

The Joy of Suffering? It's in the Book!

Written by Dr. Harold R. Carpenter -

TEXT: James 1:1-12 7:14

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, ¶ To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 {being} a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. 9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; 10 and the rich man {is to glory} in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which {the Lord} has promised to those who love Him
(James 1:1-12, NASB).

INTRODUCTION:

Adoniram Judson, the great missionary to Burma, is famous for his suffering for the cause of Christ. Adoniram and Ann Judson sailed for India just two weeks after their marriage. After months on a sailing ship on stormy seas they arrived in India only to find that they could not stay because of war. Their first child was born and died as they made their way up the bay of Bengal to Burma. Their baby was buried by casting him overboard into the sea. Living in indescribable conditions of poverty and filth they labored for years without seeing a convert. Adoniram was arrested as a British spy. For seventeen months he suffered hunger, beatings, isolation, torture. He was suspended nightly by his hands and feet from a bamboo pole with his shoulders only barely touching the floor.

While Adoniram was in prison his wife gave birth to a second child but was too sick to nurse it. She walked the streets of Rangoon begging other nursing mothers to allow her baby to nurse along with their children. When Adoniram was finally released from prison he found his wife and child in a chicken coop near death. Ann was so emaciated and withered that he could not even recognize her at first.

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After Ann and the baby died Adoniram suffered a severe depression and consumption. On a sea voyage along the coast of Burma, Adoniram himself passed away and was buried at sea as was his first born son.

I have heard it said several times as my students have studied the life and tribulations of Adoniram Judson, that "He had more than his share of suffering." I suggest to you this morning that this is not proper thinking. Suffering is not equally shared! You can not have more than your share of suffering, nor less than your share of suffering. We are called upon to share in the sufferings of Christ!

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with {Him} so that we may also be glorified with {Him.} 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:17-18, NASB).

Until such time as our suffering exceeds that of Christ on Calvary's cross we cannot say that we have had more than our share of suffering!

I. JAMES AND THE JOY OF SUFFERING

A. Who is this man who calls on us to rejoice in suffering?

1. Not James the son of Zebedee: (James the Greater):

21 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the {son} of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them

(Matthew 4:21, NASB). a. Brother

of Johnb. Son of Thunder:

16 And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), 17 and James, the {son} of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him
(Mark 3:17-19, NASB).

c. Intimate disciple of Christd. Martyred by the sword of Herod:

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a

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sword (Acts 12:1-2, NASB).

1. Not James the son of Alphaeus (James the Lesser):

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him (Matthew 10:2-4, NASB).

- a. One of the 12 apostles b. Son of Mary:

40 There were also {some} women looking on from a distance, among whom {were} Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome (Mark 15:40, NASB).

1. He was James the son of Mary and Joseph (The Just) also known as James of Jerusalem

- a. A brother of Jesus Christ:

54 He came to His hometown and {began} teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where {did} this man {get} this wisdom and {these} miraculous powers? 55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? (Matthew 13:54-55, NSAB).

- b. An unbeliever until after the resurrection:

21 When His own people heard {of} {this,} they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses" (Mark 3:21, NASB).

3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be {known} publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him (John 7:3-5, NASB).

c. An apostle:

7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; (1 Corinthians 15:7, NASB). d. A pillar in the Church:

19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother(Galatians 1:19, NASB).

9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we {might} {go} to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised (Galatians 2:9, NASB).

17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place (Acts 12:17, NASB). e. Bishop of

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Jerusalem

f. Presided over the Council of Jerusalem:

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." 22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23 and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings (Acts 15:19-23, NASB).

18 And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present(Acts 21:18, NASB).

B. What right has this man to tell others to suffer?

1. He watched his brother and Lord cruelly suffer and die.
2. He remained in Jerusalem when the rest of the Church was scattered following the stoning of Steven.
3. He was thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple, stoned and finally beaten to death with a fuller's club.
4. He did not sit in the boat and tell others to walk on the water!
5. As Paul, he understood that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy of being compared to the joy that awaits us in Christ Jesus:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18, NASB).

II. THE BELIEVER AND THE JOY OF SUFFERING

A. Suffering is not something uncommon to the Child of God.

1. There is a natural enmity between a child of God and the kingdom of Satan.
2. The list is long of those who have suffered for the sake of righteousness:

a. Job in the pit of despair and suffering.b. Joseph from the pit in the desert to Potiphar's house to prison--Genesis 39.c. Daniel making his bed in a pit of lions.

1. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witness, most of whom suffered for the sake of

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righteousness:

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,³³ who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed {acts of} righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received {back} their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; ³⁶ and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸ ({men} of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. ³⁹ And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect (Hebrews 11:32-40, NASB).

1. This comes into context when we read the next chapter!

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:1-3, NASB).

B. Suffering perfects the believer:

1. **³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:3-4, NASB).**

2. **¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which {the Lord} has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12, NASB).**

C. Suffering cements our relationship with Christ.

1. Listen to Paul who is famous for his sufferings:

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a. **5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; 7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are {sharers} of our comfort** (2 Corinthians 1:5-7, NASB).

b. **10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained {it} or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:10-12, NASB).

1. Listen to Peter who was crucified for his Lord:

a. **13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if {anyone suffers} as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name** (1 Peter 4:13-16, NASB).
b. **:8 Be of sober {spirit,} be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in {your} faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen {and} establish you. 11 To Him {be} dominion forever and ever. Amen**
(1 Peter 5:8-11, NASB).

CONCLUSION:

Most will agree that suffering is noble when it is someone else who is doing the suffering. It is difficult to hold such a view when it is we who are doing the suffering!

James said "**Count it all joy when you suffer as a Christian.**"

Paul said "**Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!**"

Both were on the brink of martyrdom when they wrote these words.

Their sufferings were hard! Their faith was strong! Their anchor was fast! Their hope was sure!

Paul wrote:

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7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing
(2 Timothy 4:7-8, NASB).

James wrote:

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which {the Lord} has promised to those who love Him
(James 1:12, NASB).

Closing Hymn: Living By Faith #260

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This is the outline of the sermon Dr. Harold Carpenter preached 16 February 2003. Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He now serves as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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