

Introduction

1. Have you ever heard Chuck Swindoll's famous quote on attitude. (Show)
 - a. *The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home.*
 - b. *The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past, we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string that we have, and that is our attitude.*
 - c. *I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to [us] and 90 percent how [we] react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.¹* (underlined portion read in unison)
2. How develop positive, Christian attitude? Swindoll = choose. James agrees, v. 2. (Show)
 - a. 1st thing James says is that to get thru life you must choose a positive Christian attitude.
 - b. Count in v. 2 (consider, NIV) = a term that refers to mind; = think, consider, regard
 - c. It calls for . . . the conscious acceptance of a definite inner attitude.²
 - d. Right fr. get-go we're told to adopt an attitude of joy in the midst of our problems. How?
3. Principle: *The right Christian attitude is a choice of the right Christian focus.* (Show)
 - I. **WE MUST FOCUS ON THE OPPORTUNITIES, NOT JUST THE OBSTACLES (V. 2).**
 - A. Trials = Obstacles
 1. Trials = obstacles = adversities, hardships, afflictions
 2. These troubles are painful, hard to bear and block the road to our happiness.
 3. Yet says James in the midst of them we are to adopt a joyful outlook. How?
 - B. Joy Is A Figure Of Speech (Metonymy = change of name; Synonym = same name)
 1. Metonymy is where you substitute one thing for another (e.g., effect for cause).
 - a. Angel said, I announce to you a great joy (Lk.2:10). (joy put for birth of Christ)
 - b. Joy is the effect. The cause is what produces the joy - some event/occasion.
 - c. So the idea in James 1:2 is, "Count it all an occasion for joy."
 - d. Whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy.³
 2. This helps explain how we can have a joyful attitude in midst of painful troubles.
 - a. Joy is usually the result of something good happening to us, an opportunity.
 - b. This is what trials are like for Christians. An opportunity we hold in our hands.
 - i. An obstacle is often an unrecognized opportunity.⁴ Change often to always.
 - ii. For believers an obstacle is always an unrecognized opportunity.
 - iii. And this leads to pure joy, NIV. Know what pure joy is?
 - iv. Pure joy is unmixed joy. It is joy w/o bitterness, anger, resentment.

¹Ted Kyle, John Todd, "A Choice Each Day," *A Treasury of Bible Illustrations* Copyright © 1995 AMG International, Inc., Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 2005, QuickVerse.

²D. Edmund Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, p. 71.

³*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, 1996.

⁴Source Unknown. Edythe Draper, "Difficulties," *DRAPER'S book of QUOTATIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN WORLD*. TYNDALE House Publishers, Inc., 1992, Wheaton, IL., Entries 2708-2712.

- v. We may be weeping because of pain, but we have joy because of God's plan.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer = pastor knew share of pain. Nazis imprisoned/murdered. (Show)
- On Sunday April 8, 1945 Bonhoeffer conducted a little service of worship. He found just the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment and the thoughts and resolutions it had brought us. He had hardly ended his last prayer when the door opened and two soldiers entered.⁵ He was hanged the next day. He said this about pain:
 - Pain = a holy angel who shows us treasures that'd otherwise remain forever hidden.*⁶
 - That's where joy comes from. Opportunity for treasures otherwise hidden forever.

II. WE MUST FOCUS ON THE BIG PICTURE, NOT JUST THE LITTLE PICTURE (v.3)

A. Use Camera Illustration

- I have a camera on screen w/zoom lens and I can take two kinds of pictures. (Show)⁷
 - I can take close-up or a long shot by varying the focal length zooming in or out.
 - Or, I can take a broad picture that includes whole sanctuary.
 - Cameras can narrow in or broaden out. Life is like that.
- We can focus on 1 thing (the little picture) or focus on the big picture of lives.
- If focus on little picture obscures rest. If focus on big picture puts in perspective.

B. Verse 3 Is God's Big Picture This is another reason for joy.

1. Troubles test our faith (v. 2).

- In v. 2 uses the word for *trials* means *tests*. "*Distresses that test*" is the idea.
- Peter said that our faith is more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:7).
- Something that important must be tested. Is it real? Is it genuine? Will it last?

2. Troubles prove our faith (v. 3).

- V. 3 uses word for *testing = to learn genuineness of something by examination*.
- Has idea of to test for the purpose of proving. V. 3 could be *act of proving*.
- I have a lovely diamond ring someone gave me. No idea its value until appraised.
 - Do you know how jewelers tell a real diamond from a fake, glass imitation? To test the genuineness of a diamond, jewelers often place it in clear water, which causes a real diamond to sparkle with special brilliance. An imitation stone, on the other hand, will have almost no sparkle at all. When the two are placed side by side, even an untrained eye can easily tell the difference.*⁸
- That's what hardship does for believers. We sing, *Jesus is all the world to me*.
- But then we lose our health, possessions, job, or receive abuse. Why, we ask?
- Our heavenly Father, the expert jeweler, plunges us like a diamond not into clear waters, but turbulent waters—boiling waters—to see if our faith sparkles or not. If our faith sparkles in love to Jesus and a willingness to follow Him even through pain and adversity, then God shows us and others that we have something very special—a growing, maturing faith that He approves.

III. WE MUST FOCUS ON THE GAINS, NOT JUST THE LOSSES (vv. 3-4).

⁵ <http://www.slideshare.net/pdcoc92255/080824-a-grain-of-fallen-wheat-john-12-20-36-dale-wells-presentation>. Slide #42. Accessed 6/11/16.

⁶ *Men of Integrity*, May/June 2007, p.6/13. http://iows.net/data_files/archives/file_1_42.pdf. August 2008, Issue 2.

⁷ <http://thecoolgadgets.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Samsung-WB1001-digital-camera-26x-zoom-lens-493x348.jpg>. Accessed 6/11/16.

⁸ MacArthur, John. 1998. *James*. Moody Press: Chicago, Ill.

A. **What Troubles Can Gain For Us**1. **Troubles Can Make Us Strong (v. 3).**

- a. patience = endurance, perseverance = to remain + under
- b. Presents picture being under heavy load & resolutely staying there instead trying escape.⁹
- c. Ropes calls it "staying-power."
- d. James is talking about toughness—"the testing of your faith produces toughness."¹⁰

2. **Troubles Can Make Us Grow (v. 4).**

- a. perfect and complete = terms applied to animals
 - i. perfect meant animal fully grown and no longer a baby
 - ii. complete meant an animal that had all of its parts and was not deformed
- b. It means a believer who has become fully grown in the Lord, mature in character.

B. **Application**

- 1. Troubles always force us to choose—God's way vs. the world's way.
- 2. And when we remain strong and choose God's way, we develop character.

- a. There are discouragements in your ministry. People quit on you or don't follow through. You say, *Who needs this grief? Why should I bother?* But you decide to keep serving for Jesus' sake even though others don't. You lose an easy, comfortable life, but you gain faithfulness, purpose, an ability to stay focused on Jesus, not people. You are becoming mature & complete.
- b. You've lost your job with no immediate replacement. As time drags on you feel irritable, downcast, frustrated. But for your family's sake you try to remain encouraging, helpful, and a blessing to them. You have lost the control of your circumstances, but you are gaining control over your moods. You are becoming mature and complete.

Conclusion1. James is telling us the lesson of the honey bee.¹¹ Do you know it? Here it is:¹²

- a. A queen bee lays each egg in a six-sided cell filled with the pollen and honey that will nourish the unborn offspring. She then seals the top with wax. Twenty-one days later, its food supply exhausted, the newborn wrestles, squirms, and strains to break the wax seal and emerge alive. The opening it makes in exiting is so narrow that it rubs off the membrane covering its wings, enabling it to fly. Should the wax seal be opened prematurely, the bee will emerge without a struggle—unable to fly since the membrane remains on the wings. It is soon stung to death by other bees.
- b. God wisely designed a specific struggle to give the common bee new life. We can trust him to provide for each of us the struggles best suited to bring us rewards, not penalties. If we obey him even when it is difficult, we will grow and stretch.

⁹Hiebert, op. cit., p. 75.¹⁰Hughes, R. K. 1991. *James: Faith that works*. Preaching the Word. Crossway Books: Wheaton, Ill.¹¹Hurley, Virgil. 2000, c1995. *Speaker's sourcebook of new illustrations* (electronic ed.). Word Publishers: Dallas¹² http://museumca.org/sites/default/files/8_EmergingBeeAndWorker.jpg. Accessed 6/11/16.