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Overcoming Trials And Temptations

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One sometimes gets the feeling that life is a constant series of problems. There is always a crisis to be faced, some hard decision to make, bills to be paid, or some illness or accident from which to recover. Or problems may arise from an entirely different source. A successful business man is under pressure to keep production and profits up. His success may cause problems. Everyone has had his own special problems.

Our Attitude Toward Problems

We should not think on these things in negative terms. God wants us to take a positive view of our problems. He wants even the most trying experience to produce a good effect in our lives. *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations”* (Jas. 1:2). *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life”* (Jas. 1:12). Don't give way to despair when you have a difficult situation to face or a hard problem to solve. Remember the Lord will bring you through your problems and turn them into a stepping stone toward spiritual maturity. Rejoice in the knowledge that you don't have to let them get the best of you

The Meaning Of “Temptation”

The word *“temptation”* can have two different meanings. It can refer to outward trials that press upon us or inner temptations to do wrong. James uses the word in both ways and the distinction of meaning should be remembered. We face the ordinary events of life which tax our energy. These trials are not sinister in character, but rather are designed to discipline and improve our character. *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby”* (Heb. 11:12).

Outward Trials

James refers to outward trials in verses 2,3, and 12. These could be such things as sorrow, sickness, pain, disappointment, hardship and grief. The original people to whom this letter was written were experiencing trials when this letter was written. They had been forced to leave their homes (8:1). They were among strangers (Jas. 1:1). They had to adjust to an entirely different life! Would they remain faithful or decide it was too much to ask of them and give up?

Such trials have always come upon the people of God giving opportunity to prove their faith in the Lord. Trials are still here and always shall be. These trials are not evil in themselves and God is not to blame for allowing them. The high winds and rain causes many houses to fall. In the same way the common trials of life are not evil, yet some people fall under them. They fall because they have not built on the solid rock and reinforced their character daily (Matt. 7:24-27). Christianity does not ignore the painful facts of life; it faces life's problems and overcomes them.

Internal Temptations

These temptations are designed to lead us into sin. These are not the same as everyday stresses and strains of life. *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God*

cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (Jas. 1:13-14). God proves the character of a man by subjecting him to various tests of his faith (Gen. 22:1). It is not true that He seduces man to evil. No man can blame God for the circumstance that led him to sin. Adam was, in a sense, blaming God for his sin when he said, *”The whom whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat”* (Gen. 3:12). Not only can God not be blamed with evil but He also cannot be responsible for our temptation to do evil. How could we regard God as good if He brought evil into our lives?

What then is the source of temptation to do evil? *”But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed”* (Jas. 1:14). The blame for sin belongs not to God but to us because we choose to do wrong. Man generally blames fate, or society, and he cannot do otherwise. We are morally free and do wrong because we choose to do wrong. All will be well with a man so long as he follows the Word of God without turning aside to the right hand or to the left. But as surely as he sees something out in the world and veers from the straight and narrow way to get it, he is caught by it. Unchecked desire causes him to sin.

How to Overcome Trials and Temptations

We have to live with the problems which grow out of trials and temptations. We can and must overcome them. Temptation must be conquered with faith and obedience. *”Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Eph. 6:11).

How shall we gain the victory over trials and temptations? **We must be optimistic about the struggle**, *”Count all joy...”* We are inspired by the promise, *”There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (I Cor. 10:13). An attitude of pessimistic fatalism will surely mean failure. We can make it for we have God’s promise of help.

You must pray. Do you need answers to your questions? Do you feel confused? Do you need wisdom and understanding to make the right decision *”If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”* (Jas. 1:5). When we pray this prayer, we must pray in confidence that God will help us bear the burden and stay on the right course. *”But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways”* (Jas. 1:6-8). Most of our doubts in prayer are due to a divided heart. We want God’s blessings, but we do not want to make the necessary changes required in order to conform to His will.

We must remember the outcome of sin. *”Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death”* (Jas. 1:15). There is no future in sin. Uncontrolled desire leads to spiritual death. *”And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”* (Rev. 20:14).

Reward For Those Who Overcome

The greatest incentive one has to overcome his trials is the greatness of the reward promised. *”Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing”* (Jas. 1:3-4). Growth takes place gradually, through the testing of faith. If allowed to have its full effect it makes one

complete. The man who overcomes temptation “*shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to those that love him*” (Jas. 1:12). Think of the trials of life in relation to a promised home in heaven. The life promised is in sharp contrast to the death promised as the result of sin (Jas. 1:15). “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Rom. 8:18). The difficulties of life are the means which prove faith; produce maturity in the Christian and enable one to possess an abiding inner peace. “*Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad with exceeding joy*” (I Pet. 1:12-13). Yes, we are going to have problems. But they are not going to destroy us, but can actually serve to make us stronger and bring us closer to God.
