



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE MASTER CARPENTER

WEEK 3— Trusting God in Troubled Times

1. When you are in troubling times in your life, instead of asking “why me”, as a Christian what should you ask of God? Read James 1:2-6. According to this passage, what should your attitude be toward the trials you endure in life? Why? What should you ask God for in these trials? What is wisdom?

Answer – Instead of asking God “why me” or for him to remove trials, we should ask him “what do you want me to learn from this” instead. In James 1, it says that we should have joy in the midst of our trials. Joy is not happiness, joy is the firm belief that even though things might be bad, God has our back and that everything will be alright when we come out the other side of our difficulties. Trials should cause us joy because God is using them to teach us and make us better as Christians. What we should ask God for is the wisdom we need to handle our trials in the way he wants us to. Wisdom is knowing the difference between what is right and wrong, the difference between what is good and what is best, and then choosing to do what is best.

2. Read Philippians 4:8 and then read Romans 8:28. When we are facing troubled times, what promise from Romans 8:28 should we think about? Does this verse say that everything that happens to us will be good? Do you think this is saying the same thing as the passage in James 1 from question 1?

Answer—Romans 8:28 promises that God can cause everything that happens to us to end up being good for us, that is a promise we need to always keep in mind no matter what we are going through. It does not say that everything that happens to us will be good, many times it is bad, but that God can cause even the bad things to turn out for our good. That is why we can have joy in the middle of the bad things that happen, because James 1 tells us that God will teach us good things in the middle of the bad things if we handle them with wisdom.

3. Why could Mary’s situation in being pregnant have been such a devastating situation for her? How is that different from today? Why would this have been unfair to Mary? Did God promise her that he would keep any of these bad things from happening to her? What did he promise in Luke 1:34,35?

Answer— In Mary’s day within the Jewish culture, many bad things could happen to a woman

who got pregnant when she was not married. The worst would have been to have been put to death for having sex outside of marriage. We see that idea in the story of the woman who was caught committing adultery who was brought to Jesus in John 8:3-11. Her parents could have kicked her out of their house. Since she was engaged to Joseph, he could have brought her before the Jewish leaders and condemned her and put her to public shame. She would have lost her ability to attend the local synagogue, which was “church” for the Jews. This is very different from today where pregnancy outside of marriage happens so often, people do not think anything bad about it. Any of these things would have been unfair for Mary because she had not had sex outside of marriage, the Holy Spirit impregnated her and not a man. God never promised Mary that he would keep anything bad from happening to her, she did not know that God was going to send an angel to tell Joseph to marry her anyway and she probably did suffer the scorn of people when they saw she was pregnant. God did promise in Luke 1:34,35 that he would bestow his power on her and that she would be giving birth to the Messiah, God in the flesh.

4. Even though all of these bad things could have happened to her, what was Mary’s response to the situation she found herself in according to Luke 1:46-49? What can we learn from her response?

Answer—Instead of focusing on all of the bad things that could possibly happen because of her pregnancy, she chose to focus on the good that was going to come out of it. She realized that within her was the Savior of the world, the Messiah, and that she would be called blessed by everyone. It was actually a hope for the women of Israel that they would actually be the mother of the Messiah when he finally came. We need to focus on what God is doing in our lives when we go through hard times and how we will benefit from them when God’s power turns them for our benefit.

5. Read 1 Peter 1:6-8. What does this passage tell us happens to our faith as a result of the trials we face? Is this another result that should cause us to have joy as we saw in James 1? Do you think this will happen to our faith if we do not respond in a wise way to the trials we face? What will we receive at the coming of Jesus if we do respond in a wise way to our trials? What does James 1:12 call this?

Answer—When we respond to our trials by trusting in God to handle our trials with his power, the result is that our faith will be strengthened. This happens because when God takes the bad situations in our life and cause them to turn out for our good as Romans 8:28 says, it makes us realize that we can trust God. This causes our faith in God to grow. This is exactly what James 1 tells us should cause us joy. If we do not trust God to give us the wisdom and ability to handle our trials, then our faith will not grow and we will have no reason to have joy. This passage in 1 Peter tells us that if we allow our faith to grow by relying on God in our trials, then we will receive praise, honor, and glory from Jesus. James 1:12 says that we will receive the crown of life. We are rewarded for eternity for enduring our trials in the correct way.

6. Read Hebrews 12:2-4. What does this passage say we should do when we are struggling with the circumstances of life? What will this prevent, according to verse 3?

Answer—We should think about Jesus and everything he endured on our behalf. He knew a very good thing would result from his suffering—our salvation from sin. This will give us the strength to follow his example and prevent us from growing weary and losing heart in the midst of our trials. It will keep us from being depressed and keep us from quitting on God.