

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

January 13, 2019

"It Is Too Much"

by Frank Himmel

The kingdom of Israel divided after Solomon's death. Solomon's son Rehoboam ruled over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and Jeroboam became king over the remainder of Israel.

Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:26-28).

Jeroboam told Israel that God requires too much. That devilish notion remains to our day.

Jesus plainly said, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16a). Yet the vast majority of modern preachers say we are saved before and apart from baptism; to make baptism a condition of salvation is to require too much!

The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). Some want salvation, but they want no part of any church. To them, that is too much!

Jesus instructed His disciples to assemble on the first day of the week to remember His death, worship God, and encourage one another (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25).

Evidently, setting aside just a few hours a week for the Lord on a regular basis is asking too much for some church members.

The first day of the week also calls for giving in proportion to our prosperity (1 Corinthians 16:2). While no percentage is specified, some seem to think that anything beyond a token few dollars is too much.

Some think the Lord asks too much at home, as well. When questioned about the lawfulness of divorce, Jesus responded, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:6b). He then added, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery" (v. 9, ESV). Earlier He taught, "Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32b). To increasing numbers of people, living with your spouse for a lifetime or foregoing remarriage following a divorce is asking *way* too much!

Ancient Israel welcomed Jeroboam's less demanding provisions. God did not. "Now this thing became a sin..." (1 Kings 12:30). Do not be deceived. ■



Joy in Trials

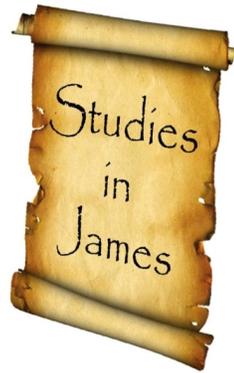
by Frank Himmel

James's opening instruction is to consider it all joy when we encounter trials (1:2). That is obviously not our natural response! Why should we do that? How can we do that?

“Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (vv. 3-4).

People tend to equate joy with fun, ease, comfort, and security. Bible writers present a radically different view. Genuine joy is not in one's circumstances; it is in one's relationship with God and therefore in one's character. The more we are like Christ, the more joy we have.

Just as recliners do not build muscle, comfortable circumstances do not build character. Growth requires *testing*. Peter used this word of gold being tested by fire (1 Peter 1:7). In metallurgy, precious metals are heated to the melting point to remove impurities and produce a desired shape. James says fiery trials can do that for our character. That is why they should be viewed with joy.



Endurance or perseverance is the desired outcome. In a parallel passage, Paul wrote, “We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4). James reminds us, however, that the final outcome is not automatic: we must “let endurance have its perfect result.”

The “perfect result” of endurance is two-fold. Obviously, it includes faithfulness until the end of our journey. We want to be able to say with Paul, “I have finished the course” (2 Timothy 4:7). But James also notes that the “perfect result” of endurance is that we be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If we endure but do so with worry, sadness, or bitterness, we still have much room for improvement.

Too many people make trials an occasion for rebellion against God. They reason that a loving, caring God should not allow such. James takes the opposite view. Through our trials, God is graciously molding us into the kind of people we ought to be. Our joy is thus not some phony bravado but a satisfied acceptance of God's will.

Gordon Potteat rightly observed, “Christians are not distinguished by their immunity from the trials which are common to mankind, but in the way they meet them and what they make out of them” (*The Interpreter's Bible*).

None of this, of course, is easy. We must work at it. And we must pray about it, James's next subject. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Bruce Williams	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Sam Walters
OPENING PRAYER	Mike Zachry	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Howard Moore	
CUP	Adam Gibson	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Stachys McLeod	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Singing
CLOSING PRAYER	John Baucom	Kerry Gray