

The Pathway to Holiness: Trials

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Date: 14 September 2008

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[0:00] James 1, I'll read just the first four verses in your hearing from God's Word. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations, greetings.

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. Many precious things in the world come to us through very difficult and trying circumstances.

Think of expensive pearls. There's an oyster sitting on the bottom of the sea, minding his own business. And a microscopic piece of shell or coral gets lodged in his shell.

And the irritation is so great that it secretes a substance around the irritant. And over time, more and more layers of this substance are secreted.

[1:17] And they harden. And it turns into a pearl. And the longer the irritant remains, the more layers of the substance are added and the more precious the pearl.

Expensive pearls come from trying circumstances. Think of diamonds formed out of ordinary carbon under intense heat and extreme pressure.

And in the same way, some of the most sparkling jewels of holiness that adorn the Christian life come from irritating trials that God sends to do us good.

Heat, pressures, disappointments. And these trials become the very instruments of God to create in us the beauty of holiness.

Well, we've just begun a study on the book of James. It's a call to passionately pursue holiness.

[2:24] Some 50 imperatives, 50 commands in the book. And James wastes no time in getting the first one out of his mouth. Greetings. Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.

It's a command. It's what you must do. It's what you owe God. Your duty as a Christian. It's part of holiness. It's part of putting Christ on display in your life.

Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds. And so with one sentence, James has pushed right through all the religious talk.

And has got right into where we live with the high demands of holiness. And if this command does not give us pause, I should wonder if we really understand it.

It's downright shocking. It goes directly against the grain of our fallen natures. I mean, here he is talking about pure joy.

[3:35] Sheer joy. All joy. Greatest joy. Different ways that it's translated. May I ask you, what gives you sheer joy?

Make a list. Having a huge assignment behind you that you did well on. And now that's behind you. Sheer joy.

Having a Saturday with nothing to do. Two weeks vacation in your favorite spot with your favorite people. A sense of God's presence in worship.

Sitting down to your favorite dessert. Receiving a clean bill of health. From the doctor. Having your children not act up for one day.

Sheer joy. Winning a hard-fought athletic competition. Reaching the highest level of a video game for the first time. Getting a huge pay raise.

[4:39] But we all have different ideas about the meaning of sheer, pure joy. My list will not look like yours. And yours not like mine. But now here comes Jane.

And he comes along and insists that we all add one more thing to our list of pure joy. Trials. Trials. Your trials. All of them.

Put them on there. They belong on that list. Of pure joy. Maybe you just got a huge assignment dumped on you and it still looms large upon you.
Maybe your Saturday's full of unpleasant things to do such that you have no spare time. Maybe you got sick and couldn't go on that vacation.
Maybe the doctor just took your favorite dessert off of your diet. Maybe he tells you that the test results show that you have cancer. Maybe your kids made a scene at the grocery store.
[5 : 43] Maybe you lost that athletic competition. Maybe somebody stole your video game. Maybe you took a cut in pay instead of a raise.

Put them all in the pure joy column. That's where they belong. Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.
Trials of all sorts. They come in many shapes and sizes. Our friends from England sometimes bring us licorice. And they've got this sack in England called all sorts.
And you guessed it. What's inside is licorice of all sorts. It comes in different colors, different shapes, different sizes. But it's all licorice.
And you haven't needed to live long in this earth to find out that trials come in all sorts. Big ones, small ones. Long ones, short ones.

[6 : 42] Public ones, private ones. Internal, external ones. Trials of many kinds. Maybe it's people. Maybe it's things. Maybe it's circumstances. But they all belong in the pure joy column. They're all a part of this command. This demand of holiness.
Now James is ever the realist. We'll find that throughout his letter. He doesn't say, count it all joy, brothers, if you face trials.

But whenever you face trials. It's a fact of life. It's inevitable that you will face them. They come to all men. Believers included.

Consider it pure joy. My brothers. My brothers. There's no life in this world above trials. The preacher on TV who tells you. That it is your birthright as a Christian.

[7 : 46] To live a life without trials. That it's your birthright as a Christian. To claim health, wealth, and prosperity. He's lying to you. This spoiled generation somehow thinks that.

We not only have an inalienable right. To the pursuit of happiness. But also to live a life without. Sickness, suffering, and trials.

Know in this life. In this week. You will face trials of many kinds. And whenever you do. And whatever kind they are. Consider it pure joy, my brothers. The command leaves absolutely no wiggle room.

No exceptions. Put your trials. Everyone. Into verse 2. That's where God has it this morning. Notice. Next. Let's consider this word consider. Consider it pure joy. Now that is an exercise. To consider something is an exercise of the mind.

[8 : 54] It's a call to think. And to think a certain way about trials. We're supposed to form an opinion about them. We're to regard them not as liabilities.

But to think of them as assets. As assets. We're not to think of them as against us. But as being for us.

We're not even to write them off merely as necessary evils to be endured. So often that's about the best I can do. I'm sorry. That doesn't reach up to the demands of holiness in verse 2.

Oh, this too will pass. No, no. That's not sufficient. You must count them as pure joy. My brothers. Every occasion of trial that brings a trial is an occasion for joy.

And at once I'm confronted again with the expansive chasm between God's thoughts and my thoughts. Because here I am down here thinking.

[9 : 57] And the very things that I think are interruptions to my joy. Are obstacles to my joy. Are robbers of my joy. God up here is thinking.

Those are occasions for joy. Those are reasons to jump for joy. Whose interpretation of reality will hold sway in my heart.

You see, he's telling me how to think. And folks, if we've learned anything about the Bible and the Christian life. We must learn that coming to the Bible is coming to God.

And asking him to teach us how to think. And he does so in this verse. This is how you're to interpret the reality of trials in your life.

Now, whose interpretation will stand? Yours or God's? It's not hard to tell whose interpretation is controlling you. When trials come, do I welcome them with joy?

[11:02] Well, then I'm thinking of them God's way. Or do I lose my joy when they come? Do I sink into a bad mood? Do I grumble and complain?

Do I get irritable? Grow bitter and bad tempered? Even lashing out against the ones involved in the trial? Or do I get depressed and hold a pity party for myself?

And simply endure it as an inescapable evil? If so, it's clear that I'm still thinking about my trial my way and not God's way.

No wonder God says to me in Isaiah 55, John, My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far are my thoughts above your thoughts, and my ways above your ways. Therefore, any repentance on your part must include your thoughts.

[12:08] Let the wicked forsake his way, and the evil man forsake his thoughts. Your thoughts must go. They must be replaced by my thoughts.

What you think of trials must be set aside. It must be replaced with what I think of trials. And so I don't have to read any further in James' letter than verse 2, than to have sufficient reason to hit my knees and start confessing my sinful thoughts.

I've not thought of it as pure joy when I've faced trials this past week. I like tennis. I like to play tennis, rarely do.

I like to watch tennis, rarely do as well. Seems like the finals are often on Sunday, and so I miss them. But the Lord sent rain on New York last weekend, and it pushed the finals of the U.S. Open men's championship to Monday night.

Well, that happens to be my day off. And I know they were complaining about the rain, but I was thankful for the rain. And so all day long I was licking my chops.

[13:28] I'm looking forward. The end of my day off. I'm going to can tomatoes and watch the U.S. Open. And so the desire is growing through my day.

I won't go into all the details of what happened, but I didn't know what time. I just heard it's Monday night. And so we have supper and devotions, and I go over to the kitchen and turn the TV on.

Let's see. Is it just coming on? To my horror. It was over. All three sets, and I hadn't seen one point of it. And I must confess, my first response was not pure joy.

This is pure joy facing this. Oh, I was let down. I was upset. I felt resentment growing in me.

I got a bit edgy for the moment. My first response was that, to this trial in my life. But I thank God that he doesn't leave us with first responses.

[14:35] He brings his word to mind for a second response. Grace, isn't it, on his part? You know, I can forget my text for next Sunday from the time I walk out of my study to where I reach my kitchen.

Just that quick, the Bible can escape me in my living. But God is kind, and he brought it to my mind. Consider it pure joy, John, whenever you face trials of many kinds.

And I saw in that moment that, yes, this trial is one of those trials James is talking about. And yes, this trial has come to me from God for my good, for the strengthening of my faith, my perseverance, my holiness.

And I could say I found true joy in the fact that God knew that I needed this frustration of my desire to work something better in me. Holiness.

But I must confess that the next day, when I hit a trial, it was the same. It does seem that when preachers preach on trials, God gives them plenty of opportunities to put their sermon in practice before they preach it.

[15:50] And my first response, again, was not pure joy. But again, there was a second response. And I have a long way to go in this. My desire is that it would be my first response to any trial in my life to face it with pure joy at what God is doing through it.

Now, my trials are not very big. I didn't lose any arms or legs this past week.

But I did lose some desires that were frustrated and plans and things that I wanted my way that didn't go that way. And I'm humbled when I think of my puny trials compared to some of yours.

And I'm embarrassed when I think that my puny trials are enough to cause me to lose my joy and to have a bad temper, a bad attitude toward life.

Yeah, my trials barely register on the trial meter. They're barely there. But I'll argue to the tooth and nail that they are on there.

[17:09] That these trials of mine, as small as they are, are part of what James is calling many kinds. Trials of many kinds. You see, if we only apply that to the big ones, losing a spouse, losing

our health, losing our job, well, then we have just effectively taken ourselves right out of James 1 and verse 2.

And we will miss 99% of the applications of that truth to our life because most of our trials come in small sizes.

And James has a word for us. Oh, Lord, teach us how to think about trials.

Change the way I think. If anything steals our joy, it's a call to stop and think. It's a call to stop and think differently about that trial you're facing at the moment until you can consider it pure joy. It's faulty, sinful thinking that allows trials to make off with our joy. And so, so much of the battle for holiness and the battle for joy is the battle of the mind.

[18 : 25] It's a battle for your mind. Whose description of reality holds sway? Mine or God's? God, the ever-infinite, all-wise God or puny me who was born yesterday?

Whose interpretation on life holds sway? Consider it.

Regard it. Think of it as pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds. So, you let this command search and try you.

You say, that's impossible, John, to count it pure joy whenever I face every trial. Well, that's just what James would have you say. You see, until you despair of holiness in your own strength, you will never go to Jesus Christ as you ought.

As long as you have any leanings on your own strength, to that extent, you are not putting all your weight upon Christ to help you obey His commands.

[19 : 34] Brokenness is a forgotten and rare virtue in the Christian church today. And it's to be feared that the reason there is so little brokenness that it's because we have lowered the standard of what God expects of us.

We've watered it down to make His commands manageable. We've taken the bar and we put it down here at 18 inches where we can conveniently step over it.

No, no. The bar of God's law for holiness is at 8 feet. No man has ever jumped over it without supernatural strength. And so we face a command like this.

Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds and we say impossible. Oh God, you see my weakness, you see my stubbornness, you see my way of thinking. And we seek the Lord for pardon and power.

And what do we find? We find that He does not despise a broken and a contrite heart, but He rather takes pleasure in giving grace to the humble, giving mercy for our time of need.

[20 : 47] He comes and makes the self-consciously weak strong. That's the command. Now we come to the reason.

Because James gives us a reason attached to the command and the reason should help us obey the command. Here is the reason to view the experience of trials as pure joy.

There's a good reason for doing so. He wouldn't tell us to rejoice in it if there wasn't good reason.

Well, what is it? Well, the short answer is this. Why rejoice when you face trials of many kinds?

Because God uses trials to produce holiness in you. You want the long answer? 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.

He simply spells out the process that God uses to produce holiness in you.

[21 : 48] So the key in facing trials is to keep your eye on what God is doing. He's up to something unbelievably grand and good for you in trials. He's making you holy.

And such a desirable result should far outweigh any unpleasant trees along the way. Here's cause for joy. These trials are the raw materials of a holy life.

They're the fertilizer for producing holiness. They're the spiritual gym where disciples train for practical godliness. They're the mountain that prepares runners for the marathon of life.

This is the way we must view trials so as to count them pure joy when we face them. God's instrument to make us holy.

The joy isn't in the trial itself but in the happy effect, the results that they bring. Much as a woman considers the labor pains that result in such happiness as her baby.

[22 : 52] And here the baby is holiness. Precious, precious holiness. Notice verse 3 starts. The reason why we should count it all to us.

Because you know. And again, you see it's the battle for the mind. This is something you know or should know. Perhaps you've forgotten it in the midst of your trial and so James is reminding you.

Knowledge of the truth leads to godliness, leads to holiness. holiness. Don't demean Bible knowledge. We're the poor for neglecting it and forgetting it.
We're the richer in joy when we remember, when we know what God has said. Because you know he tells us. And knowledge of God serves our pure joy.

So consider three phases then in this whole process of making you holy. Three phases in God's sanctifying use of trials. He says in verse 3, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

[23 : 59] Phase 1, trials test your faith. Trials test your faith. This is the acid test for true Christianity. You claim to be a Christian.

You claim to have saving faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know that it's genuine? How do you know that it's the real article? Well, it continues under trials.

It takes the heat, the pressures, the disappointments and difficulties and it doesn't shrivel up and die when troubles and temptations come. Yes, trials put your faith to the test.

Will you go on believing? Will you go on taking Jesus at His word? Will you go on living a life of faith? Will you go on obeying, living a holy life no matter what happens to you?

Will you go on with the obedience of faith? Will you stick to your duty even when things don't go your way? Only if you hold firmly to the faith you profess. Only if faith lays hold of unseen realities and sees Him who is invisible and lays hold of that future reward.

[25 : 15] So when faith stands under the pressures of trials, its genuineness is proven. It's the real thing.

Do trials test your faith? Then under trials be sure to feed your faith.

Be sure to give special attention to faith. Feed it much upon God's word, His promises, His character, is truth.

It's the best diet for faith. Trials come to test that faith. They'll need a healthy diet of Scripture. Dr. Henry Crabbendam, who is writing a commentary on this book of James, and I've drawn from it and profit from it immensely already, says, trials not only prove your faith true, but they also improve your faith.

Trials prove your faith and improve it. They refine it. They strengthen it. They develop perseverance. And so we come to the second phase.

[26 : 31] For the testing of your faith develops perseverance. That's the second phase. This testing of faith develops perseverance. We're going along in the process. Trials test faith.

And the testing of the faith develops perseverance. What is perseverance, kids? It's endurance. It's staying power. It's steadfastness. Or as one author says, a gutsy fortitude that doesn't break, doesn't quit.

Now that's God's aim in every trial, to develop perseverance in holiness so that you will hold your course and not be moved from God's way.

But let me say that Satan has an aim in every trial as well. What is a trial from God is always a temptation from Satan.

Satan's aim in the very same trials that God sends is to tempt us to quit. To quit believing. To quit obeying. To quit holy responses.

[27 : 33] And we live in a generation of quitters. Dropouts. Who when the going gets tough, simply quit.

Walk away from duty. Find an easy shortcut. Detour around the problem. They're giving up on their marriage. They're giving up on their children. They're giving up on their church.

They're giving up on their friends. They're witness. They're giving up on moral purity. They're giving up on God's commandments. They're giving up on God Himself. We desperately need perseverance.

If we're to go the distance and finish well. The Christian life is not a sprint. But a full marathon. We're going to need perseverance. Because it's only He who stands firm to the end, Jesus says, that will be saved.

Matthew 24, 13. I need this thing called perseverance. But how do I get it? James tells us, through the testing of your faith under trials.

[28 : 36] Testing of your faith develops perseverance. You see, trials call our faith into action. Trials call faith into the gym for a workout.

They kick our faith out of bed and say it's time to get busy. That's what trials do to faith. The trial requires faith to be an exercise.

And so in the trial, faith grips onto God a little tighter. It holds onto His promise. It holds onto His interpretation on life, to His ways and His thoughts.

And you see, the very process of my faith being tried has strengthened the muscle of perseverance. perseverance.

But it's the repeated exercise of faith in trials that develops perseverance, isn't it? Perseverance isn't the fruit of one or two trials, but the result of many trials.

[29 : 43] It's not the pumping of the weight once. Wow, did you see what that did to develop my muscle? No. It's many, many reps, many sets that develop the muscle of perseverance, believing over and over, taking Jesus at His word in the trials of life, and the very process is building the muscle of perseverance.

so that that trial this past week of not having things go your way, of denying you some desire, that exercise of faith in the promise of God, that that thing came and did you something good, it promoted faith and perseverance and holiness in your life.

That trial, though it was small, the passing of that test is helping you for bigger tests that are down the road.

And so Abraham's faith is tried by the sacrifice of leaving his home. No small sacrifice, but that was simply preparing him for the bigger sacrifice of his own son, Isaac.

Daniel. Daniel's faith is tested in the matter of defiling himself with food offered to idols, but that exercise of faith is helping to prepare him to stare down lions in the obedience of faith.

[31 : 10] And so, by trial, by trial, the muscle of faith is growing and perseverance and holiness is developing so that you might conquer still harder battles of holiness in the future.

Oh, what a blessed result is this. Consider it pure joy then, brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds because the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

perseverance. We admire the faith of Abraham, but who had more trials and tests of his faith than Abraham? Brothers and sisters, in each trial, remember that God is up to something good, glorious, grand, nothing less than strengthening, perseverance, strengthening our faith.

So see God. See what he's doing in that trial if you would count it all joy. If you're not rejoicing in trials, it's a sign that you've lost sight of what God's doing.

Faith is napping. You're not seeing the invisible. Wake up and rejoice as you take on board God's interpretation of life.

[32 : 24] Third and final phase in the process of being sanctified by trials is that perseverance leads to perfect holiness. What have we seen? The process is threefold.

Trials are the testing of your faith and the very putting it under pressure, calling it into exercise, develops perseverance. The continuing exercise of faith.

And the continuing exercise in perseverance develops perfect holiness. Perseverance, verse 4, perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. You see, James is taking us now to the very end of the process. What's the result? The happy result of trials in your life. It is perfect likeness to Jesus.

The mature and complete. The first word for mature would be better translated perfect. It is more often than not in the New Testament. And I think the context shows it.

[33 : 27] Perfect and complete, not lacking anything. Is that not perfection? If you have any lack, it's not perfect. No, the end goal, you see, is perfect likeness to Jesus.

It's perfect holiness across the board, complete, not lacking anything, with no deficiencies or shortcomings. Now, some people think such an impossible goal is self-defeating.

John, if you hold that goal before us, you will dishearten us and we won't take another step in the race with joy. It's not the way the Bible reasons with us. John says, my dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.

That's got to be your goal as you head out the door every day. Not, I hope today I don't sin very much. No, that I will not sin. It's the aim. It's the end goal that we're heading toward.

Jesus says it, be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect, Matthew 5, 48. So don't settle for anything less. God doesn't. Romans 8, 29, He's predestined you to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.

[34 : 34] That's the good that He's working in all things for you. And nothing less will satisfy the longings of your new nature in Christ. That one day you'll see Him and you will be made exactly like Him.

And everyone who has that hope in Him purifies himself right now. He does what Crabbing Down says is to pursue purposeful holiness en route to perfect holiness.

Never lower the bar. Keep your aim before you every day. The end of trials. The end result for which this is in my life is to make me just like Jesus.

That's cause for joy. Now the verse is an imperative. Verse 4. Perseverance must finish its work. We could say let perseverance in holiness finish its work.

Let it keep on having its way. Don't cut its work short by opting out and quitting as so many are doing. Let perseverance finish its work. Let it lead you all the way to likeness to Jesus without any imperfections.

[35 : 46] Not lacking anything. So the summary of this process. There's the glorious end of holiness.

But we don't arrive there in a sudden experience. We don't arrive there by coming to an altar and getting baptized by the Spirit. No. We get there by a process.

And the process is trials. Trials that test our faith. That call it into exercise. And so develop perseverance.

perseverance. And perseverance that finishes its work and brings us into the perfect likeness of Jesus. Oh, I see this and I say when will we finally get it?

When will we finally get it? That trials are not obstacles to holiness but they are the very pathway to holiness. We say, you know, I could be such a better Christian if only this trial was not in my life.

[36 : 53] No. Perish the thought. That very trial is sent to you to make you a better Christian. It's the very instrument that God is using to forge you into one who will one day be just like Jesus without sin.

When will we finally get it that trials are not electives in the school of life but their core curricula that every believer must take? This is the way to holiness.

Trials are one of God's favorite methods of sanctifying us so that that unfulfilled desire that frustrated plan that irritating person in your life that interruption that thing that goes wrong is the Lord coming to you to make you more holy.

Welcome. Welcome Him as such. Welcome trials as you would welcome Jesus coming to do you good for in fact that's what's happening in your trial.

So, thank you James. You have taught us to find joy where we would least have expected to find it. In trials. In trials.

[38 : 11] In trials. In trials. And so, to want holiness without trials is to want pearls without irritations.

To want holiness without trials is to want diamonds without pressure and heat. And once again, my heart is laid bare. this book on holiness and James' first lesson 101 foundations introduction this is the first word.

Trials are the pathway to holiness. This holiness that we're going to talk about in this letter. Trials are the way to it.

So, there's the destination. Holiness. Oh, glorious destination. More precious than pearls and diamonds to bear the beauty of Jesus Christ.

And the pathway leading me to it is trial. Many trials. All kinds of trials. And I must conclude that if I were more in love with holiness that I would consider it pure joy when I face trials of many kinds.

[39 : 30] because they were conducting me to my desired end. Holiness. And if holiness was more an obsession with me, if it was my passionate pursuit, then I would rejoice in whatever makes me holy.

I wouldn't be down in the mouth when God comes to make me holy through trials. I would welcome my trials as pure joy knowing that there are opportunities for further growth and holiness.

welcome weakness, welcome insult, welcome hardship, welcome difficulties, if only you will lead me to greater likeness to Jesus.

holiness. And so I can only conclude that my holiness is not yet as important to me as it is to God. And I'm on my knees again seeking pardon and power from my mighty and merciful Savior. And that's just where James wants me.

[40 : 33] What is your attitude toward trials in your life? What does it reveal about your pursuit of holiness? How much do you want holiness?

That's the question that I'm confronted with in James 1, 2 to 4. How much, John, are you serious about holiness? Forget all the talk.

Forget all the religious words that you can couch your answer in. And you tell me, how serious are you about becoming more like Christ? It'll be read in your heart's response to trials.

Ryan Hall was one of the U.S. hopefuls for the gold medal in the Beijing Men's Marathon. He was the top U.S. qualifier by far.

Only ran the race three or four times in his life. But put everyone away in the U.S. trials for the Olympics. Well, he lives and trains in Big Bear, California, 100 miles east of L.A., up in the mountains at 8,000 feet.

[41 : 39] A professing Christian whose identity, he says, is not in running but in Jesus Christ. And we were there in Big Bear five days before his race.

All over town, the banners, Run, Ryan, run. Run, Ryan, run. He couldn't even go to church without the testimony time. Someone saying, Pray for Ryan. Pray for Ryan. He's not only there running, but he's there to be a testimony for Christ.

And I read in World Magazine that he prepared for the Olympics running the roads around Big Bear. And I thought, I'd like to try that.

Let's see what that's all about. So one day, I went out to have a run. And I wasn't ten minutes into my jog. And I was reduced to a shuffle, one foot barely going above the other, heart jumping out of my chest, gasping for air, wanting to quit.

And I say, what would cause a man to persevere under such trials? Well, there was something. It's the dream for a gold medal.

[42 : 53] The dream for a gold medal. And so he embraced the uphill runs. What will cause a man to persevere in joy through the trials of life, to welcome them with joy?

The gold medal of being like Christ one day. Oh, but the road is steep, the air is thin, the sun is hot. All these things that would tell me to complain and quit. Be silent, my soul. This is the road that leads to the gold. And I must ask you, is holiness more precious than gold to you?

What will you endure in the way of hardness, in the way of trials, for the gold of likeness to Jesus? Ryan finished tenth in the Olympic marathon.

Six minutes slower than his best time. He says, I just wasn't feeling my best. He was so disappointed. He knew ten kilometers into the race that it wasn't going to be his day.

[44 : 11] And on his blog after the race, he shares his disappointment. The very next day was the closing ceremonies, the first part of which is the medals for the men's marathon.

and he says as the Kenyan took his medal on the platform and the anthem was playing, he was jealous.

He was jealous of him. You see, his first response was not pure joy. But he also confessed that it wasn't his last response.

It wasn't his last and final answer. that before the end of the anthem, he was rejoicing. He had lost his jealousy.

And he says, quote, I know that it is possible with God, but even if it is not God's will for my life, I will still praise him and make the most of the gifts he's given me.

[45 : 10] What the Olympics has taught me is that I need to live a life surrendered to the will of God. It is my prayer that I will be able to have the same heart as Christ before he was nailed to the cross.

Not my will, but yours be done. His trial was to lose the gold. It disappointed him. That was his natural response.

But he learned James' joy in trials because his Olympic loss taught him something greater. It taught him the very principle of holiness.

Not my will, but yours be done. Oh, he came out the winner and he saw that and rejoiced in what his trials had produced.

So welcome disappointment. Welcome frustrated desires when they can say with me, not my will, but yours be done.

[46 : 12] You see, even our Savior, even the Son of God learned obedience from the things that he suffered, Hebrews 5.

And must Jesus bear the cross alone while all the world goes free? No, there's a cross for everyone. There's a cross for me. Must Jesus run up the road of trials alone? And do I expect a trial-free life? No. You see, it was Jesus facing those self-denying acts all through his life.

Those sacrificial losses that he made for love from leaving heaven's glory, sacrificing for love, losing his own rights, letting free of what he wanted.

All those acts were leading to the last and greatest sacrifice when he would be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

[47 : 16] All the earlier obedience in the face of trial was strengthening him. The Lord was learning obedience by the things he suffered, so that when it was time to march to Calvary, he set his face as a flint.

You weren't going to move the Savior from Jerusalem. That's where he was going. That's why he had come. And now strengthened by all the trials and suffering that he had endured through his life, he now goes to the cross and makes the ultimate obedience, even death on the cross.

So, when trials come knocking at your door this week, they'll be there this afternoon in some way, something won't be right.

What will you do? you throw the door open and welcome them in, not because of some joy in the trial itself, but because you have joy in the God who's come to make you more like himself.

May God help us. Our Father, that is our prayer. How thankful we are that we can step aside from the world for a moment to step into your sanctuary, and so to have you put our thoughts right, to come before you and have you strengthen faith and sweeten care.

[48 : 38] Thank you for meeting with us. Thank you for speaking your word to us, and thank you for being ready to meet us, both with your pardoning grace and your strengthening power.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.