

Lord, Please Change My Circumstances. “No!”

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. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:2-5 NKJV)

One of the most difficult scriptures to understand is James 1:2 which admonishes us to “count it all joy when we fall into various trials...” For one thing it says “fall into” which implies that I am not in control. And being the red blooded American male that I am, control is a serious consideration!

But the challenge is spelled out by the phrase “testing of your faith.” It is in times of trial, often in the form of spiritual darkness, that my faith is tested. Am I going to run away or maybe pray that God will deliver me out of my circumstances? The way to glorify God and grow in my faith is to endure patiently whatever circumstance, favorable or unfavorable, that He has allowed me to be in. I often hear believers asking for more faith while they fail to exercise the measure of faith that has already been given them.

The better thing to pray for is more wisdom! My prayer sounds something like this; ***“Dear Father, in Your sovereignty you have allowed me to be in this circumstance. Since I know that you don’t do anything without a reason, I ask for the wisdom to learn what you would have me to learn from this trial.”***

In My Utmost for His Highest, Oswald Chambers says this:

“At times God puts us through the discipline of darkness to teach us to heed Him. Song birds are taught to sing in the dark, and we are put into the shadow of God’s hand until we learn to hear Him. “What I tell you in darkness”—watch where God puts you into darkness, and when you are there, keep your mouth shut. Are you in the dark just now in your circumstances, or in your life with God? Then remain quiet. If you open your mouth in the dark, you will talk in the

wrong mood: darkness is the time to listen. Don't talk to other people about it; don't read books to find out the reason of the darkness, but listen and heed. If you talk to other people, you cannot hear what God is saying. When you are in the dark, listen, and God will give you a very precious message for someone else when you get into the light.¹

We all love to use the scripture that says, ***"all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*** But I think that at times we translate that to mean God is working to merely make us happy. Look at the following verse;

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29 NKJV)

So God's purpose is to strengthen our faith that we may be conformed into the image of His Son Jesus Christ. And we all know that His earthly life was not pain free. ***"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."*** (Hebrews 5:8 NKJV)

So if you are in an uncomfortable and seemingly unfavorable circumstance today, don't waste time asking God to change it. The truth is that He won't until we learn what it is that He is teaching us. Instead ask God for wisdom to learn what He is trying to teach us and sufficient faith to glorify Him in the midst of it.

Jim Freed

¹ Chambers, O. (1986). *My utmost for his highest: Selections for the year*. Grand Rapids, MI: Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering.