

Shaped Through Adversity

(Sermon Notes) By Wray Zehring – 11/16/2013

Think of a trial that you are going through? ...What adjectives come to mind? They are mostly negative – aren't they?

When we think of a scripture about trials which one comes to mind first? For most people, including myself it is:

James 1:

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

Why does this one come to mind first?

I think because it is so opposite of the way that we think that it can become a glaring contradiction. James makes an incredible leap to the final stage of the way to view trials.

James bypasses: Hating and despising, to getting through them, seeing their value, appreciating the changes that come about because of trials.

...ALL the way to JOY!

That is my second title: **Count it all Joy**

Where are we at in this process? As Christians we know that we are to **count it all joy when we fall into various trials** but often we come up way short!

Today I would like to see if we can shed some light on the subject and perhaps see if we can start to change our perspective on trials and have a paradigm shift from where we are to where we should be.

First let's look a little further down in this chapter and note where James says that trials come from. Where do our trials come from?

James 1:

12 Blessed *is* the man who endures **temptation**[same word as "trials" in verse 2]; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

13 Let no one say when he is **tempted**, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

I think the way that we can view this is that God **tests** us hoping that we will pass, but Satan **tempts** us hoping that we will fail.

God does not induce people to sin. God is holy, and without sin and hates it. It is contrary to everything that He stands for. It takes someone that is sinful to tempt someone to sin... which is why James goes on to say what he does:

James 1:

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his **own** desires and enticed.

At the end of the day we need to view our own sinful nature as the enemy and the origin of our trials.

James 1:

- 15** Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Ultimately it leads to the 2nd death if we do not subdue it and bring it under control. And then James sums it up by saying:

James 1:

- 16** Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Be aware; be on the lookout.

He is saying that we need to be aware, that we need to be on the lookout for this. Christ said:

Matthew 26:

- 41** Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Do not ask why.

Many times in the past though we have gotten hung up on why these things may be happening to us. Sometimes trying to ask, Why this happened in the first place isn't the right question.

It might not be so much about fault as much as what is it that God is trying to accomplish in us.

It is just the fact that we can become better; we can be perfected or move towards perfection. Let's notice a case like this in the Book of Job.

Job 1:

- 1** There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was **blameless and upright**, and one who **feared God** and **shunned evil**.

Job's possessions and the extent of his wealth are seen in Job 1:2-5.

Job 1:

- 6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
7 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

Knowing good and well where he was. So Satan answered the LORD and said,

Job 1:

- 7** ...From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.
8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"
9 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"
10 Have You not made a hedge around him [I can just imagine Satan thinking he is conning God], around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.
11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

Don't get me wrong, Satan is really clever, but he was outmatched from the beginning by God.

Job 1:

- 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*."

God put boundaries and limitations on Satan.

Job 1:

- 12 ...So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

So we see here that God allows and Satan obliges. This is not a matter of time and chance.

Job 1:13-19 Satan "touched" [as in stole destroyed and killed] the property, livestock, workers and even children of Job.

Job 1:

- 20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.
 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the **LORD has taken away** [he understood correctly that God was ultimately in charge]; Blessed be the name of the LORD."
 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

It was Satan. God was not tempting, but allowing the testing.

What we see in this passage is that when it comes to the people of God (that man was **blameless and upright**, and one who **feared God** and **shunned evil**.) God is involved intimately in the process and He allows Satan to do what Satan wants to do any way. **Satan stayed within the bounds set by God as much as he didn't want to.**

Job 2:

- 1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.
 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Satan's goal is that we do not make it.

Job 2:

- 3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, [Again it is reiterated that Job is] a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

This is what Satan does as an accuser of the brethren.

Job 2:

- 4 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.
 5 But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"
 6 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he *is* in your hand, but **spare** his life." [again God set restraints on Satan that he HAD to abide by and DID.

God sets constraints on Satan which he has to abide by.

Job 2:

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

God allowed this:

Job 2:

10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept **adversity**?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

God was **Shaping Job Through Adversity**

This was WHY God allowed the trial. When we are "touched" by the devil it is because God has allowed it and it is for a purpose.

James 5:

11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and **seen the end intended by the Lord**—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

God has a purpose in the testing that we have to go through. There are specific reasons that are personal for each individual, but there is an all encompassing goal that He has in mind.

1 Peter 1:

- 3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,
- 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved [distressed and sorrowful] by various trials,
- 7 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, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

We are tried so that our faith will be found to be praiseworthy and honorable at the return of JC. Shouldn't we rejoice in that, Shouldn't we greatly rejoice in the fact that God is making sure that we make it? Do we see the "end that was intended by the Lord?"

Peter goes on in Chapter 4 to tell us more about the purpose of trials.

1 Peter 4:

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

If we see the aim of God, then then fiery trials should come as no surprise to you and we should not be upset by them.

1 Peter 4:

- 13** but **rejoice** to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, **you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**
- 14** If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.
- 15** But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

We are not talking about the suffering that comes from being a willful wrongdoer of God's laws.

1 Peter 4:

- 16** Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him **glorify** God in this matter.
- 17** For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?
- 18** Now "IF THE RIGHTEOUS ONE IS SCARCELY SAVED, WHERE WILL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?"

We need the work and tests of God in us through trials.

1 Peter 4:

- 19** Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

It is the will of **our Father** that we go through suffering. God is not cavalier or capricious, and as our Father, He treats us as a good parent should. What is your approach as a parent to your children when it comes to training up your child in the way that he should go? How do you build character in them? How do you mold and shape them as a parent should do? As our spiritual Father, He will do the same for us.

Hebrews 12:

- 1** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

This is not a 100meter dash or a short sprint; it's not really even a three and a half hour marathon; more like a Raid Gauloise; running, backpacking, climbing, swimming over many days; an endurance race that can last longer than a week.

Hebrews 12:

- 2** looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the **joy that was set before Him** endured the cross.

Just as we are admonished to take up our cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Keep Jesus Christ as our focus.

Hebrews 12:

- 3** For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.
- 4** You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. Have we suffered like Christ? No!

Now we come to part of what a good father does.

Hebrews 12:

- 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM;
6 FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Act of love; it is because He cares; He cares about how we are going to turn out; He is doing it for our own good.

Hebrews 12:

- 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons [and we are now sons of God]; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Don't we do the same thing for our children? Educating, training, correcting and disciplining; that is what is implied by chastening.

Hebrews 12:

- 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Without trials to strengthen and improve us we are not sons of God; it is because we are sons that He puts us through tests.

Hebrews 12:

- 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

How much more should we then respect God who corrects us perfectly? How should we view trials?

Hebrews 12:

- 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

That is our final goal. The reason for the trials; so that ultimately we can become Holy as He is; that we may gain Salvation.

Hebrews 12:

- 11 Now no chastening **seems to be joyful** for the present, but painful; [is this where we are in the process?] nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Or are we focusing on this aspect of it and what it leads to? Are we rejoicing in the fact that God is working in our lives? Are we rejoicing in the fact that this will lead to building Holy Righteous Character? Are we counting it ALL JOY?

Hebrews 12:

- 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,
13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame [our shortcomings] may not be *dislocated*, but rather be healed.

This is the ultimate goal that we are thoroughly and completely healed. Why is that when we are anointed for sickness we don't get upset? Just the opposite; **we look forward to God's intervention in our life**. We want and desire it. That is why we call on God – we look forward to His correction.

Yet we are asking for a physical correction...from God; a correcting of the situation; How was the situation brought about? Through our faults; through others (Someone ill breathed on us, and we got sick; hit us with a car – it does not matter what it was)? Whatever it is we want God to work in our life towards us being healed.

Now let's compare that to our current state of spiritual sickness; by that I mean that we are not perfect and we come up short of the glory of God.

Do we see this in ourselves; does it bother us; do we want to get rid of it; Do we want God to "make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may be healed?"

God is trying to show us how we are coming up short so that we can be a part of His KOG? Is this what we want? Should we not want this in the same way that we want to be healed of our physical infirmities? This is what we want.

Should we not then "Count at all joy" this process, this removing of our carnality and the replacing of it with the Character of God? We begin to see it for the good that it is for us now as well as keeping the end in sight

Do we want this? Do we truly want God to show us what we are to begin to root out? He can show us these things through a myriad of ways.

God is able to show us in a nice way through others:

Galatians 6:

- 1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
- 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
- 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have **rejoicing** in himself alone, and not in another.

Because we were able to help a brother or sister in Christ. We should want this. This is the better way to view it.

Most won't tell you your problems – but we should want to find out – if done in a right way. Sometimes if they do tell us our problem, it's not in a constructive way. So if it is told us correctly, then how much more should we want and desire it.

Let's look at an example of a not so nice way:**2 Samuel 16:**

- 5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came.
- 6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.
- 7 Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue!"
- 8 The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you *are caught* in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"
- 9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!"
- 10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' "
- 11 And David said to Abishai and all his servants, "See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him.

Another way we can see where correction in ourselves is needed is through the Bible:**2 Timothy 3:**

- 16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
- 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Or, through the ministry:

Back to the anointing analogy. It is not the minister that is healing. He is merely a conduit.

It is the same for sermons. A component of almost every sermon is **correction**, no matter what the subject. [We do it for the Perfecting of the saints] But these are not my words that I speak. So why would you be offended by God's Words? I would not know the things that I do unless I had read them out of the Bible.

Now, we can rest assured and take comfort in the fact that We are not the first to go through this.

Jesus Christ suffered an ignominious death, and was tested in all points:

Hebrews 4:

- 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.

Others went through this:

This is the "Faith Chapter."

Hebrews 11:

- 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:
- 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,
- 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
- 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

We need to keep things in perspective.

Hebrews 11:

- 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

Notice the trials in verse 37

Hebrews 11:

- 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword [Isaiah's fate]. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—
- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.
- 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,
- 40 God having provided something better for us, **that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**

God wants to achieve the same thing in us. See how He did it in them? Can we learn the lessons that we are to learn without those things, or do we have to go through trials? What are you going through now. By comparison is it that bad? Nonetheless it is enough to accomplish the perfecting of the saints.

We are to have to go through it as well:**Romans 8:**

- 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.
- 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Acts 14:

- 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,
- 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through **many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God."

This is true for us.

From the time of Jesus Christ to Paul all the way to the End-time church, all have to go through trials.

Revelation 3:

- 18** I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire [trials], that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

One of the definitions for the word trial is “Assay”; Expound: assay is to find how much gold there is vs how much impurities. If we are successful in dealing correctly with our trials now there is a chance that we can avoid this.

Revelation 3:

- 10** Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Some of the Church of God will have to go through the tribulation.

We will survive:

1 Corinthians 10:

- 11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
- 12** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
- 13** No temptation [trial] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation [trial] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

We just need to Endure with patience:

Luke 8:

- 13** But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the **word with joy**; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation [trials] fall away.
- 14** Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.
- 15** But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

There is an element of enduring expressed in this verse.

And Keep doing what we are supposed to do:**Acts 20:**

- 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,
- 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many **tears and trials** which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;
- 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

God can and will deliver us:**2 Peter 2:**

- 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of **temptations** and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

If we do this then our trials will produce a great outcome:

We see a process here.

Romans 5:

- 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- 3 And not only *that*, but we also **glory in tribulations**, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

Is this where we are? Do we find ourselves here? God will allow trials to continue till we get it – Thank God! Think positively about this process.

Romans 5:

- 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Trials and Corrections are there:

Since there is a reason He will continue to do it until we learn it.

1 Corinthians 3:

- 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.
- 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward – the Kingdom of God.

So, brethren when we find ourselves in the midst of various trials let's make sure that **we count it all joy**.

End: Shaped Through Adversity / Count it all Joy