**The Silver Lining on The Clouds of Trials**

**TEXTS: James 1:2-4**

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire. I Peter 1:6-7 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. As we walk in the land of uprightness, there are seasonal changes in our perception of righteous living, as well as of our perception of God’s faithfulness to us. We love Springtime in our walk, with all of its’ new life and budding potential. It is so full of color and abundant growth. The living waters flow and the sunshine and blue skies motivates us to throw ourselves into life with divine enthusiasm. Following the warmth and radiance of the productive growing season of Summertime, life takes on a different look and a different feel. So much of what we have perceived as lusciousness seems to be fading away and even dying. Many times we feel the same way in seasons of trials and troubles, when we fall from a luscious state of abundant life where seemingly this state of bliss begins to slip away. The balmy breezes of the wooing and working of the Holy Spirit seem to be turning chilly and the bright and delightful foliage that enfolds our moments seems to be withering and losing its’ spell of glory. As our divers trials and troubles multiply, as they so often do, we find ourselves looking around and becoming aware that all of the leaves are gone and the green has faded into a lifeless shade of brown. In the text at hand, we find that God anticipates our perplexity in verse 5 by saying that if any man lacks wisdom about their season of distress, let him talk to God about it. Though God understands our spiritual dilemma and its’ ensuing pains, he does not have an open ear to faithlessness or doublemindedness according to verses 6-8. God knows this is a critical time in our lives and that we will be prone to question his faithfulness, and even blame him for the setting in of the winter season in our life. We find this in the words of verse 6 which say, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.” God goes on to say, “For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” The underlying problem that causes so many to abandon God in seasons of trials and tribulations is found in verse 7 in these words, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” When we are walking in the Spirit, we have the mind of Christ whereby we continually proclaim our Lord’s faithfulness. When we walk in the flesh, we automatically respond to adversity in the flesh. Whereas faith is a fruit of the Spirit enabling us to remain faithful while we walk in the Spirit, unbelief is a fruit or work of the flesh, leaving us with no capacity for faith or faithfulness. We can not operate with the spiritual mind of Christ and the carnal mind of the flesh at the same time. It is only natural for the natural man within us to respond to manifold fiery trials in anguish of soul and a spirit of anger, with God being the target of our blame. Sadly enough, when we respond in the flesh, we not only abandon God but the divine resources that God provides to enable the trying of our faith to be much more precious than of gold that perisheth. At the appearing of Christ, our faith will not be found unto praise and honour and glory, but unto dishonor and shame. If we desire for our faith to be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Christ, then we must allow our Lord to teach us how to count it all joy when we fall into divers and manifold fiery trials. This training will only take place in God’s classroom, which is in his throne room. We must yield our confused and rebellious spirit to the wooing and working of the loving Holy Spirit, confessing our transgressions and our double mindedness. With our sins forgiven and Christ’s righteousness and true holiness imputed to us, we now find ourselves in the throne room of our Lord’s very presence with a reachable, teachable spirit. It is here that God will liberally give, without any upbraiding, the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom needed to engage any and all trials and temptations of our fruit of the Spirit faith. Our Lord makes it clear in I Peter 1:6 that there will be seasons of great heaviness through manifold temptations, however, he says in I Cor. 10:13, “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 also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. It is not God’s desire to upbraid, or to scold and condemn us, nor to blame us, but to make a way through the trials before we can no longer bear them to our needless destruction. The moment of response to our trials truly can be a crucial and critical point of crisis. Too many believers through the ages that have fallen into fiery trials have also fallen from the faith rather than allowing God through his Spirit to provide them with a faith that could enable them to escape the great heaviness and distress. Take note that God does not remove the trial from us, but enables us by his instruction from the word and by the supply of his grace to bear it. We should understand at this juncture that the trying of our faith will be a routine encounter until Jesus comes. It must also be understood that only a genuine fireproof faith can withstand the pressures and the varying degrees of distress and sometimes heart rending pain associated with these trials. A non-optional requirement for perpetual access to this caliber of faith is a consistent walk with God. I John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,......” I John 1:3 says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” It is important to note that what maintains our fellowship is righteousness through confession and the cleansing power of the blood unto forgiveness. It is here that we are walking in the presence of God in his Spirit and in his throne room. Because we are in his Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is immediately available to us to enable us to walk with God in righteousness and true holiness. It enables us to be conformed to the image of Christ, and in doing so, to respond to sufferings in the same manner as Christ did. Did Jesus Christ encounter trials and temptations? Of course he did! He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Amazingly enough, we find in the scriptures that he counted it all joy!! Hebrews 12:2 tells us that he endured the shame and sufferings of the cross for the joy that was set before him. We also must learn the value of a tried faith and be willing to bear our cross with all of its’ shame and sufferings, if need be. I Peter 1:6 says, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, IF NEED BE, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” So why does it need be? James answers that question in chapter one, in verses 3-4 where he says, “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.” Perhaps herein lies the value of a genuine tried faith! Only through this caliber of faith can the Spirit of God work and produce and install patience, one of the grandest of virtues, into our Christian character. Without it we could never be perfect and entire, wanting or lacking nothing in our spiritual growth and character and maturity. We truly can and should count it all joy knowing that a right response in the Spirit to adversity that tries our faith actually builds us up in the faith. Finally, it might behoove us to ponder on the sources of trials that come into our lives. Where does all this adversity and tribulation originate? May it be considered first of all that God is never to be blamed, as he so often is, when trials find us walking in the flesh. Romans 8:7 tells us that the carnal mind is at enmity with God, which automatically makes him the enemy of self desire and fleshly pleasures. This double minded man has no desire to seek spiritual knowledge, understanding, and wisdom when adversity comes, therefore he responds as a fool would and in anger strikes out at God, playing the blame game. In Lamentations 3, we find Jeremiah in rare form as he is striking out at God in the flesh playing the blame game. Verses 1-3 says, “I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. Does this sound familiar? Sure it does! When we are walking in the flesh and our world starts falling apart, we respond in the same manner. It is the nature of all flesh! We see an amazing change in Jeremiahs’ spirit later on in chapter 3:32-33 where he says, “But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” We find in this chapter that Jeremiahs’ soul was humbled in him and he threw himself upon God’s mercies and was restored to fellowship and a sober mind. He was aware that God had caused grief among the children of Israel, of which he was one, but it was only because their sin forced him as a just God to deal with their sin. It was not in God’s heart to afflict and grieve his children. The same is true today. The majority of the afflictions and grief experienced by God’s children through fiery trials do not originate with our Father. It is true that in our Father’s love all will experience chastening and this will yield affliction and grief, but it is so against his desire and will to afflict and cause grief to his children. Let us then search further into life for sources of adversity that would test our faith for genuine substance. One of the most evident sources would perhaps be God’s curse as pronounced in the garden. Before this time man lived in complete peace with God and therefore with one another. They did not live under any form of burden, pressure, or distress, as well as any stress produced by either. Life truly was a dream of tranquility, then came sin and the curse. For the first time a new pnenomenon entered into their realm of reality called, ‘Guilt’. This strange and unwelcomed entity of their life overshadowed all that was lovely and pure, all that was refreshing and lifegiving to their soul. Indeed, by some mysterious means, the enlightening of their understanding of their Creator God that produced such abundant life had seemed to pale into some form of dismal darkness never before experienced. Looming in the darkening shadows appeared another frightening stranger to their troubled soul called Fear. He became an ever present source of anxiety and torment. Gone was peace and a sense of divine preservation. Dread now awaited the arrival of Creator God in the cool of the day. Desire for fellowship with him was suddenly gone, as he seemed more to be an enemy that would hurt them, than a friend coming to bless them. How quickly this God changed his love and loyalty! If he loved us, how could he have allowed us to be robbed of our prosperous and bountiful existence? May our Lord reveal to us through this simplistic portrayal of the effects of the curse of sin on our minds and hearts the powerful and persuasive effects of guilt and fear, and the burdens and stress, the anxieties or worries, the doubts and twisted reasonings that beset the carnal mind. Our only hope of overcoming the effects of the curse on a cursed nature is to put off the old man and put on the new man or new nature. We can put on the new man at the blood gate of I Jn. I:9 and with divine understanding and wisdom, count it all joy when we fall into all the various forms of trials that try our genuine God produced and provided faith. Understanding that the curse is certainly an important source of adversity that tries our faith, let us examine another possibility and that being, The Law of Sowing and Reaping. Galatians 6:7-8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. It would seem that God is serving us notice that we are sadly deceived if we manage our choices regarding fleshly desires and appetites in complete irreverence toward his Lordship and the fear of God, and think that there will be no price to pay. The frightening truth is that when we walk in the flesh, every choice we make to feed the flesh and satisfy and gratify its’ lusts are divinely monitored. Each fulfilled choice sows seed to the flesh and a harvest will be reaped in time. The Law of Sowing and Reaping assures us that regardless of the type of seed sown, the harvest will always be corruption. The basic concept of corruption is a decaying from a sound condition to an unsound condition. It implies a rotting away to a state of putrification. In light of this law, perhaps it would not be a stretch to say that a great deal of our adversity and troubles that try our faith are self inflicted. If it isn’t already insulting enough to mock our Father and our Lord by carelessly sowing to the flesh, we will in turn mock and scorn or ridicule him when our lives, to include our minds and bodies, begin to decay into unsoundness and weakness. If we would consider that it is possible that we can bring upon ourselves seasons of heaviness through manifold temptations, would it not be reasonable to consider that we would be prone to murmur and bitterly complain during these seasons of mental disturbance and distress, perhaps to the point of seeming hopelessness. Please allow me to pass on a word of warning that should activate a spirit of caution. The fact of the matter is that God hates murmuring among his people! The idea behind this word is the act of grumbling and complaining. We need to exercise extreme caution because it is a most natural reaction to our encounters with difficult circumstances that put our faith to the fire to be tried. Indeed it is even more dangerous to those believers that find themselves walking in the flesh and have no divine resources available to deliver them from murmuring and stirring up God’s anger. I Corinthians 10:10-11 says, “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” God is referring to the faithlessness of his children in the wilderness. They grumbled about his leadership, his provision, his protection, and even his love and concern for their well being. God said in verse 11 that the things that happened to them are being communicated to us in holy writ for the purpose of being an example that we should take heed to and modify our behavior accordingly, considering the judgment of God that befell them. It should be quite clear that our Father takes our mouthing off as a personal affront to his very nature. He sees our murmuring as a denial that he is a God of love and compassion. It is a denial that he is a worthy Father declaring that he is unworthy of our love and loyalty. It makes a mockery of his trustworthiness as well. God gives what seems to be a sobering warning in these words of verse 12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Good news!! Life in Christ does not have to be this way. Christ in us is the hope of glory and glorious living! We can choose to sow seeds that will reap glory and glorious, victorious living. Galatians 6:8b says, “but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” It is vital to understand that in order to sow to the Spirit, we must be walking in the Spirit. It is here that we have the mind of Christ and are enabled by God’s grace to make proper judgment calls or proper decisions which constitute our choices. Our Spirit controlled choices are sown to the Spirit, which in time yield a harvest of abundant, glorious and victorious life. This in reality is the resurrection life of Christ lived through us by his very own Spirit. It is not enough to have everlasting life with eternal benefits, we must learn to lay hold on everlasting life today and begin enjoying our Lord’s spiritual bounty, which is ours by inheritance. Count it ALL joy!!!