

## **RULE # 2 FOR TRIALS: SAY “HELP!”**

**James 1:2–8**

**Dr. George O. Wood**

I'd like to include in that reading three verses we looked at last week, so we actually read from verses 2–8—they belong together as a whole.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does” (James 1:2–8, NIV).

Last week we began with the first rule of trials” “Say: ‘Welcome.’” Count it all joy. It is one thing to say from the pulpit, “Say ‘Welcome’ to trials.” And it is quite another thing to face tragedy in a home. I'm not a masochist. The Scriptures do not teach us to punish ourselves.

When I say “welcome trials,” I don't want to be misunderstood. I'm not saying that when the trial comes along, we look at it and say, “Oh, good! This is the most wonderful thing that's ever happened to me!” That's not the approach that the Scripture is telling us to take. In saying “welcome” to trials, we are to say “welcome” to the opportunity that this event presents for the further making and molding of my own life—spiritually, mentally, and in every way.

In other words, I can choose to be bitter about this trial. Or I can choose to accept it and to grow through it and to work through it, no matter what time it takes or effort is involved. But my

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attitude and your attitude toward trial are so very critical if we are going to be successful in it. It is one thing to say “Welcome” to trials, but another thing to do it.

Of course, as Christians we are not on sunny days looking around and saying, “Everything is going good in my life. Please, God. Send a trial to make me happy.” I’m not saying that. What I am saying is that we have a wholesome and a biblical attitude. A wholesome attitude—when trials come, we face them, not with defeated resignation. We face them, not with bitter resentment. We face them, not with oceans of self-pity—although that will always be part of our initial emotion when encountering them. But when it comes right down to it and we get settled in our heart as to how we’re going to face trial, we adopt an attitude that says, “This is going to challenge me to become a better person, a more Christ-filled person.”

Take a moment right now and inventory your life. Select the biggest trial you’re having right now in your life. Think of it and focus on it. Thank the Lord for all the people here that can’t think of a thing! We’re glad for you too. But know that if someday the breeze is blowing behind you, the wind may at a later date be going against you. Pray for those whom it is now blowing against.

I ask you to focus on that trial because I think you’ll get more out of this teaching from James if, while I’m going through the passage, you specify, you’re concrete in what you’re wrestling with. I find, in my own life, that simply because I preach something, it doesn’t mean that I’ve done it. And simply because I’ve heard it, it doesn’t mean I’ve acted on it. I am not saying that we should use mind control over the very real emotions of hurt and anger, fear and depression. Scripture is not saying for us to deny those very real things that happen to us. There is a time to express hurt. There is a time to express anger, a time to express fear, and even depression. But James says that there is the unexpected response that the Christian has. This power that we can tap into causes, in

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the midst of our trial or tragedy, a seed to be planted which will flower that trial into some blessing in our life.

“Out of the trial,” James has said, in verses 2–4, “out of the trial comes stamina, staying power that produces in us maturity, completeness and lacking nothing.” It is this phrase, “lacking nothing,” that brings us to rule number two for trials: Say, “Help!” Immediately in verse 4, after James says that the result of trials will be that we will not lack anything, he turns right around in verse 5 and tells us that we may lack something. “If any of you lacks wisdom...” In other words, the end result of a trial will be, you’re not lacking anything, you’ll be mature and complete. But it’s when you are facing the trial that you may find yourself in the first instance lacking. So he threads together in this teaching with the word “lack” and connects the two rules. Rule one: Say “Welcome.” Rule two: Say “Help.” If any of you lack, ask.

What James is saying is, “Don’t be surprised if you don’t have it all together in a trial. Don’t be surprised if you have been struggling to say ‘Welcome.’ If you’ve been saying, ‘Count it all joy’ and you’ve had a rough time, don’t be surprised.” There are trials that we do not initially know how to handle, and we struggle with how we’re going to respond. We struggle with what God is doing and why He has even allowed it to happen.

In trials, we may lack wisdom. That is, we don’t have perspective. We are confused about how to respond. We don’t know what options we’re supposed to take. Especially when we feel hemmed in. We may, in the midst of a trial, want to—in some way—find an avenue to deaden the pain. That’s why people turn to the bottle. It deadens the pain. Or they turn to drugs or sedatives to deaden the pain. Or in some instances, they have an affair or have escapism of one kind or another.

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But the Bible tells us that the way we go on with getting a resolution to our trial is not only having this healthy mental attitude that says, “God is going to work for the good in this.” I can say “welcome” as to what this is going to do in my life. But in addition to that, when we’re struggling with all that, we come to God and say, “Help, Lord. Please give me perspective. Show me how to handle this. I’m in way over my head. I can’t cope. Or I’m not coping very well. Give me wisdom!”

Ideally, I feel that the Scripture is teaching us we’ve really not dealt with the core of our trial until we’ve broken through to God in the midst of the trial. In trial, I can grouse a lot—and do I! I don’t try to grouse in the pulpit, but every once in a while, I’ve groused around the house. We can become bitter, or we can even act irresponsibly in the midst of our trial. But if I want a resolution for my trial, if I want to get on with life, I must have a heart-to-heart talk with God, “Help, God! I’m in trouble!”

James tells us that when we say that to God, we’re to keep two wonderful truths in focus.

The first truth: We’re to remember how God gives. And the second truth: We’re to remember how we are to ask.

### **I. How does God give?**

When you say to God, “Help!” How does He respond? James says, “He gives generously”

(James 1:5). Generously! Not just enough to get by, but more than enough.

Whenever I think of giving generously, my mind goes back to when I was a nine or ten-year-old kid in Oklahoma. It was Halloween time. I was looking forward to trick or treating at the home of the wealthiest man in town. He lived in a big red brick house up the street. He was a millionaire, the only one in town. I just knew that at trick or treat time, he would have the interest of all the little kids in town at heart and something great and magnificent would be coming out of

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his house. I showed up at his door with my bag. The maid, who looked so very big, looked down sternly at me through the screen door and said, “Have you been here before?” It was sort of gruff. I, being shy and bashful anyway, merely answered, “No.” She said, “If you’ve been here before, we’re not going to give you anything.” I said, “I haven’t been here before.” Almost reluctantly, she reached into whatever she had and dropped a nickel in my bag. My adult language tells me that that household did not give in proportion to its ability, and the gift was beneath the dignity of the giver. I got dime candy bars from poor people down the street. Ours was a generous town. He only gave enough to keep us kids from turning over his garbage cans and writing with soap across his screen windows.

When I come to God with a need, is God saying to me, “Have you been here before?” “Haven’t I helped you before?” Is He giving in proportion to my ability to give or in proportion to His ability to give? Scripture says, “He gives generously.”

The history of the word “generously” is interesting. It comes from the Greek word that means “single-minded.” How the word goes from single minded to generous, lies in the fact that a single-minded person has a single-minded concern for another person, almost an exclusive preoccupation with the need of that other individual. God gives generously. We can expect that He’s going to give us wisdom to get through the trial.

And we can expect that He will give to us without finding fault. That surprises us, because we come to God mostly when we’re in a jam, we’re sort of embarrassed and say, “I know if I had done the right thing in the beginning, I wouldn’t be here,” and this sort of stuff. John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim’s Progress* translates this verse in a marvelous old English way. He says, “God gives without twitting.” He doesn’t make us feel stupid or guilty. He doesn’t say, “If you had listened to Me in the first place, this would have never happened.” He doesn’t say, “You mean,

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after all the times I’ve helped you, you’re back again?” He gives without finding fault. That to me is amazing. It so much flies in the face of what I often feel. The Lord’s not wanting to pick on us when we’re down. He’s wanting to help us up.

So James says, “Remember how God gives.”

### **II. Then secondly he says, “Remember how you are to ask.”**

The Scriptures teach that when we ask, God will indeed give us wisdom. I’ve found that in my own experience. He’ll show us what to do. It won’t be necessarily that He’ll drop the whole load down on us at one time. But day by day, as we work through a situation, He’ll keep showing us what response He wants us to take. Often, the way He will show us is by reminding us from His written Word, or He’ll drop some kind of special word in our heart that will keep us going. One of the things I’ve found is, when I get the solution from the Lord as to how to deal with the trial or the situation, I find myself crying out at times, “But I don’t want to do it that way!” It’s not that I verbalize it, but I inwardly say, “I don’t want to do it that way.” The Lord says, “Here’s the way I want you to handle this,” and I say, “But I want to do it this way.” Or, “Let’s do it partly Your way and partly my way.” Or, “I haven’t made up my mind yet if I want to do it Your way.” Or “I want to keep my options open. I may want a quick way out of this jam.” Such a person is called “a doubter” or “double-minded.”

A doubter is not a person who simply has a negative thought now and then. We’re all going to have negative thoughts now and then. A doubter is someone who doesn’t want to put their trust in the Lord completely—especially on the particular issue that relates to the trial—and simply rely upon Him. “Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). “I cast my care on You, Lord, but I want to take it back. I want to work through it my way.”

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I'm reminded of the story of the elderly lady who was frightened over the possibility of an airplane crash, so she would never fly. Finally, at the urging of her children, who lived in a far off city, she agreed to get on an airplane. She flew, apprehensive and frightened, the whole way. When she got off, she was greeted by her family, who asked her how the trip was. She replied “I guess it was alright, but I never put my weight down once.”

There are times like that in life that we haven't got our weight down. The doubter is double-minded.

The word for “double-minded” is “double-psyche.” A split personality. Double-minded. Two-souled. Two minds. One believes and the other doesn't. Such a person is a walking civil war. First they're inclined to one alternative and then to another. They're never able to settle down and make a firm determination to obey God. This person, James says, is in constant agitation and will make no progress because this person is like the wave that's being driven by the sea and is not going in a purposeful direction. The wave is being driven rather than having an inward ability to chart a course. “Such a person,” James says, “winds up receiving nothing from God and proves to be unstable.”

If life is getting to us and we feel we are having a difficult time coping, we ask in the midst of that, is our own heart right with the Lord? Is there any division of loyalty? Am I giving to the Lord the secret place of prayer? Sometimes, the hurt is so bad that we can almost not even say anything in prayer. We are speechless. There are some hurts that are so profound that glibness does not lie within our power. Articulation is not easy to achieve. We fall back upon what Paul tells us in Romans 8, that there are times in our life when the Holy Spirit has to take our sighs and articulate them into meaningful intercession before God's throne for us. But in those times, we need to get to the Lord and to find the resolution of the conflict in the security of our

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relationship with Him. God is aware of my trial and He has a plan for me and He has a plan for you to make it through. He wants us to trust Him with that.

In the last years of her life, Corrie ten Boom had several stories which she always told to an audience. One of them was this. She would hold up a piece of embroidered cloth, first showing the beauty of the embroidered side, with all the threads forming a beautiful picture. She would talk about how this is God’s plan for our life. Then she would flip the cloth over to show the tangled, confused underside, the mass of threads and cut off places that didn’t yield a pattern or a picture, that seemed to be irregular and difficult. She would say that this is how we look at our life from a human viewpoint so often. There is an upper side, which God is weaving. Then there’s the underside, which we so often see. She knew what it was like to see that underside of life. That’s why she speaks with such power and eloquence. We listen to somebody who has come through a trial complete and mature and lacking nothing. We know that that’s true. That there are times in life we don’t possibly see what good God is working in the dilemma we’re in. We just have to have faith that there is an upper side that God sees. And there is—really. Then Corrie Ten Boom would recite one of her favorite poems: “My life is but a weaving, between my God and me. I do not choose the color He woveth steadily. Oft times He with sorrow, and I in foolish pride, forget He sees the upper and I the underside. Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly, will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why. The dark threads are as needful in the weaver’s skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.”

In your trial of life, have you said “Welcome”? And have you said, “Help”? The Lord offers you His promise and His help to form the beautiful pattern of His embroidery in your life and in mine.

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### **Closing Prayer**

Father, we take this special moment to pray for those in the congregation who are going through a trial or tragedy of any kind. While we pray for them, we want to take a moment and give You thanks for all of those who are experiencing sunny days in this moment of their life. We thank You that life has its wide open spaces also, and its great and enriching joys. But we also know that there are winter times. Winter times in the soul. Winter and hurtful and damaging times in our life. It is in this moment, Lord, for these friends, that we turn to You and we come with faith in You, because You have said You would give generously, and not upbraid us. You would not chew us out, but You would help us. In this service, and in this moment of prayer, we indeed want to cast all of our cares upon You. We want to be men and women who hear Your voice and are faithful to it. We want to ask for forgiveness for the moments in our life when, in spite of knowing what we should have done, we kept our own escape route open. Give us the power of the Spirit to close those escape routes, Lord, so that we go through trials rather than fleeing from them. So that our character is made rather than unraveled in a time of danger and difficulty. Give us a healthy mental outlook. Give us strength in our inner life. Give us Your power for every need of life. For every need that presses down so deeply against anyone here, we ask today for Your help and that, in the heart of hearts, there would be a resolution with You. A breaking through from You to us, a healing of the inner spirit that helps us to embrace Your plan and Your way. We ask this in Your name. Amen.