

Count it joy

Introduction

Tie to other things

- We've been talking a lot about faith and our response to difficult time
- For example:
 - We wrapped up a series focused on Hebrews 11 and the heroes of faith
 - Last week we held forth the encouragement of an *On that very day* for each and every promise God has given us
 - We talked about how Abraham grew stronger in his faith even though he had to wait , emphasizing how Abraham gave glory to God for His ability to keep his promise

Narrative: Negative

- So encouraged by your praise and thank offerings on Sunday the 18th (two weeks ago)
- Especially blessed by Dennis and others who chose to give God thanks in spite of our difficulty
- Fear that our disposition about these things is still largely negative
- I want us to be filled with joy ... in spite of all that we're dealing with

Text

- This morning I want to share from **James 1:2-4 (ESV)** *(2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
- Here the Apostle encourages us to take the hardships and find joy

Message

Reality of trials

First, understand that trial, suffering, hardship, etc - these are not aberrations - but the normal experience of Christianity.

Let's consider:

What are trials?

- KJV - divers temptations
- Unexpected difficulties
- See Good Samaritan story - same word
- **Note:** Not temptations to sin - see **James 1:13-15 (ESV)** (13) *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. (14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*
- Temptations spring from our sinful lusts - trials are allowed to come into our life to shape us into a more Christ like person!
- **Note:** resisting temptation can be a trial!

We should expect them

- There are seasons of difficulty in the life of every believer
- Saw that in our previous study - they faced challenges
- Scripture is filled with the reality that believers will go through times of difficulty

*Trial*s

- **1 Peter 4:12** *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*
- **2 Peter 2:9** *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,*

Tribulation

- **John 16:33** *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*
- **Romans 12:12** *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*
- **Revelation 1:9** *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*

Suffering

- **Romans 5:3** *More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,*
- **Romans 8:18** *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Hardship

- **2 Cor 11:25-27 (ESV)** *(25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; (26) on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; (27) in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*
- **2 Corinthians 12:10** *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Reason for trials

Let's take a minute and ask the "Why" question - why do we have to go through this?

Our own doing

- Sometimes we just make it harder on ourselves!
- E.g. consistently overspending - we will have money problems

Corrective

- God allows us to run into difficulties when we leave the path
- These turn us back towards the path
- E.g. grooves cut into pavement to tell us when we're drifting out of the lane

To produce a steadfast faith

- God uses trials and hardship and suffering to produce in us steadfastness
- Paul calls it endurance see **Rom 5:3 (ESV)** *(3) More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,*
- Steadfast: resolutely firm and enduring
- Not going to quit - not going to give up - not going to settle for less than His

- reward!
- **Bottom line:** There is no other way for this character to be developed than hardship, trial and suffering!
 - **Illustrate:** Lifting weight - must have some resistance to grow muscle - can't grow steadfastness without opposition

Response to trials: rejoice

Our text proposes a response to our trials - to see them as a reason to rejoice or to **count them as joy** - let's examine how that's possible

The choice to rejoice

- Definitely not a *normal* response to hard times
- Instead a deliberate choice to rejoice in spite of suffering
- Just like we chose to be grateful - now I'm asking you to choose joy!
- *All joy* or nothing but joy or the greatest joy!
- This is so far from where we are!
- Pastor how can there be joy in the middle of this mess we're going through?

God is working in us

- First - we can choose joy because God is working in us!
- See **Heb 12:7 (ESV)** (7) *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*
- God is still working on us - he's not given up on us!
- That's a reason for joy!
- Reminds me of **Phili 1:6 (ESV)** (6) *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
- He's working to bring us to completion

Roots that bear fruit

- In Matthew 13, Jesus tells the parable of the sower
- Seeds land in different types of soil - and based on that soil - the plant either produced fruit or it didn't
- See **Matt 13:5-6 (ESV)** (5) *Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil,* (6) *but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.*

- The sun separates those plants with roots from those that have none
- No difference above the ground... until the sun shines bright
- **Point:** The Lord has allowed a time of hard sun to expose the roots. As you endure to bear fruit, rejoice in the roots God has allowed you to grow!

And a fruit that brings joy

- I said that choosing joy in the middle of a trial is not natural
- That's because its supernatural
- Joy is the fruit of the Spirit: **Gal 5:22-23 (ESV)** (22) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*
- See **John 14:16 (ESV)** (16) *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, - another, like me*
- See also **John 14:26 (ESV)** (26) *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*
- This word translated *Helper* is Paraclete - one called along side
- Jesus gives us His Spirit to walk this burned road alongside us!
- We are not alone, but the Comforter is with us!
- See the promise of His intercession - **Rom 8:26 (ESV)** (26) *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*
- We can have Joy as we **1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)** (7) *casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.* and partake of the provision of His Spirit

Reward because of trials

Finally, let's look at the promise

- The one who doesn't quit is blessed
- See **James 1:12 (ESV)** (12) *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*
- There is a crown of life for those who endure!

Closing

Will you rejoice

- Here's the bottom line: what will you do with your trial?
- You can quit - and opt out of the future reward for a present life of ease (which is a lie btw)
- You can persevere, but be miserable
- You can persevere and rejoice: Knowing that
 - God is working in you
 - He is producing deep roots
 - He has given you His Spirit
- **Ask:** What is your response today

Can we see God at work at ALC

- Talking about this with Tom this week
- I got excited because these things are true at a church wide level too
- God is preparing Abundant Life church for something special - if he's allowing us to endure this time of testing
- Let us rejoice for what lay ahead!