



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 25.02.2024

“Joy in Trials”

Preacher

Ps. Nathan Bean

Scripture

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: greetings. 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”

James 1:1-8

Thought

The Church in Jerusalem was experiencing significant persecution, and James was one of the key leaders of this persecuted Church. In the midst of the challenge and threat, he pens this letter - imploring the listener to “consider it pure joy” when they face trials of all kinds. But why does he equate difficulty with joy?

The truth is, we store joy in all kinds of places, and we don't realise until suffering and hardship comes. In the western world, our joy often is based



on good circumstances. True Christian joy does not rely on this. These things may be great - family, employment, health - but they are transient, all come and go. They cannot be our ultimate source of joy.

Suffering reveals where we keep our joy. Through trials and tests, our hearts are exposed and the true resting place of our treasure is revealed. If our joy is placed in transient things or circumstances, this becomes painfully evident. As these things fall away, so does our hope.

We're often completely unprepared for this. We have a total lack of preparedness for difficult times. We think something strange is happening to us - yet Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 4:12, that difficult times will come and that we should be prepared. It doesn't need to shift us from His steadfast presence. Hard times happen. Trials happen. The Bible is absolutely clear that we will go through difficulties, yet the promise is that Jesus is with us through every fiery ordeal.

James implores us to 'consider' these trials and consider them pure joy. This is an active process, to meditate, to take account, to weigh up. We must consider, to prepare ourselves for difficult times, and to place our true hope in the one thing that's immovable; Christ Jesus.

God may not instigate these hard times, but He certainly uses them for good. Things are not the way they're meant to be, and yet, God is always with us, His joy is always present and available, and He promises to work all things for Good. If you keep your joy in tact, even when you're not where you want to be, God can lead you through a season of growth.

Yet growth doesn't happen by default. It must be a posture of the heart, to allow Christ to do a deep work in us, to find our strength in the Lord, above all else. Our joy can, and must, be ultimately stored in the person of Christ and our relationship with Him.

As we journey through life's twists and turns, we do so in the presence of an ever-faithful and ever-present God, who promises to work all things for good, and in whom all joy is truly found.



Discussion Points

1. Do I honestly believe in the deepest part of me, that God works all things for my good? Why / why not?
2. How would I identify where I'm placing my trust and joy in things that cannot last?

Personal application + Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you that in Your presence, I find everything I need. I thank you that you are the God who can calm the chaos, and lead me through every season. Reveal to me, Lord, the things in my life which are shifting sand, and show me what it means to truly build my life, my hope, my joy in You, my rock.

Amen.

Becoming Christlike in our BEING, THINKING, and DOING

As followers of Jesus, the depth of our joy is connected to the depth of our trust in God's goodness.

It is so common for us to place our loyalty in things, events, or outcomes rather than in Jesus. Yet we are constantly being called back to trust in Him! Being totally honest with yourself, where do you find is the easiest place to give your loyalty?

As you move through this week, notice the moments when your joy is lacking. Begin to see these experiences as a grace (gift) from Jesus, as he draws us deeper in our life of faith. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in your trust in God in these areas.