

COUNT IT ALL JOY

James 1:2 ... "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials."

Easier said than done. That's the way we might feel when we face a serious problem and someone quotes today's verse to us. I faced a fairly serious trial yesterday, and although from a lifetime of experience I quickly recognized it as something God was allowing to mature me, I didn't immediately feel much joy in it.

But the verse does not instruct us to feel immediate joy. It says to "count" it. That is something you will probably do after the initial wave of testing and anxiety pass. After the initial panic or shock of a difficult situation hits you. After you regain your footing and assess the situation calmly. That is when you can count the value of your trial and come to the realization that God is behind it and has a plan for you to be victorious, or at least to survive it.

The verse uses another descriptive word that we can all relate to: fall. It really does feel like we are falling into a pit or off a cliff when some trials hit us, does it not? I felt like that last night, momentarily. But, by turning the challenge I was facing over to God, I felt his loving arms holding me and protecting me from the rocks that might have been at the bottom of that pit. It was never God's plan for me to be crushed or destroyed or beaten. It was just a trial and by applying verse 5 of James chapter 1, I received the solution to my trial: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach (rebuke), and it will be given to him." This means exactly what it says. When you face a trial or challenge that will require you to make the correct decision, you have only to ask God for the wisdom to make the correct choice and he will give it to you without criticizing you or blaming you for the situation you are in.

Who has access to God and the wisdom he offers? Only committed followers of Christ. Unbelievers can pray day and night and never be heard by God. They can beg for wisdom and relief from their problems, but God only hears the cries and petitions of his followers. John 9:31 is clear: "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, he hears him." The only prayer God will hear from an unbeliever, is the prayer of confession and repentance. Then God can begin to transform that person and, through his Holy Spirit, have a relationship. A prayer life develops from that relationship, making God's promises and wisdom available to that person.

If you have not confessed your sins to God and repented of them, and asked Christ to be your Savior, do it today. You may face a trial tomorrow for which God cannot help you, unless you are his child.

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