



Update

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Count it all joy! Really?

One of the two courses I will be teaching next semester at the Calvary Bible Institute is the Book of James. Some of these men and women will go into full-time Christian service as a vocation. Others will start businesses or work for someone else and each will make a good citizen bringing honor to God by the way they live.

I have learned through mission trips into other countries and going into prisons that the Bible covers all human need. It is an honor to be a part of releasing CBI students into society to make our country what it should be in God's sight.

For this newsletter, I want to share a taste of the Book of James. When James said in 1:2 *to count it all joy*, the teaching behind that statement is at the center of all daily living. Does anybody live without some adversity or trials coming along and taking the joy out of life?

So, what is joy? Joy is a gift from God and is a quality in your spirit that produces a calm delight deep within your heart. When we "enjoy" something, it means we are in a state of joy. Joy means we are experiencing blessing in our spirit as well as in our mind and emotions. There is no sense of loss and there is a deep satisfaction. It makes life worth living. Strange as it may seem, experiences of sorrow enlarge our capacity to experience joy, so it turns out that God has purpose even in adversity and trials.

It can set up this way—you are a Christian who has sought the Lord and He has given you a direction and vision for your life. Yes, God can change your direction to a new

job or purpose He has for you, but until He speaks that change, you need to stay with what He has given you. But adversity arrives, and you are challenged to stay with the vision God has given you. You are challenged to stay steadfast in the tough situation. This is when it is all important to be open to God to receive His wisdom.

To stay open to God, you must live in a state of worship. ***One is in a state of worship when everything he knows about himself is surrendered to everything he knows about God at this point in his growth.*** Worship is an internal attitude and condition of mind and spirit that can exist 24/7 and is more than



the outward action of praise and adoration to the Lord. You can be in a state of worship mowing the lawn, driving your car, washing dishes, or any number of things that are morally right. Worship is surrender to Sovereign God, it's being aware of His Presence, and it's in His Presence that we experience joy. (Ps 16:11)

Any number of things can happen to take our joy, and when it happens, life is no longer enjoyable. The key to counting all things joy is ***to release the control of the outcome*** of what is going on in the adversity. To be "filled" with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that He can sustain joy and give wisdom on how to move forward, despite the temporary setback.

We can let circumstances dictate our joy or we can allow His joy to fuel us in the circumstance.

A simple illustration, I was working on the Book of James handout for the students. I clicked with the mouse on a function in the word processor and nothing happened. I clicked and clicked—it was here click, there click, and everywhere click, click! With each click I was getting more frustrated because "I was in charge of the outcome." My joy was gone! Frustration and joy cannot coexist. Then I thought, "Count it all joy,

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you need wisdom on what to do!” When I paused and released the outcome to the Lord, the joy returned. By being calm, I could think of possibilities. Rebooting the computer fixed the problem.

In addition to teaching the Book of James, I am writing an expanded version of James for the students, more of a commentary than a translation. My goal is to provide practical application and understanding of first-century teaching for today’s lifestyle. We need to understand the context of James’ writing and what people were going through that needed his instruction and encouragement.

The commentary I’m sharing in this newsletter is for James 1:2, *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials....* Perhaps if the Apostle James had known we would be reading his letter to the twelve tribes of the Jewish Christians who had been forced to leave Israel, he would have included current event explanations. Or a short teaching. If he would have, maybe it would read like this:

Brethren I know how frightening and disturbing the persecution was to you and your families after the martyrdom of Stephen. It was so intense that it required you to relocate and to find a way to live in other countries. Now even in those countries, the living conditions have become a series of trials, and those trials are severely challenging your faith.

The way to meet the spiritual challenges of these trials is to count them all joy. Not that they make you happy but remember that God can produce good even in trials. If you don’t consider them joyful, your feelings will tell you the wrong

thing, and the threatening circumstances will overpower you. The trials will defeat you and draw you away from a living, peaceful relationship with the Lord.

Those things over which we have no control can become our own worst enemy. When we set in our heart how things should be, but it isn’t happening that way, we struggle to control the outcome and lose our joy. In this struggle we can find ourselves in angry reaction. At times that anger will develop into rage. If in our frantic effort to control where things are going in our life, we think the rage will melt down everyone to get our way, but we are foolish. It won’t happen.

When you find yourself frustrated and angry, you can even hate the person, object, or situation that has taken your joy. If this attitude remains unchecked, and with your joy gone, you open the door for bitterness to gain the upper hand. Life becomes miserable. Your rage will not work the righteousness of God in your situation.

People can be willing tools of the devil, and we may become exasperated with their nonsense. If on a deep level we are trying to control them, it is as useless as it is to try and catch our own shadow. We cannot have control over them in the



that anger will develop into rage. If in our frantic effort to control where things are going in our life, we think the rage will melt down

outcome of things. But a day will come that the Lord will set things straight—things here are temporary.

Brethren, when a trial suddenly happens that is not supposed to happen, and you are boxed in a tight place, like you are now, the emotions you feel can be difficult, harsh, and unyielding. This is when you are greatly tempted to act in your own strength and make something happen to restore a peaceful life.

Don’t react.

When we are in reaction to feelings and situations, we can behave foolishly, acting like a little god who is in control of the outcome and use of everything in our lives. If this happens, we are making something greater than our relationship with the Lord. That makes the thing greater than God Himself.

When it comes to trials, it is not a matter of “if” a trial will come, it is a matter of “when” it comes.

So how do you “count it all joy”? Brethren, you count it joy when you release the control of the outcome of things to the Holy Spirit, thus you have re-joyed (rejoiced) and have returned to the joy of life-producing satisfaction deep within.

*You will return to joy when you thank God **in** the situation and **for** the situation and release the control of the outcome to the Holy Spirit.*

You must be responsible to change whatever you have the power to change, but you absolutely must leave the rest to the Lord.

With everything surrendered to God once again, you are free to rejoice in the Lord always. In peace you can wait on God to provide you with a solution or to provide for your true need—in spite of the adverse circumstances in your life. ✨

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