

James 1:2-8, 1:12-18

The word trial is not used much in our lives. One of the definition of the word trial is a test of the performance, qualities, or suitability of someone or something. Sometime we use the word trial-run implies an exercise before the true execution like for a project, game or an event. I had many trial-runs in my engineering profession such as trial-run for a new computer software execution, a trial-run for an engineering test, or an exercise of simulations to mimic various conditions of a satellite operation in space. However, this word has slightly different meaning in the Bible, and it is a very significant element in Christian lives. That is God let us go through many difficult or challenging time in life for a purpose. Trial is part of our faith building process instead of our general thinking of it as a test (or pre-test) for a final product release or for a mature stage certification. Book of James has a good description and teaching on the subject of Christian trial as well as on temptation.

The book of James is written by James who is the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3). He was also a leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, Gal. 1:19). He was not one of the 12 disciples. The book has many topics and mainly of them are concentrated on faith. It covered faith building through trials, faith must go with work/action, faith leads to true wisdom, faith can resist worldliness, and faith is yield to God's will for tomorrow. It is one of key Bible book that covers the subject about trial and temptation.

1) Trials

Trials are difficult or challenging time in our lives which God allows them to happen.

a) It is not predictable nor controllable. God decides the time, types and level of difficulties.

b) How to face it?

1. Consider it pure joy.... (James 1:2). We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces hope, and hope does not put us in shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom. 5:3-5). It is not saying it is joyful during a trial, but it says we need to think of it as a joyful and good outcome. So that we can look forward to the end. Have a positive attitude when you are in trial.

2. Seek Wisdom from God because God gives generously (James 1:5). Job finally asked God when he was confused and under a great painful trial.
 3. Believe in God - James 1:6 states “when you ask, you must believe and not doubt...”. II Cor. 12:9 states “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me”. Also see Rom. 8:28-29.
 4. Knowing trial itself is our faith maturing process designed by God (James 1:3-4)
- c) What is the outcome?
1. Closer to God – Psm 119:71
 2. Mature and complete, not lacking anything – James 1:4 (faith built)
 3. Reward – crown of life (James 1:12)

2) Temptation

Temptation is something seems easy and comfortable to do, but not God’s will.

- a) You can decide accept it or not. James 1:13 states God does not tempt anyone. James 1:14 further describes it as follows: “but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.”
- b) How to face it?
1. Avoid it – pray to God as “lead us not into temptation...” (Matt. 6:13).
Matt. 26:41 states “watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” Only you are alert and watch for it, in addition to prayer, in order to avoid it. Otherwise, you might not be aware of the temptation and fall into sin.
 2. Be certain that God knows about our weakness and provides a way out - Heb. 4:15 describes Jesus himself had faced temptations, and thus understands what we are going through. Also, God states that He will provide a way out for us as stated in I Cor. 10:13.
 3. Know God and the Bible well – Jesus used the scripture to fight against temptation from the devil (Matt. 4:1-11). Chapters 3 to 5 of James also cover how our understanding and obedience of God’s desire and commands can resist worldliness.
- c) What is the outcome?
1. Yield to temptation leads to spiritual death (separated from God) as stated in James 1:15.
 2. Suffer consequence – An example is David’s sin led to the loss of his son (II Sam. 12:14-31).

We have trials and temptations, and they happen very often. We need to know clearly the differences between trial and temptation. Then, we need to know how to respond in each case and act on it. It is not easy but the outcomes are very different. May God help each one of us!