartbreaking. Most of the time, trials come our way just as unexpectedly as falling into an unforeseen mud hole. One minute we are on our feet "doing life", and the next minute we are flat on our faces, trying to figure out how to set ourselves aright again.

This is when we have a choice to make. What will you do now? Will you take a deep breath, fix your eyes on Jesus, and decide to trust Him in the trial, knowing that this test will accomplish something good in your life; knowing that this testing of faith will produce endurance?

TESTING

"Dokimion" is the Greek word translated "testing." It means "approved after testing". We are tested for our own good, that we may be proven faithful and true to God. He already knows what is in our hearts. He tests us to reveal it to *us*. You may share my same sentiments: I've never been one who loves testing, whether in school to test my knowledge, for health purposes to test the condition of my body, or in life, to test the

condition of my heart. But testing is needful and profitable, for if we don't know the status of these various situations, then we could suffer other and more serious consequences than the testing.

Open your Bible to I Peter 1:6-9. Read the verses and fill in the blanks. Get ready to get your socks blessed off!

"In this you greatly _____, though now for a little _____, _____, you have been _____, that the _____ of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is _____, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the _____, whom having not _____, you _____. Though now you do not _____ Him, yet _____, you _____ with _____ and _____, receiving the end of your faith----the salvation of your souls!" Now read it again in its completion.

Wow! Did you feel the locomotive momentum of the positive outcome of the testing of our faith? First, there is the low rumble for the need of the trials; the trial comes, faith is tried and proven true. Next, praise, honor, and glory erupt at the reality of Jesus in your life--the One Who saw the need for the test and carried you through it. Inexpressible joy bubbles out for the One you love, even though you have never seen Him. Then in the fullness of His glory, you receive salvation for your soul, salvation from and out of the trial! You've been tested and found true by the One and Only, the great I AM! Oh!, glory to His name! What He takes us to, He takes us through!

Gold That Perishes

Peter compares the genuineness of our faith to gold that perishes. As gold is heated, the impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. The pure, refined gold then can be used by the goldsmith to craft useful and beautiful items.

Read and write Job 23:10. Why do you suppose Job and Peter used refined gold by which to compare our tested and proven faith?

Just as refined gold is useful to the goldsmith, Christians refined by the fire of trials, struggles, and persecution, can be used by God.

PATIENCE, PERSERVERANCE, AND ENDURANCE

These three character traits are what are produced in us when our faith is tested.

Endurance--faith stretched out, faith that trusts God for a long, long, long, long time---FOREVER. We all *hope* we would be faithful to God no matter what, forever and for always, but the fact is we can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure. Endurance and perseverance are strong and active responses to

the difficult situations in our lives. It is the act of standing on your feet as you face the storms. It's not just the attitude of withstanding trials, but the ability to turn them into glory--to overcome them!

Because we serve a living God, a risen Savior, a powerful yet gentle Holy Spirit, we can stand with confidence in the face of trials. The Bible is clear that no one who comes to God in saving faith will ever be separated from Him.

Read John 10:28 & 29, Luke 22:31 & 32, and Hebrews 7:25.

Jesus intercedes for us. He prays for us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who speaks to God on our behalf.

(I John 2:1) We are secure in Him because of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Read Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:20

Read John 14:16.

He is the Holy Spirit of God who seals us for the day of redemption! He is the Helper who was sent to us by Jesus, after His ascension. **THE RISEN ONE SENT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO US!**

We, like Paul, will hopefully endure pain and suffering gladly and without shame, and will be able to proclaim as he did in 2 Timothy 1:12, "For this reason I suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day," and, "The Lord will deliver me from evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever" (2 Timothy 4:18).

Endurance is the long haul of faith, knowing and trusting our Lord and Savior to carry us *through* it, perfect us *in* it, and produce good *from* it. Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear the Lord say to us what He said to the disciples before He left to be arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane?: "You are those who stood by Me in my trials; and just as My Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom" (Luke 22:28-30).

That, my dear sisters, is reason to "Count it all joy!" Are you standing by Him? Are you allowing your testing to produce endurance, patience, and perseverance in you?

Please take the time to write a prayer to the Father, asking Him to help you be found faithful in the tests; to be able to hear Him invite you to His table in heaven; to hear Him say of you, "Well done My good and faithful servant." Reach out your hand to His and take the help that He offers; He will stand by you in your trials and see you through them.