

Series: How to Live as a Christian – Part 1

Benefit From Your Trials!

James 1:1-4 ESV

3rd Sunday of Easter – 2013

Sunday, April 14 at 8:00 & 10:45; Monday, April 15 at 7 PM

Series Introduction – How is a Coach like God’s Word?

Dear friends, the word “coach” comes from the word “stagecoach,” which – *at one time* – was the best way to move people or goods from one place to another. So a coach moves his players from one skill level to another.

As a coach tries to **change** his players, *so the Word of God tries to **change** all people!* First, the Word changes us **from condemned by our sins to saved through Christ**; second, the Word changes how we live every moment of every day.

When a coach is no longer changing his players, *he is replaced!* When the Word is no longer changing Christians, *they need to be called to repentance!* Part of the reason why James wrote his letter is because *the Word was no longer having its way with the Christians who heard it.*

Most people are in one of these three categories:

- In Christ and mature – Thus trusting in Jesus as Savior *and faithfully doing the Word!*
- In Christ but immature – Thus trusting in Jesus as Savior *but not faithfully doing the Word!*
- Not yet in Christ – *Thus not trusting in Jesus as Savior!*

May God use this series to grow us up in Christ!

1. **The Relationship Emphasized by James:** **1 James, a servant [lit. slave] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...**
 - a. James had three options:
 - i. I’m a half-brother of Jesus – *an amazing earthly reality!*
 - ii. I’m a forgiven child of God – *a blessed eternal reality!*
 - iii. I’m a slave of God and Jesus – *the relationship that influenced how he lived!* Therefore, James constantly sought to know and do THEIR WILL – *not his own!* That same attitude is proper for every Christian: ^{NAS} **2 Corinthians 5:15** “...and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.” Do those words describe YOUR life?
2. **The Recipients of the Letter:** **1b To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.** Thus the recipients were Jewish Christians who were living outside of Israel. James wrote them to call them to repent, *even as I write to dispersed members of Bethlehem to call them to repent.* Such a call becomes necessary when people:
 - a. Stop having daily contact with God’s Word!
 - b. Lose their desire to attend Bible class!
 - c. Become hit and miss in Divine Service!
 - d. Disconnect hearing the Word from doing the Word? Then, such people begin to:

- i. **Believe** their ideas over God's Word!
- ii. **Talk** faith but don't live it!
- iii. **Live** for self rather than for Christ!

Therefore, may God use this series to ♦get our attention, ♦move us to repent, and ♦cause us to be doers of His Word!

3. **Stop Complaining, God Has a Plan**: Did God have a plan ✦ when the Israelites found themselves backed up against the Red Sea – *with no apparent escape* – and Pharaoh's army coming to destroy them? **YES!** God used what *appeared to be foolishness* to destroy Pharaoh's whole army! Did God have a plan ✦ when Jesus was arrested, beaten, and crucified? **YES!** *That is how God defeated sin, death, and the devil!* God's ways can be *unusual* and even *incomprehensible to us*; nevertheless, *God always has a good plan* – even when things don't seem right or feel right to us.

- a. God uses trials to mature our faith: **Count it all joy, my brothers** [*my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (also in 16, 19)*], **when you meet** [*encounter*] **trials of various kinds** [*Why?*], **for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.** // Since the testing of our faith *strengthens our faith*, our trials can be viewed with joy! They are like *spiritual vegetables* – we may not like their texture or taste, **but they are for our good!**
- b. God has a plan, so don't give up: **And let steadfastness** [*endurance, perseverance, patience*]

have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. // If the trial is light, *the benefit of enduring will be small*. But if the trial is heavy, *the benefit will be great!* So, let us not complain *but count it all joy!*

Conclusion:

For our entrance into heaven, let us focus on God's forgiveness in Christ!

For our living here on earth, let us focus on doing God's Word!

And all God's people said: **Amen!**