

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 9, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

THE MAGNIFICENT JOY OF TRIALS Tried and True

James 1:2-4, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18, Hebrews 12:2-3

“Consider it pure joy, my brother (and sisters) whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” –James 1:2-4 (NIV)

We began our study several weeks ago called “The Magnificent Joy of Trials.” Although it sounds absurd or perhaps at least a little sarcastic that trials should ever be counted a “joy”, we have discovered that maturing in our faith and finding a complete (or whole, full, mature) faith includes times of trial... sometimes great trial. Without them we may never really develop... and nobody, it seems, ever escapes the process. We simply cannot become the people God intends us to be without some headaches and heartaches along the way... some bumps along the road. Just for review we have discovered that when troubles and hardships... trials come we can do a couple of things with it:

2 Possible Responses to Trials:

- 1. Negative response... we can respond by becoming hardened** – Often when “trial of many kinds” (as James calls it) come our way, whatever that trial may be (failure, loss, discouragement, heartache, disappointment), it often throws us so off guard... we are so unprepared, that it knocks the wind out of our sails. It may leave us reeling, perhaps hurting so deeply or so confused and bewildered that we find ourselves growing angry... sometimes even mad. We get mad at God, mad at the world and mad at others. We can lash out and allow our pains and disappointments in life to literally harden and callous our spirit. We may grow bitter toward God for apparently allowing this to happen to us.
- 2. Positive response... we can respond by becoming heartened** – The word “hearten” means to give strength, courage, or hope to, to encourage. Our trials truly do harden us ro hearten us. That is essentially what James says. He is telling us that for a believer, the trial we experience in this life can actually serve to enable our faith to be heartened, full of hope and encouragement as we mature us and grow in the faith. So. Trials actually do “hearten” us causing us to draw closer to God than we have ever been in greater dependence and reliance on Him.

So the question is how do I develop a heartened, mature, faith rather than become hardened, wilt and die in despair and bitterness when I’m hurting or going through a very trying time? How do I turn moments of struggle, and hardship, and difficulty into opportunities to develop my faith?

James mentions **“trials of many kinds”** which may also be translated as “many kind of trials” and, let’s face it, there are many kinds of trial that we face in this life. We have talked about a few of these in the past few weeks of this study. .

Where We Have Been: (2 trials we have explored the past few weeks)

- 1. The trial of waiting**
- 2. The trial of failure**
- 3. The trial of discouragement**
- 4. The trial of fear**
- 5. The trial of doubt**
- 6. The trial of loss**
- 7. The trial of temptation**

The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life (trials of many kinds), we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. God desires for you to live an overcoming life! Jesus, Himself, said in **John 16:33, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** And in **1 John 5:4-5, “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”** Christians are overcomers and truly are to live victorious Christian lives every day, but let’s be honest, there are many trial and struggles, heartaches and difficulties along that way that can daily steal our joy and paralyze our faith, destroy our relationship and weaken our walk... trials of many kinds that can embitter and defeat us if we let them.

“A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man made better without trials.”
– Chinese Proverb

Sure it doesn't feel good to go through abrasive moments of trials and struggles. Sometimes they are recurring. Remember this, life is full of rubbing shoulders and exchanging words. Every time life would seem to cut you and grind you, it means God is working in you to make you a better you.

Life really is marked by problems... struggles... hardships... trials. We all have them. No one is immune to them... not even Christians. Some are major, most are perhaps minor... some linger... many can be resolved about as quickly as they appear. When we are in the midst of a trying time... a trial, they can all seem major at the time, and life impacting in some ways. No trial is easy at the time, otherwise it wouldn't be called a “trial.” In the process of growth toward maturity in our Christian lives, trials do actually play an essential role as we have seen. Trials put faith on the line, it may cause us to grow and mature in our faith walk, and it can actually create a greater reliance on the one who can truly handle the problems, and struggles and trials in our lives and cause us to grow closer to Him than we have ever been. This is especially true when a trial is especially challenging. In closing out our study on “The Magnificent Joy of

Trials” there is no better help to be given for facing the trials in life that are sure to come than to point us to the One who can provide help and answers to our trial-prone lives.

I. A STARK REALITY FOR CHRISTIANS

New Christians will quite often have misconceptions about God, the Christian life and other believers and the things we face in this life... namely the struggles, the problems, the trials this life can hold. But that is not only a reality for new Christians, many who have been Christians for years may carry these misconception tucked neatly in their back pocket and when trial, and difficulties, and hardships come... when things don't go as they expected in their tidy Christian world these misconceptions reveal themselves. This look at the common misconceptions of Christianity is designed to dispel some of the myths that typically hinder Christians from growing and maturing in the faith even in the face of trials.

10 Commonly Held Dangerous Misconceptions Christians May Make: *(these misconceptions really contribute to our inability to deal with the trials we face and sometimes are themselves a catalyst for great trials themselves)*

- (1) **Once you become a Christian, God will solve all of your problems (John 6:33, 1 Peter 4:12-13)** - In other words, “no more trials”... “all my restless tossing and trials are over.” Not so! Christians are shocked when the first trial or serious crisis hits. Here's a reality check -- get prepared -- the Christian life is not always easy! You will still face ups and downs, challenges and joys. You will have [problems and troubles](#) to overcome. Jesus said in [John 6:33](#), *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* And [1 Peter 4:12-13](#) offers encouragement for Christians facing difficult situations, *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”*
- (2) **Becoming a Christian means giving up all fun and following a life of rules (John 10:10, 1 Corinthians 2:9)** – This age old idea seem to imply that becoming a Christian will just be one problem after another...one trial heaped on another...that you will have to give up all your good times, all your friends, and that becoming a Christian is a real trial in itself. A joyless existence of mere rule-following is not true Christianity and the abundant life God intends for you. Rather, this describes a man-made experience of legalism. God has amazing adventures planned for you... not trial free, but amazing. As a matter of fact, Jesus, Himself described the life a Christian has as “abundant” when He said in [John 10:10](#), *“... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (NKJV) This verses gives a description of what it means to experience real life, full life... the best life even in the midst of a trial-prone existence. [1 Corinthians 2:9](#) says it like this and reminds us that though not problem free the Christ life is truly a blessed life, *“However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”*
- (3) **All Christians are loving, perfect people (Colossians 3:13, Philippians 3:12-13)** – This misconception can pose serious problems itself for a believer. It doesn't take very long to discover that Christians are not always loving and perfect people. Quite the contrary can be true sometimes for any number of reasons. [But being prepared to meet](#)

the imperfections and failures of your new family in Christ can spare you future trials of pain and disillusionment from the hands of others from whom you may be tempted to expect perfection. Although Christians strive to be like Christ, we will never obtain complete sanctification until we stand before the Lord. In fact, God uses our imperfections to "grow us" in the faith. If not, there would be no need to forgive one another. As we learn to live in harmony with our new family, we rub each other like sandpaper. It's painful at times, but the result brings about a smoothing and softening to our rough edges. Paul reminds us in [Colossians 3:13](#) that we are to *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* The very fact that he encourage us to have to do this "bearing with one another" implies that we are not always loving and perfect people, but rather a people who must be "beared" with. Do you get it? And he reminds us in [Philippians 3:12-13](#) that we aren't there yet, but rather still a work in progress when he said, *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead ..."* In other words, I am not perfect yet... I'm still working on it, or rather He is still working on me!

- (4) **Bad things don't happen to truly godly Christians (2 Corinthians 11:24-26, 1 Peter 1:6-7)** - This point goes along with point number one, however, the focus is slightly different. Often Christians begin to wrongly believe that if they live a godly Christian life, God will protect them from pain and suffering... problems in this life... from trials. This just "ain't" so according to God's Word. Paul, a hero of the faith, suffered much. He lays out some of the bad things that happen to this truly godly Christian... just listen to it in [2 Corinthians 11:24-26](#), *"Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers."* Some faith groups believe the Bible promises [health, wealth and prosperity](#) for all who live a godly life. But this teaching is false. Jesus never taught this to his followers. You may experience these blessings in your life, but they are not a reward for godly living. At times we experience tragedy, pain and loss in life. This is not always a result of sin, as some would claim, but rather, for a greater purpose that we may not understand immediately. We may never understand, but we can trust God in these difficult times, and know he has a purpose. [Rick Warren](#) says in his [popular book](#), "The Purpose Driven Life" says *"Jesus did not die on the cross just so we could live comfortable, well-adjusted lives. His purpose is far deeper: He wants to make us like himself before he takes us to heaven."* [1 Peter 1:6-7](#) says it like this, *"So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while. 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 tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world."* [\(NLT\)](#)

- (5) **Christian ministers and missionaries are more spiritual than other believers (1 Timothy 1:15-16)** – This is a major “problem” in church and with many Christian. The problems associated with this misconception are varied, but deadly. This is a subtle but persistent misconception that we carry in our minds as believers sometimes. Because of this false notion, we end up putting ministers and missionaries on "spiritual pedestals" accompanied by unrealistic expectations. When one of these heroes falls from our self-constructed perch, it tends to make us fall too -- away from God. This creates a terrible “trial” for our faith... sometimes to the point of disillusionments and abandonment of our previous commitments to our Lord and to His church. Don't let this happen in your life. You may have to continually guard yourself against this subtle deception. Paul, Timothy's spiritual father, taught him this truth - we are all sinners on an equal playing field with God and each other. **1 Timothy 1:15-16** , *“This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--and I was the worst of them all. But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.” (NLT)*
- (6) **Christian churches are always safe places, where you can trust everyone (1 Peter 5:8, Matthew 10:6)** - Although this should be true, it is not. Unfortunately we live in a fallen world where evil resides. Not everyone who enters the church has honorable intentions, and even some who do come with good intentions can fall back into old patterns of sin. People get injured in church, and words said in a heated moment can cut deeply. Disagreements and squabbles can seem to hurts even deeper in a church leaving their victim feeling like the one place they felt was a holy separate place is suddenly a war zone. “Trials” can come us even in the seemingly “safe” environment of the church, because churches are made up of imperfect people, and the enemy likes to disrupt and dis-unify the body of Christ whenever and where he can. Peter warned us of this very thing in **1 Peter 5:8**, when he said, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (NKJV)* And Jesus, Himself, warned us in **Matthew 10:6**, *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (KJV)*
- (7) **Christians should never say anything that might offend someone or hurt someone else's feelings (Ephesians 4:14-15, Proverbs 27:6)** – This is a misconception. Many believers have a wrong understanding of meekness and humility. The idea of godly meekness involves having strength and courage, but the kind of strength that is submitted to God's control. True humility recognizes complete dependence upon God and knows we have no goodness except that which is found in Christ. Sometimes our love for God and our fellow Christians, and obedience to God's Word compel us to speak words given in love that to some, who are caught up in some worldly things or in a path of sin, may possibly be offended at or hurt by. Some people call this "tough love," and although some may be use this approach too readily and carelessly injure others, there is a time and a place under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and done with the right heart attitude and in the Spirit that things must be handled and said. Be aware that this may create a crisis of faith for that one... a real trial for them. Paul states it like this in **Ephesians 4:14-15**, *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and*

forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (NIV) And listen to this wise proverb from Proverbs 27:6, “Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. (NIV) Wow! In other words, even hard words said in love from someone who really cares about you are flattering words from someone who just says what you want to hear.

- (8) **As a Christian you should not associate with unbelievers (1 Corinthians 9:22-23)** - I am always saddened when I hear so called "seasoned" believers teaching this false notion to other Christians. Yes, it is true that you may have to break off some of the unhealthy relationships you have had with people from your past life of sin if and when their pull and draw on you is so strong that it is leading back into that life of sin. At least for a while you may need to do this until you are strong enough to resist the temptations of your old lifestyle. However, Jesus, our example, made it his mission (and ours) to associate with sinners. How will we attract those who need a Savior, if we don't build relationships with them? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, “When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings. (NLT)
- (9) **Christians should not enjoy any earthly pleasures (Job 1:21)** - I believe God created all of the good, wholesome, enjoyable, and fun things we have on this earth as a blessing for us to enjoy. The key is not holding on to these earthly things too tightly. We should grasp and enjoy our blessings with our palms held open and tilted up. Job 1:21 reads, “And (Job) said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." (NIV)
- (10) **Christians always feel close to God (Psalm 63:1, Psalm 42:1-3)** – When a person first becomes a Christian he or she may feel very close to God. Your eyes have just been opened to a brand new, exciting life with God. However, you should be prepared for dry seasons in your walk with God. They are bound to come. A life-long walk of faith requires trust and commitment even when you don't feel close to God. Sometimes those dry seasons and distant feeling can come in the midst of the problems that we face. It is in those moments that we may feel at times like God has deserted us, or our own disappointment with life may cause us to feel not as close to Him. In these verses, David expresses sacrifices of praise to God in the midst of spiritual times of drought. Psalm 63:1, “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (NIV) And Psalm 42:1-3, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (NIV) He is still there even when do feel as close to Him as we may have at one time. Go to Him! Seek after Him and don't stop even in those times when problems persist.

QUESTION: We stated that these misconceptions really contribute to our inability to deal with trials that come our way in this life and sometimes are themselves a catalyst for greater trial themselves. How do these misconception contribute to our inability to deal with trials and sometimes serve as catalyst for greater trials?

II. A FRESH REMINDER ABOUT TRIALS

In the way of both a review and a reminder, we want to make some important statements about trial and the Christian life especially. These are very important in clarifying both our perspective about trials as Christians and our maintaining a healthy spiritual approach in dealing with the very real and certain trials we will face in this life.

4 Initial Clarify Statements About Trials:

1. **It is incorrect to think that because one is a Christian, he or she will never face any trials or that all his or her trials will automatically be solved.**
2. **It is incorrect to say that all trials are specifically (exactly, explicitly) discussed in the Bible.**
3. **It is incorrect to believe that having a problem means one is unspiritual.**
4. **It is incorrect to assume that being exposed to Bible teaching automatically immunizes and inoculates one from trials in this life.**

III. A BIBLICAL APPRAISAL ABOUT TRIALS

The words of Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9** reveal four levels of the reality of the trials that we “will” face. Paul doesn’t imply that these things might happen, he assumes they will. He is the way he expresses it, *“⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”* The King James says it like this, *“⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”* When James speaks of “trials of many kinds” in James 1:2-4 he is acknowledging not only that there are all kinds of trials we may face in this life, but also the varying degrees and levels of intensity of those trials. The levels of trials in this life are indicated by four terms.

4 Levels of Trials:

- (1) **Troubles – “daily struggles, trials”** The NIV calls these being “hard pressed.” Other translations use the word “afflictions.” This is the actually the slightest level of trials. It is mild or moderate, none the less a real trial. The Greek word Paul uses is the one from which we get our word “pressure.” This type of trials is closely related to stress that comes from people, deadlines, interruptions, and delays. It is easily forgotten, but it attacks us on a daily basis. Daily trials!
- (2) **Perplexities – “without a way”** This indicates a level of trial which is more intense than the former daily grind trials we face.. It is also less often experienced, therefore perhaps a little harder to deal with. The Greek term translated here means “without a way” and conveys the idea of not knowing where to go or to whom we can turn. This kind of trial would include not knowing how to handle the situation that may include unfair treatment from people or circumstances.

- (3) **Persecutions – “tormenting problems”** This is an extreme level of trial. It can be either emotional or physical. This form of trial carries with it intense irritation and stress that has affected us on the deepest painful levels and it does not pass quickly, but is tormenting. This is a level of trial that extremely difficult to handle and sometimes cause one to lose hope or abandon all hope.
- (4) **Destructions – “loss”** This is the ultimate in trial, maximum stress is felt and experienced. It can include the loss of someone or something near and dear to us; a spouse to divorce, a mate, child or friend to death; something you consider valuable; a dream. This is a trial that we experience that may feel very final and hopeless. It may feel as if there is really no way out of it but to accept it!

Now notice, once again that Paul does not deny the reality of struggles, hardships and trials for a believer. Nor does he indicate that Christian will not face these trials... some severe. As a matter of fact he is affirming that we will face these trials most certainly at every level. He does however tell us that the Christians... the believer finds something beyond himself or herself to give victory, hope, and help in the midst of trials. Notice his words again in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, ⁸ *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”*

4 Christian Promises in the Midst Trials:

- (1) **The promise that troubles will not crush us**
- (2) **The promise that perplexities will not leave us despairing**
- (3) **The promise that in persecution we will not be abandoned** – Remember that Scripture teaches that our God will *“... never leave us or forsake us”* (Hebrews 13:5).
- (4) **The promise that in being struck down we will not be destroyed -**

**The promise is that our trials won’t destroy us or overtake us because we have something beyond ourselves to see us through and give us victory. What is that?*

IV. THE ULTIMATE HELP FOR YOU AND YOUR TRIALS

The trials of this life are a reality and you and I will never escape that reality. They will come and sometimes they will be intense trials... beyond our ability to handle them. Paul tells us that he found a ways to not be crushed, despaired, abandoned or destroyed by them. He found victory and ultimately that comes only through Jesus Christ. So he closes out his words at the end of 2 Corinthians 4 in speaking of the reality of the trials he knew were certain with these words in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, ¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles (trials) are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

5 Sources of Help for You and Your Trials:

- (1) **Don’t lose heart** – Verse 16 says, ¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart...* Literally “don’t allow yourself to be disheartened by the trials that you face.” Don’t lose all hope! No matter how bad it gets in this life, no matter how difficult the trial to endure,

for a Christian all hope is never... never lost! Realize that everyone goes through trials. It is a part of this life. It rains on the just and the unjust. Everyone has problems. Trying times can be disheartening, but there is One who will guard your heart... One who is on your side.

- (2) **Be Renewed day by day** – Paul says in verse 16, “...*Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*” Christians are to be renewed and be being renewed daily. That is one of the ways we are able to handle and do life with all of its associated challenges and struggles, and hardships and trials. How are we “renewed” day by day? By being in a growing and increasingly intimate relationship with Him. That only comes about by spending time with Him and getting to know Him on an ever deepening level through the study of His word (Bible study), by spending time with him in conversation (prayer), but sitting under the teaching and proclaiming of His words, by fellowshiping with others who know Him (church), by loving and expressing that love to Him (worship), by serving and giving of our self to Him (giving), etc.
- (3) **Remember your trials are momentary** – Paul speak of “...*our light and momentary troubles (trials)...*” in **verse 17**. He is giving us a right perspective for the trials that we face in this life, namely that they are momentary... temporary. “This too shall pass.” Sometimes we get “tunnel vision” in the midst of our struggles and can focus on nothing else, but for a Christian we would always remember that this life with all of its ups and downs, joys as well as sorrows, is only a temporary. His intention is not to sound callused by the real trials we face, but to remind us that they really are only momentary blips on the screen of the bigger picture of all that God has in store for you. And that really leads us to the next one
- (4) **Keep in mind a better day is ahead** – **Verse 17** says, “*For our light and momentary troubles (problems) are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*” For the believers, the weight of our light and momentary trials in this life will soon give way to a new day where all difficulties, challenges, heartaches, and struggles of this life will be over forever and there will be no more crying, no more suffering and no more pain. There is a better day coming when all our wrestling with the trials of this life will be over for good! Yeah!
- (5) **Focus on Him who is unseen and holds our lives in the palm of His hand** - *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* One of my favorite verses is **Hebrews 12:2-3**, “² *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* ³ *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*” You get it! We must focus on Him and not the trial itself. He holds the key and is the “ultimate” source for victory over the challenges, and struggles, and trials of this life. Focus on Him.