

## 18 THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH

*James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

*1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Peter speaks more about the experience of trials with a long-term view of its purpose, while the emphasis of James is on anticipating trials and its present purpose. Contrary to the common notion of trials and tribulations, both of them start with the keynote of joy, not gloom. We are not asked to pump up joy or try to be happy about a tough situation – we cannot. In fact, it says we are grieved by various trials. But we can count it all joy on the basis of knowing where we are headed in the purposes of God. *“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).* We can rejoice while going through the grind because there is a nobler end. *“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Psalms 30:5).* It does not last forever but only for as long as it takes for His work to be done in us, and not one moment more.

Trials are not a test of our feelings but of our faith, with the intent that it would be made more genuine and patient. There is a kind of impatient and impudent faith that has never been proven which is of little use to God. It is in the actual testing process that patience is produced. Patience is not merely a side effect or by-product, but the ‘gold’ He wants to purify in us. Why is patience so precious? Because patience is the path to perfection, which James describes here as the state of being complete and lacking nothing. We get impatient when we are missing something we want or need. Patience is cultivated when we have to do without what we used to have for a time, till we cease missing it or feeling incomplete without it anymore.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul speaks of this blessed position in terms of its all-inclusiveness by counting all things loss for Christ (*Philippians 3:8*), doing all things through Christ (*Philippians 4:13*), and rejoicing always in Christ (*Philippians 4:4*). What a privileged place to be in. We are sometimes desirous of attaining this, but are deterred by what is required. The capacity to do all things and rejoice always in Christ is proportionate to counting all things loss for Christ. We would like to have the gain without the loss, the crown without the cross. But strong faith can only be forged through the fire.