

TRIALS

By C.A. Musser

Traditionally, we think of January 1st as a good time to make resolutions and set our goals for the year. But this morning I woke up thinking February first is a good day to work on those good habits I've been meaning to get in order. I got myself out of bed, put the dog out, brought the paper in, started to woodstove, ran the dishwasher and made a sour cream apple cake and iced cappuccino for breakfast, muttering to myself about the state of the house (as in looking like Kansas after a tornado, and even the little dog too needed a haircut). I am not quite sure why nobody seems to notice the dishwasher is empty and the dirty dishes are overflowing the sink! But I digress....

Having done all that, I sat down to have my devotions, and opened to the book of James. I didn't even make it through the first sentence before I needed a major attitude adjustment. ***"This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."*** Ouch. A slave of God. I'm supposed to be working as unto the Lord, as my ministry to Him, not just to my family. And as busy as I am some days, I really can't say I'm a SLAVE to my family or to God, or that I'm really serving all the time with a right attitude. OK, so not only do I have some ACTIONS that I need to get in order, I have some ATTITUDE to work on here. So let's read on....

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way consider it an opportunity for great joy."

Hmmm, troubles come my way. Yea, I'd say so. Scott got laid off in September, the dishwasher broke once and the washing machine broke 3 times, the kids have had car troubles, and I'm in the middle of a major computer snaffoo at the office. I guess I qualify for this verse. Have I always considered it an opportunity for great joy? Nope. I've had some good days and some grumbling days. ***"For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow."*** Oh my. ***"So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete lacking nothing."***

That's a sermon all in itself. Let it grow. Don't fight the circumstances that test our faith, let God use them as tools of growth in our life. Let it grow. Let our reliance on Him grow in every trouble, big and small. Consider trials an opportunity for great joy? There are days when I've cried over my troubles and days when I've laughed over them because it's better than crying. But maybe I need to start asking God to help me find the GREAT JOY in the midst of them. Doesn't that sound wonderful, having great joy when things go wrong, when life doesn't flow smoothly and without problems like we think it should?

In verse 12, ***"God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."*** Almost anyone can endure grudgingly, grumbling and complaining. But God is calling us to patiently endure, and even wants us to find GREAT JOY in the midst of it.

DEAL OR NO DEAL? It's your call.

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