

# Joy in Trials

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of finding joy in trials and maintaining spiritual integrity amidst challenges.*

**Duration:** 1:18:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:1-2, James 1:26, 1 Peter 1:6-7

**Topics:** "Joy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of facing challenges and difficulties in life. He uses the example of a man who claimed he couldn't be a true Christian because of his wife, but the speaker argues that such challenges should actually strengthen one's faith. The speaker then tells a story about a king who gives his subjects a single seed to plant and promises a prize for the person who grows the best flower. Despite facing doubts and criticism, a little girl continues to care for her seed, even though it doesn't grow. The sermon concludes with the message that facing challenges and staying faithful can lead to growth and ultimately bring glory to God.

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## Transcript

Lord, take this service and let it be in your hands. You Lord, wouldn't you speak? Lord, prepare our hearts and minds, lest they be in a condition where they cannot hear what you have to say. That your word would reach people in its life-changing power.

Amen. Yesterday I met with some young people. I didn't recognize who they were.

Although I had known them. But they were so different and so changed. The expression on their faces was different.

That I had to say afterwards, oh, so it's you. In my lifetime there will be no change, but until we die I will change. As I was praying just now, I was thinking of those young people.

As I was praying that the word would change us. And let it be like that indeed. That the word will change us for it cannot reach us and not have an effect on us.

In fact it will be even visible. People will notice that there's a newness about this person. This person has been influenced and changed by God's Word.

Let's read the book of James, the letter by James. Chapter 1, verses 1 to 3. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, we'll read thus far. This epistle begins with the name of Jacob or James. The servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This James is not one of the twelve. Remember that Jesus, as he went on his travels, that he would sometimes take aside that special trio of Peter, James and John. He had these three disciples who were special to him.

And then there were the rest of the twelve. And then there were also the seventy. This is not the same one, because we are told in Acts chapter 12 that Herod had James the Apostle.

But rather, this James was the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that Jesus did have brothers after him, ancestors. And this James was one of the brothers of Jesus.

A lot of his time was spent being the shepherd, the bishop of the church in Jerusalem. Sometimes he would travel through Palestine and Syria. Now he wrote this letter to the twelve scattered tribes.

So this James, the brother of Jesus and Peter and John worked, in particular they worked among the Jews. The brethren, those who were Jews by circumcision. So when James writes to the scattered tribes, he says, I am the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He does not start by saying, I am James, the brother of Jesus. No. He doesn't refer to the human relationship, to the blood connection.

He doesn't take note of the fact that he is the brother of Jesus Christ. In another place of the scriptures, it there speaks about James the brother of Jesus. But when he himself writes, he says, I am the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus.

What was glorious to him was that he was the servant of Jesus Christ and of God. He gloried in that, that he could be a servant of Jesus Christ in the spirit. So for him the most distinguished title was to be a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

James is showing us that in this world there is no title or honor that can surpass this honor of being a servant of the Lord Jesus. I don't know what is important to you when you write or if you introduce yourself, but to James what was important was that he was a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what mattered to James.

Being a relative was of no consequence to him. Being a brother of that family meant nothing to him. What was of supreme importance was being a servant of God.

And you cannot be a servant of God if you are not a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. With some people blood is thicker than water, but in things spiritual that's of no consequence. Being a servant, being in the service of Jesus is what matters.

I remember some years ago, a co-worker leaving and going his way and I asked his wife, well, what do you say? She said, well, I'm just going to do whatever my husband does. That does not work in the things of the spirit. Jesus must be the first.

ended up that he divorced her, he got remarried, she got remarried but with God we must in the first place be the servant of God, of Jesus. My theme for the service is rather going to be about falling into various trials and temptations but I'm just looking at and exploring the context of it first. James has introduced himself as to who he is.

You've read that he is writing to the twelve tribes, the Jewish tribes that are scattered. Why was he writing this epistle? What was his reason for writing it? He was writing it to the brethren regarding their backsliding, their degeneracy. But they had declined spiritually, they weren't on fire, alive and full of vitality like they had been in the beginning.

What a tragic thing to see people who used to be on fire for God who have now started to wither, to fade and other things have come in. That burning zeal for the Lord has fizzled out. Their faith, their manners, their behaviour shows and has evidence of being faded.

That James writes to the Jewish Christians, he writes to them specifically with this intent to point out that they aren't as they were. Their standard has dropped, they're not on fire as they were in the past. I want you to take this directly at yourself, I'm not speaking to your neighbour, to the one in front of you or behind you.

But that you ask yourself, am I still on that spiritual standard where the Lord put me? There is an English song, chorus, which says Lord if I ever loved you, kiss now. There hasn't been a time in my life where I loved you more than what I do now. And I want you all to face the truth, is that true in your life? Has there never been a time where you were more aflame for Christ than right now? Has there ever been a time where you were more fiery and did more for Christ than now? If so, let me tell you directly that you are fading out, you're washing out, you're on the way down.

That will be the greatest miracle that can ever happen if you go down and you end in heaven. Now it's up to you to test yourself, to pray earnestly, spiritually to be on your knees. Say, God, that you ask the question, Lord, have I begun to fade and am I on the decline? Are you degenerating spiritually? If that's a terrible thing, whether it's you, your wife or your children, it's an evil thing, the greatest tragedy that can happen to you.

It's worse news than to hear that the doctor tells you your whole body is full of cancer. That's a shock to a person's system, but you should get a greater shock if you realize I'm going in the wrong direction. I'm not going up, I'm going down, I'm degenerating, I'm getting worse.

Than what I've been in the past. But I don't have time to expand upon that theme. For I haven't yet got to the crux of the matter.

But I'm just touching two or three points regarding the brethren to whom this was written. James says, for instance, to his brethren, why is it that you are so particular about a person who's classy, one of the elite and rich, and you take him with kid gloves to the highest place, but the poor person, you discriminate against him and you neglect him. James says, that is degeneracy.

For rich man comes, he's ushered to the best seat, a poor person to the remotest seat. James says, that's degeneracy. The Lord says, he wants to rule long in this world as king, must take particular note of the oppressed, of the poor.

James says, that is degeneracy. Jesus never said that you would be judged according to the way that you're treated, the dignified, wealthy, civilized person. He said, no, he'll take the one who is least in your eyes and say, what you did to that person is what you did to me.

And who is the smallest in your eyes? And Jesus will judge you on judgment day according to your relationship to that least one in your eyes. Who is that person to you? Maybe it's somebody who is very uncivilized according to your culture, and you don't acknowledge them as existing. And there are many who've got the name and say, we are alive, but before God you are dead.

Dead, D-E-A-D. And you know what? That life before God doesn't mean anything. That's why it's of greatest importance that you take God's word, you live in God's word, and God's word lives in you and changes you.

That you've got the mind of Christ. Maybe a person who can't eat with a fork or knife, he can just eat with a spoon. You, according to your tradition, you judge a person according to that.

Menace at the table. That's the least. And you'll be surprised.

For all eternity, you'll be lower than him. And he'll be in a better situation for all eternity than what you are. Or you'll be.

He or she doesn't know anything about the garden. Will plant some maize right in front of the house. And have some chickens running around the house.

And you judge the person according to that. Because you've got a different culture to what they have. But Jesus died for them.

And when God judges, he'll judge you accordingly. I said in these days I wish I could take all of you right into the deepest depths of the valleys and mountains. And that you could go to those people and preach to them.

That would be a good school for you. It's a curse if a person can sit under preaching, under a sermon, and is not touched by it. But that's a thing.

That's a usual thing. Every day's occurrence. But may God grant that you're not stone dead, that there's still a bit of life in you, that you can register what it's about.

May God grant that you're not stone dead, that there's still a bit of life in you, that you can register what it's about. So James, the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, then writes this epistle to the twelve tribes, these Jewish Christians, and says to them that you have degenerated, you are sliding back in your faith. And as long as that spirit is in you, you recurse and not a blessing to the Lord's work.

You'll be a greater blessing six feet in the ground than being alive amongst God's people. Another point. He says to these Christians, you fail to discipline your tongue and to hold the reins.

They spoke too much and sinned too much with their tongue. He says, an undisciplined tongue makes your worship of God to be null and void. Do you hear that? You may be quite assured about your worship of God, but because of your uncontrolled tongue, it says your religion is in vain.

I'm just touching different points as I head to my main aim. He also says to them, your faith with artworks is dead. If you say to the hungry person, the Lord bless you, but you don't give something that will provide food, your religion is in vain.

John Wesley was in the practice of riding on horseback. It was before the time of vehicles. He would arrive at a service, take the meeting, then get back on his horse and go to another meeting.

He would preach there. The congregation said to him, as he was on his horse to go to the next place, they said, the Lord bless you. John Wesley turned back to them and said, well, you say God bless you, but you haven't given food for my horse.

Let me point out two other things that indicated that the faith of these people was dead. He said, there is conflict and war among you. They were not one, they were divided.

And he said this enmity, these wars do not come from God, but from your craving for pleasures within. He said among the Christians, there is this enmity, these warring factions, and yet they were still preaching, they were still calling themselves Christians. Another sign and proof of those who are being degenerate and who are backsliding is that they love the world.

He says, adulterers and adulteresses do not know that friendship with God is enmity with God. Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself the enemy of God. He says, adulterers and adulteresses do not know that friendship with God is enmity with God.

The word says that if you love the world, if you lean towards the world, loving the things of the world and the people of the world and the Christians of the world, then you make yourself an enemy of God and you are an adulterer and adulteress. If you flirt with the world, you are an enemy of God. If that happens, when you think now this may be your end, then you should count it as all joy.

Just joy. All joy means, one person said, the cause for the highest joy.

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