

Vision | Feeling Our Feelings

James 1:1-8

Scripture Reading:

[1] James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:

Greetings.

[2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (ESV)

Text:

[1] James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

- James, the half-brother of our Lord, leader of the Jerusalem church
- Writing to scattered believers that James sees as the New Israel;

[2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

- “Count it all joy”
 - Doesn't mean to think positive – it's not telling us to be dishonest with ourselves, our feelings.
 - It means we should evaluate/**assess** our trials with differently. But how?
 - The world tells us that all **hardship is bad; to be escaped.**
- Implication #1: “Trials” imply more than randomness; it implies a behind-the-scenes cosmic director. It doesn't say “circumstances,” but brings every hardship under the authority of God – because God is the one who is trying us. So **we must ask why God is trying us.**
 - **C.S. Lewis on why God changes us:**

“To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God: because He is what He is, His love must, in the nature of things, be impeded or repelled by certain stains in our present character, and because He already loves us He must labor to make us lovable.” – C.S. Lewis¹
- Implication #2: To reach for joy implies that **sadness and fear are the emotional norm during trials**, that sadness is often near. And this means we need to know how to walk through sadness authentically if we are going to cultivate joy.
- **Chip Dodd on joy/gladness:² [What I'm learning about feelings]**

¹ Lewis. C.S. The Problem of Pain. 48. 1962 Reprint.

² Dodd, Chip. The Voice of the Heart: A Call to Full Living (Kindle Locations 849-862). Sage Hill Resources. Kindle Edition.

- We can't authentically experience gladness/joy unless we know how to fully interact with the painful feelings associated with our trials — *hurt, sadness, fear, anger, loneliness, guilt, & shame.*
 - Feel your feelings – Suppression = escape (escape → medicating)
 - What is sadness? “Sadness is the feeling that speaks to how much you value what is missed, what is gone, and what is lost. It also speaks of how deeply you value what you love, what you have, and what you live.” — Chip Dodd
 - “Sadness gives us the gift of valuing and honoring life.”
 - “Sadness speaks directly to our need to grieve for what is gone. If we grieve genuinely, we eventually come to accept life on life’s terms... However, if we can’t acknowledge how much what we’ve lost means to us, then sadness will deepen because the need to honor our losses with grief doesn’t go away.”
 - Acknowledging your sadness is to acknowledge yourself.
- **Why address sadness?**
- Triumphalism is not one of our values.
 - > The pressure to get excited about every initiative we roll out.
 - > That if I'm not always happy about everything, something is wrong...”I'm not a team player.”
 - There are wonderful things that God has called our church to accomplish for his glory. But more than accomplishing “things” for his glory, we want to simply *be* for his glory...a called out people...the New Israel that reflects his love, his mercy, and his truth.

- So we want to cultivate a textured community of believers.
 - > We don't want a community made up of plastic smiles.
 - > We want to be a place where it's okay to speak honestly about the hurts that are weighing down our hearts.
 - > We don't want a community made up of tailored suits and beautiful dresses that conceal deep brokenness.
- **It's okay if you're feeling some fear or sadness around us going to two services. That doesn't make us angry or defensive.**
- **But how do we find joy in every trial that comes against us?...**

[3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Here's **how to think of trials – how to cultivate joy**: they produce steadfastness
- But steadfastness in what? IN CHRIST (testing of your faith...in Christ)
- Implication #1: Is the development of steadfastness possible without trials?
- Implication #2: God loves us and wants us to navigate this world skillfully.

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will

receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- Wisdom for what? To learn how to grow in steadfastness in a way that helps you navigate the unique complexities of your own life.
 - Comment:
 - > New series on the Book of Proverbs beginning Sept. 17
 - > Proverbs is about cultivating the accumulated wisdom to live well in this broken world.
 - > James is a New Testament version of Proverbs.
- So we ask God for wisdom — we aren't passive in learning wisdom
 - And we ask confidently and consistently. We *pursue* wisdom.
 - Proverbs 3:13-15: “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.”
 - James 1:12 (a proverb): “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”