

April 11, 2021

A Servant of God

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance...Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

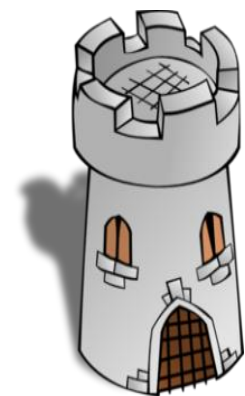
James 1:2-12

How many of us have started a new project, or a new diet, or a new exercise program? How many of us actually continue in or have finished those things? The truth of the matter is, nearly all of us are better at starting things than finishing them. This is especially true if obstacles and challenges make it harder to keep going. If it easier to quit than to go on most of us will choose to quit, although our choice may not be intentional.

The truth is, most of us lack the capacity to persevere especially in the face of trials. James would tell us, I think, that this problem stems from our view of the trials we face. We tend to see trials as inherently unfair. We are trying to exercise to be healthier so those aching muscles or the fact that the gym had to close are, in our minds, fundamentally unfair.

If we choose to fight our way through or sometimes around our trials we will typically become more committed to completing our commitments. Overcoming trials in order to move forward, in fact, almost always strengthens our resolve. As in most of life, it all comes down to our choices and more often than not the source of those choices.

There are within each of us two forces that drive our behaviors. One of those forces is emotion and the other is intellect. Emotion is always a reaction to something outside of us. We see those candy bars that all grocery stores accidently have at checkout. We did not come to the store to buy candy bars. It isn't on our list. But they look so good just like that fruit looked to Eve, and so we buy and eat just like she did.



The other driving force is our God-given intellect; the power to reason out our choices. Jesus shared a parable highlighting this very issue. In Luke 14:28-33, our Lord will refer to this process. **"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate..."** In the same context Jesus talks about a king going out to do battle against superior odds and again he says, **"Will he not first sit down and consider..."**

When we face trials we can respond to them emotionally which will nearly always lead us to view those trials as inherently unfair. James is, however, calling us to apply our capacity to apply reason to the trials we face and to intentionally choose to stand on our faith despite those trials. James is commanding us, yes 'commanding', to change the way we view trials. Instead of grumbling about how unfair our trials and tribulations are we need to use our reason to see that those same trials are making us stronger and ultimately insuring our capacity to persevere.

Gloria found an encouraging saying the other day which I think really sums up our choices. It goes like this: 'Being over weight is hard. Dieting is hard. Choose your hard.' Choose your hard. Remaining faithful is hard. Losing eternal life is hard. Chose your hard. James commands believers to see the trials they face as opportunities to grow and mature. Through the trials our

heavenly Father allows us to experience, he is shaping and strengthening our faithful perseverance so that our calling and election sure.

Today's Trial is 
Tomorrow's Testimony