“How To Profit From Your Problems”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 2 of 15 – January 13, 2013

 James 1:2-6

Today, we're going to look at, "How to Profit, From Your Problems." James, is **the most practical book**, . . . in the New Testament. It is the, . . . "How To" manual, . . . for the Christian life.

When you write a letter, you normally figure, that the guy is going to warm up, and ease into, his subject. He's going to have a few preliminaries, opening remarks, . . . and, then, move into, the message. But, James drops a bomb, . . . in verse 2. He announces, who he is, . . . and, then, in verse, 2 he says, “*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, . . . whenever you face trials, of many kinds.”*

How would you, like to get a letter, . . . like that? "This is a letter, from me . . . You got problems? Be happy!" How? There's no way, . . . I could be happy. You don't know, . . . my situation. The key, is the phrase, . . . *"because you know."*

*James 1:2 – "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials, of many kinds, . . . because, you know, that the testing of your faith, . . . develops perseverance."* Your attitude, . . . is determined, . . . by your understanding. Rejoicing is not, . . . just, positive thinking, . . . but, based on, some facts, of life.

Four facts of life, . . . from James, that will help you, with the problem, you're going through, . . . right now:

**I. FOUR "FACTS OF LIFE", . . . YOU NEED TO KNOW**

**1. Problems are . . . inevitable**. Scripture doesn't say, *"****If****, . . you encounter problems, consider it joy", . .* but, **whenever** -- count on it, . . you're going to have problems. If you don't have problems, . . check your pulse. It is a fact of life. Jesus said, *"In the world, . . . you will, have tribulation."* Peter said, *"Don't be surprised, when you have problems."* Count on it. Problems are not, an elective, in life. They are, . . . a required course. You don't get out of them, by saying, . . . you don't want to have, . . . any problems. Nobody's, . . . immune.

\*\* I knew a guy, one time, . . . who was very naïve. He used to, pray for trials. He has since learned, you don't need, to pray for trials. But, he thought, he needed, to pray for trials. The next day, . . . his car’s motor, blew up. Scott Peck's book, “The Road Less Traveled”, . . . the first sentence is, "Life is difficult." It is. It is inevitable, . . . that, you will, . . . have problems, in life.

**2. Problems are . . . unpredictable**. James says, *". . . whenever, you face problems . . ."* The word "face", in Greek, . . . is "peripipto." It literally means, "to fall into, . . . unexpectedly." It is the same word, . . . used in the story, of the Good Samaritan, where the man fell, among thieves -- it was, unexpected. Trials are, not planned.

We seldom, can anticipate, the problems, we're going to experience, in life. That's probably, good, . . . because, if we could anticipate them, . . . we'd run the other way, and we wouldn't get the benefit, from them. We don't plan, to have a flat tire, or a crisis. They are unplanned, and unpredictable -- when we least, expect them. That's what makes, a problem, a problem. Often, it's inconvenient, when you fall into it suddenly.

**3. Problems are . . . of many kinds**. They come, in all shapes, and sizes. One thing, about problems, . . . you don't get bored, with them. There are, a wide variety, of them. Have you ever tried, to match paint? The word in the Greek, for "many kinds" is literally, "multi-colored." There are problems, of many shades, and varieties.

They vary in intensity, . . . they vary in variety, . . . they vary in duration. Some are, . . . minor inconveniences. Some are, . . . major crises. We have all kinds, . . . and shapes, of problems. They come in, . . . more, than 31 flavors. Some problems, are custom made, and you know it. Sign I saw, once: "Into every life, some rain must fall, . . . but, this is ridiculous." Lots of varieties, . . . of problems, . . . in our life.

**4. Problems are . . . purposeful**. They have, . . . a purpose. Pain, can be, productive. Pressure, produces. Suffering, can accomplish, . . . something. It has value, . . . in our lives. What value?

**\*\* Three purposes of problems, . . . in your life:**

**1) Problems purify, . . . my faith.** James, uses the word, "testing", as in testing, gold and silver. You would heat them up, very hot, . . . until, the impurities -- the dross -- was burned off. Job said *"He has tested me, through the refining fire, . . . and, I have come out, as pure gold."*

The first things, trials do, . . . is test, . . . our faith. They, purify us. Christians are a lot like, . . . tea bags. You don't know, what's inside of them, . . until, you drop them, . . in hot water. Then, you know. Your faith develops, . . . when things don't go, as planned. Your faith develops, . . . when you don't feel, like doing what's right. It purifies, your faith. Christians are like steel; when they're tested, they come out stronger.

Have you ever, been in a test, . . . for a period of time? It’s a course, . . in character development. God is much more interested, . . . in, building disciples, . . . than, anything else. Problems, . . . purify, our faith.

**2) Problems fortify, . . . our patience.** *". . . the testing of your faith, . . . develops perseverance."*

He's talking about, . . . staying power, not a passive patience, . . . but, staying power, endurance. The ability, to keep on, keeping on, . . . the ability, to hang in there. The Greek here, is literally, "the ability, to stay, . . under pressure."

We don't like pressure, . . . and, we do everything we can, to avoid it. We run from it, take drugs, drink alcohol, go to Disneyworld, . . . anything, to get away, from pressure. But, God uses problems, in our lives, . . . to teach us, . . . how to handle pressure, . . . how to never, . . . give up.

There was a time, in my life, . . . I prayed for patience, . . . and, the problems, got worse. Finally, after a while, I realized, I was a lot more patient, than when I first started out. How does God, . . teach you, patience? By everything, . . . going, your way? No. God teaches you patience, in traffic jams, in grocery lines, . . . the waiting periods, of life.

We live in, a comfortable, and convenient, society. Everybody wants it, now. If we can't have it now, forget it. Endurance, today, is a rare quality. Lombardi said, "When the going gets tough, . . the tough get going."

**3) Problems sanctify, my character.** They make me, . . . like Jesus. They help me, . . mature. They help me, . . to grow. *"The testing of your faith, produces perseverance, that you may be mature, and complete, . . not lacking, anything."*

That's, God's, long range, goal. His ultimate purpose, . . . is maturity. God wants you, . . to grow up. He wants you, . . . to mature. In the Christian life, . . . character, is the bottom line. So many Christians, . . . have absolutely, no idea, . . . of God's agenda, in their life. They don't know, what's happening, . . . and, as a result, . . . they are overwhelmed, . . . by their problems.

\*\* **God's number one purpose, in your life, . . . is** **to make you, . . . like Jesus Christ**. God is much more interested, in building my character, . . . than, in making me, comfortable. If God is going to make me like Jesus, . . . He's going to take me, through the things, . . . Jesus went through. There were times, when Jesus was lonely, fatigued, . . . tempted, to be depressed, and discouraged.

\*\* The Bible says, there are two ways, . . . that God makes us, like Jesus:

1) Through, the Word of God. John 17:17 – *"Sanctify them, through Thy truth. Thy Word, is truth."* James 1:22-25 – *"The Word, makes us, like Jesus"* It builds our character, . . . matures us. But, even if, you read the Bible, two hours a day, how many hours of your life, are you not, reading God's word? God demands, even more, . . . in the second way.

2) Through, the circumstances of life. Here's where James, hits it right, on the head. So many Christians, say, "Everything was going great, when I first became, a believer. Then, all of these problems came. Maybe God, . . doesn't love me. Maybe, I'm not a Christian, . . . not really saved. Maybe, I've missed the boat." You are exactly, where God wants you. You're in, a character course. He's making you, . . . like Jesus.

Romans 8:28 – *"We know that, all things work together, for good"* [not, all things, are good, . . . but, they work together, . . for good] *if we love God, and are called, according to His purpose."* The secret, of Romans 8:28, . . . is 8:29 - *"For whom, He did foreknow, He did predestine, to become conformed, to the image, of the Son, of God."* Why do all things, work together, . . for good? In order, to make me, . . like Christ.

What about, the fruit of the spirit? How does God teach us, . . the fruit of the spirit? By putting us, in the exact opposite, situation. If God wants to teach you love, . . . He puts you around, . . . unlovely people. If He wants to teach you joy, . . . He puts you in times of tragedy, and sadness, . . so, you will learn joy, in the situation. Peace? God puts you, around chaos. The dinner's burning, the telephone rings, the cat grabs the dog, . . . the kid's diaper is dirty -- that's where, . . . you learn peace.

It's too easy, to be peaceful, . . . laying on the beach, in Florida. Anybody, can do that. Patience? Through, . . . times of waiting. Ephesians says *"We are, God's workmanship"* -- God wants to make a masterpiece, out of you. He wants us, . . . to be mature, complete, not lacking anything. (Teleos) That is a picture, . . of Jesus Christ. That's what, . . . He wants you, to be like. This is what, . . . you need, to know.

 And, then there are three things, . . . you need to do.

**II. HOW TO HANDLE YOUR PROBLEMS**

**1. Rejoice**. *V. 2 – "Consider it pure joy, whenever, you face trials . . ."*  Don't misunderstand, . . . what he's saying. He's not saying, "Fake it. Put on a plastic smile, pretend, be a Polyanna." God never asks you, to deny, reality. He doesn't mean, some kind of psychological pump-up, based on nothing. He's also, not talking about, masochism. "Good! I get to suffer! I just love, to suffer! I feel so spiritual, when I feel bad!" He's not having, a martyr complex. We don't rejoice, for the problem, . . . we rejoice, in the problem. We don't thank God, . . . for the situation. Why would I thank God, for evil? But, . . . I thank God, . . . in the situation.

One of the most, misunderstood verses, in the Bible is, I Thessalonians 5:18 – *"In everything, give thanks, for this, is the will of God, concerning you, in Christ Jesus."* If you want to know God's will, for your life, it's simple. *"In everything, . . . give thanks."* It does not say, "For everything, give thanks." Why should I thank God, . . . for giving me leukemia? "Thank You, for that accident, . . . Thank You, for that war, . . Thank You, that I just lost, my mother." No! What kind of God, . . . do you think, He is?

It says *"In everything give thanks."* Why? It means, we can thank God, . . because, we know, that He can even, take the bad, in our lives, and turn it around, and bring good out of it. I don't care, where your problems, come from. You may, have caused them, yourself. The devil, may have caused them. They may be, a problem, that society, has brought on you. But, the source of your problems, . . . doesn’t, really matter. God can use them all, . . . for your growth, . . . and, His glory.

What makes, the difference? Your attitude. It says, *"Consider it, pure joy, . . . "* The word, "consider", means, a deliberate look at. It means, to evaluate, . . to make up your mind, . . once and for all. While I'm living, in the present, I look to the forward benefit, . . . of this problem. Consideration, . . . is a choice.

Although, I cannot control the circumstances, that happen to me, in life, . . . I can control, how I will respond, to them. Victor Frankl, . . . the Jewish psychologist, who spent time in the Nazi concentration camp, in Germany said, . . . "They stripped me, . . . naked. They took everything -- my wedding ring, watch. I stood there naked, and all of a sudden realized, at that moment, that although they could take everything, away from me – my wife, my family, my possessions -- they could not take away, . . . my freedom, . . to choose how, . . . I was going to respond." You choose, . . . to rejoice, . . . in the situation.

Psalm 34:1 – *"I will bless the Lord, at all times. His praise, shall continually be, in my mouth."* Even, when I don't feel like it, . . . even when things, aren't going right. Problems, do not automatically, . . . produce blessings. For some people, . . . problems, destroy them. You'll either, . . . be bitter, . . . or, better.

The difference, between bitter and better, . . . is the letter "i". I make, the difference -- my attitude. Problems, break some people, . . . make some people brittle. It's how, you choose, to respond. Choose, to rejoice.

\*\* From “Strange and Unusual Events” of 1982, from the Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook: Brian Hise, had more than his share, of bad luck, in July. His apartment in Provo, Utah, became flooded, from a broken pipe, in the upstairs apartment. The manager told him, to go out and rent, a water vacuum. That's when he discovered, that his car, had a flat tire. He changed it, and went inside again, and called a friend, for help. From the electric shock, he got from the phone, . . he inadvertently ripped the instrument, from the wall. Before, he could leave the apartment, a second time, a neighbor had to kick the door down, because, water damage, had jammed it tight. While all of this was going on, someone stole Hise's car.

But, it was almost out of gas, so he found the car, a few blocks away, but, had to push it, to a gas station, where he filled up the tank. That evening, Hise attended a military ceremony, at his university. He injured himself severely, when he somehow sat on his bayonet, which had been tossed in the front seat, of the car. Doctors were able to stitch up the wound, . . . but, no one was able to resuscitate, four of Hise's canaries, who were crushed to death, . . . from falling plaster. After Hise slipped on the wet carpet, and badly injured his tailbone, he said he began to wonder if, "God wanted me dead, . . . but, kept missing."

 That's what I call, a good attitude! It is your choice, . . . to rejoice.

**2. Request**. Pray. Of all times, to pray, . . . **pray, when you've, . . . got problems**. What do you, pray about? James 1:5 – *"If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously, to all, without finding fault, and, it will be, . . . given to him."* You ought to, pray for wisdom, . . . when, you're in the middle, of problems.

Why, should I pray, . . . for wisdom? So, you won't waste, the opportunity, to grow. If you don't learn it this time, . . . there will be, one more lap, around the desert! God will give you, another opportunity. Learn from, . . . the problem. We become overwhelmed, when we don't understand, what God's doing. Pray, for wisdom. Wisdom is seeing life, from God's point of view. Pray for wisdom, . . . to understand, the problem.

There is no situation in life, that you can't learn from, . . . if, you have, the right attitude. Don't ask, "Why?", . . . ask, "What?". “Why”, . . is to purify your faith, fortify your patience, sanctify your character. But, ask, "What do You want to teach me, . . . in this problem, . . . Lord? What do You, want me to learn? What characteristics, . . . can I develop?"

**3. Relax**. Trust God, . . . to know, what's best, for your life. Co-operate with His purpose, . . . so, you don't short circuit, the process. That's what's called, faith. *"When he asks, he must believe, and not doubt."* Relax. Let, God work. We don’t know, what tomorrow, will bring our way. We don’t know, . . . what the future holds, . . . but, we do know, . . . who, holds the future.

\*\*\*\* My heart breaks, when I think about, the heartache, and the pain, that so many people, go through, day in, and, day out. There are some people, even in this church, . . that, are going to be, in God's Hall of Fame. You have maintained, a sweet spirit, . . . in the odds, of incredible pressure – things, that people did to you, . . . situations, you have been living with. It's not always easy, to have a joyful heart, . . . in the middle of problems. Even when you want, to have a joyful attitude, . . . it's still, difficult.

That's why, . . . **you need to pray for two things**: **Wisdom**, to understand, the trial, . . . and, **Faith**, to endure, the trial. You need them, both. James says, you need wisdom, to know what's going on, . . . and, faith, to hang in there, . . . and, never, never give up. You're never a failure, . . . until, you quit.

God says, the devil, wants to use problems, . . . to defeat you, . . . but, God wants to use those problems, . . . to develop you. Which, . . . will it be?

Some of you, are going through some tough times, . . . right now. It's pretty hard. God cares. He cares about you, very much. God sees everything, you're going through. He's got, your number! The very hairs of your head, are numbered. He knows exactly, . . . where you are. He hasn't lost, your number! He cares.

God has the power, . . . to do something, about that problem. He could change it, . . . in a snap. He's a miracle, working God. Why, doesn't He? Because, . . . there's a greater purpose. The greater purpose, . . . is what, . . . He wants to do, in you.

God is more interested, in building your character, . . . than, in making life comfortable. Once, you've learned those qualities, He may be free, to remove, that situation. But, there are some things in life, we're never going to be free from, on this side of Heaven. They are thorns, in the flesh. We will deal with them, and carry them. Nothing comes into your life, . . . without the Heavenly Father's permission.

There is a fantastic promise, . . . in James 1:12 – *"Blessed is the man, who perseveres, under trial. When he has stood the test, . . . he will receive the crown of life, that God has promised, to those who love Him."*

God says, there will be, . . . a reward. I don't think, when we get to heaven, the rewards will go, to the pastors, and evangelists, and the Billy Grahams. I think the rewards, will go to the people, who quietly, put up with difficult situations, and developed the character, of Jesus Christ, in their life. He says, “There will be, . . . a crown, of life. Cast all your cares, upon Him.”

There are many of you, who know the Lord, but you're going through, a tough time, right now. Ask the Lord, to give you the courage, . . . and, the choice, to rejoice.

“How To Profit From Your Problems”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 2 of 15

James 1:2-6

James 1:2-6 – “*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”*

How Can I Be Positive Under Pressure?

**I. FOUR "FACTS OF LIFE" YOU NEED TO KNOW**

 *“Consider it pure joy . . . because you know.”*

1. PROBLEMS ARE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"... whenever you face trials ..."*

2. PROBLEMS ARE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"... whenever you face trials ..."*

 "peripipto": fall into

3. PROBLEMS ARE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"... trials of many kinds ..."*

4. PROBLEMS ARE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"Realize that they come ... to produce in you..."*

**THREE PURPOSES OF PROBLEMS (vs.3-4)**

\* Problems purify my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"You know that the testing of your faith..."*

\* Problems fortify my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"... the testing ... develops perseverance..."*

\* Problems sanctify my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything!"*

God's #1 Purpose in my life: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 For further study: Romans 5:3-5, 8:28-29

**II. HOW TO HANDLE YOUR PROBLEMS**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials..."* (vs. 2)

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."* (vs. 5)

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt"* (vs.6)

Two things to pray for:

1.

2.

The result: James 1:12 – *"Blessed is the man, who perseveres, under trial. When he has stood the test, . . . he will receive the crown of life, that God has promised, to those who love Him."*