

James: Faith That Works: Joyful in Difficulty

Day 1

Test Pilots

Back in the 50's and 60's the job to have was test pilot. If you wanted to be the coolest, calmest, most courageous man, there was no better job. In the early days of jet-powered flight, there were many emergencies and many crashes. A large number of test pilots found it to be their last job. Why was being a test pilot so dangerous? It was not just because the technology was new and undeveloped, though that certainly played a part. The real danger was in finding the edges of the envelope. In aviation terms, the envelope is what the plane is capable of doing in terms of performance. How fast can the plane fly? How tightly can it turn? How slow can it fly before stalling? Before a plane could be mass produced and sent into the "real world", these characteristics had to be known so that flight manuals could be developed for the training of the end users. The problem was that the test pilot had to test the limits of this envelope, and the only way to do that was to push the limits until you went past them and then hope that you could recover. When James tells us to consider it joy when we face trials, he is telling us in a way that we should consider ourselves test pilots. We are flying our faith, and it will be put to the test to find its limits. When a test pilot found a plane to have poor flight characteristics, he would then inform the engineers who would go about fixing the problem to make the plane better. When our faith gets tested, we get to know its limits. We see where we need to work on our faith so that it is more reliable in the future, thus helping us to be mature, complete, and perfected. Do not be afraid of the testing, and do not become bitter in testing, but instead consider it joy because it is part of the process of growth into perfection.

Verses: James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:12-13, John 16:33

Prayer Topics: Bravery, Risk, Trust

Day 2

Stronger Faith

God is helping us through all of our trials and testing to have a stronger faith, having a greater confidence in Him. How do we help the process? Check out this devotional to find out:

<https://www.paultripp.com/wednesdays-word/posts/two-more-principles-for-a-stronger-faith>

Verses: James 1:3, 1 John 4:1, Romans 12:2

Prayer Topics: Endurance, Hope, Joy

Day 3

Stronger Faith Part 2

Faith is nothing less than our confidence in the gloriousness of God. Because of this, there is no way to increase our joy other than increasing our faith, because joy is the result of experiencing glory. Here is another great devotional to help us increase our faith:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/suffering-that-strengthens-faith>

Verses: 2 Corinthians 1:8–9, Psalm 73:25-26, Isaiah 40:31

Prayer Topics: Purpose, Strength, Substance

Day 4

Methods

Why are trials and testing the method God has chosen to strengthen our faith? Why can't God just show up and tell us that he exists, or do some kind of miracle in our presence? I remember having these thoughts as a kid and wondering why God would never show up when I asked. The issue that eluded me was a very important distinction that I was failing to make. If you were going to fly in an experimental plane like the "spruce goose" that Howard Hughes built, you might feel some anxiety or trepidation. Suppose you had never seen the plane, but only had it described to you as a very large plane made out of wood. You spend sleepless nights anticipating the flight, worried about your safety and feeling like the plane will crash. You wonder over and over again how such a large plane could be made from wood and still be strong enough not to fall apart in mid flight. You say to yourself, "If only I could see the plane, my fear would go away and it would be replaced by serene confidence". In this situation, do you think that seeing the immense size and crazy engineering of the plane would actually lead to greater faith? The mistake that we often make is that we fail to understand the nature of faith. We often think that being sure of the existence of something is the same thing as having confidence in the performance of something. The person about to fly on the giant airplane is not unsure of the plane's existence, only of its ability to stay in the air. How would this future airplane passenger learn to trust in the performance of the plane other than to ride in it as it encountered turbulence, difficult conditions, and unforeseen events? You might think that someone else could ride in the plane and tell you it performed well, and that would solve your problem. It actually would not, it would simply transfer the problem. Now you would need faith in the giver of the account, as well as in the plane. You could read an account of someone else's faith in the plane, and that might help you

make a decision to get on the plane yourself, but ultimately reading about someone else's faith is not the same as having your own. To have your own faith, you must at some point put it to the test.

Verses: Hebrews 11:6, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Job 23:10

Prayer Topics: Testing, Trials, Difficulty

Day 5

Thanks to Sylvester Warsaw, Jr for our devotional today

In James 1:2, we're encouraged to "count it all joy when we fall into various trials," therefore the question becomes why is it so challenging for many of the 62-69 percent of Americans claiming to be Christian find it challenging to have joy in the midst of trials? Is it because the main theme in American indoctrination is "independence"? The idea of independence has a foothold in the church which goes against the teachings of the gospel. God has called His church to dependence on Him not to be independent of Him. Therefore instead of inviting God into situations we lean unto our own understanding allowing our pride, the pride of life to kill us spiritually, Proverbs 3:5-8. The sad reality many professing to be Christ's oftentimes live a life of deceit because of the appearance of godliness and not a circumcised heart as recorded in Acts 18:11-20 when the seven sons of Sceva were playing exorcists and the evil spirit spoke to them about knowing Jesus and Paul but not them and the evil spirit showed them the real deal that they're not to be played with because their job is to steal, kill and destroy.

1 Peter 5:6-7 record these words, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care

upon Him, for He cares for you.” You and I can’t live a victorious life in this deceitful world without God’s providence, His redemptive act in and through Christ Jesus that allows us to be in relationship with Him the Creator and Sustainer of life. What many also don’t understand is that the battles we encounter aren’t battles of flesh and blood therefore the battles can’t be fought with flesh and blood as Paul clearly tells us in 2 Cor. 10:3-6 and Ephesians 6:11-20. When we intentionally daily die to self by picking up the cross of obedience we’re declaring our total dependence on God alone and as a result of dying to self we thrive in Christ Jesus. When we intentionally look to Him for everything allowing Him to have total authority then we can be still as the King of Glory comes in and handles the situation, Psalm 24.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow down and worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar they told Nebuchadnezzar these words, “we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up,” Daniel 3:16-18. David said it like this in 1 Samuel 17:45-47, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD

does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.” In Acts 5:40-42 the apostles who were beaten as ordered by the council, the apostles rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for the shame of His name. God matures His children as He takes them through the fire Malachi 3. In Romans 8:35-39 Paul raises and answers his own question based on his relationship with God. Like Paul who stated nothing can separate us from the love of God can we like Joseph testify in Genesis 50:19-20 say the same words “what you meant for evil against me;

God meant for good.”