

DEALING WITH ADVERSITY **(James 1:2-4)**

I. Key facts about adversity.

- A. There are two important principles we need to realize (James 1:2-4).
 - 1. Trials will come to you (Acts 14:22; 1 Peter 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:12)
 - 2. Trials come in all shapes and sizes.
- B. Think of the synonyms we use to describe adversity: persecution, suffering, hard times, problems, pain, struggles - none of them sound good and the point is they all hurt.
- C. When it comes, it does so quickly and unannounced.
- D. While in the midst of adversity, it tends to be the focus of our thinking, so much so that it seems to take the future from the present.
- E. We need to remember that adversity does not stop once we are Christians, but our Lord provides guidance for us to deal with adversity.

II. Paul knew adversity.

- A. Paul faced a lot of adversity in his life and overcame it all (2 Corinthians 7:4-5).
- B. What adversity did Paul face (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)?
 - 1. Those sufferings that are common to us all (hunger, uncomfortable surroundings, thieves, evil people).
 - 2. Disappointments (rejection by those to whom he preached and fellow Jews, conflicts in the church, falling away of brethren).
 - 3. Suffering for being a Christian.
 - 4. His unique problem (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- C. Most of us will never have the same amount of adversity as Paul.
- D. The lesson should be that if Paul can deal with his adversity then we can deal with ours as well.

III. Seven lessons to learn about adversity.

- A. Adversity draws us closer to or further from God.
 - 1. There are two possible responses to adversity.
 - a. That of Job's wife (Job 2:9).
 - b. That of Job (Job 2:10).
 - 2. Notice Paul's response to his adversity.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:10.
 - b. Many show their lack of faith by questioning God.
 - c. They ask "Why me?", "Why now?", "What did I do to deserve this?" or "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?"

- d. We must learn that our attitude and level of faithfulness is directly linked to how we respond to adversity.
- B. Adversity will bother us.
1. It hurt and bothered Paul (2 Corinthians 7:6; 1:8).
 2. We may feel like: quitting but we don't; we can't take it anymore, but we can; ending our life, but we don't.
 3. Adversity will challenge us and hurt us but we can make it through by holding to the rope of faith.
 4. Robert Hicks once said, "We acknowledge that life is a warfare and then are surprised when someone gets wounded."
 5. Flesh wounds heal and when we get knocked down, it does not mean we have to be knocked out.
- C. Overcoming adversity is based on a solid foundation.
1. The foundation of our faith is built either on stone or sand (Matthew 7:24-27).
 2. Adversity is that stormy weather beating on our house - all (both wise and foolish) face it.
 3. Our house will stand the storm if it is built on the foundation of great faith in Jesus the Christ.
 4. This is where Paul's house was built (1 Corinthians 3:11; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21).
 5. Paul's faith was in Jesus and in no one or thing else.
 6. If we have a solid foundation as Jesus as our Leader and Lord, we can withstand adversity.
- D. Adversity is momentary.
1. We need to remember the big picture when facing adversity (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
 2. We need to keep this adversity in perspective.
 3. By faith, we can look at the big picture and remember that death is not the end, it is the beginning (2 Corinthians 5:7).
- E. Adversity builds character.
1. We must remember that adversity builds perseverance (James 1:13).
 2. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger (2 Corinthians 12:9).
 3. Adversity is God's classroom that teaches us:
 - a. The right priorities in life (Ecclesiastes 7:3; Philippians 3:14).
 - b. Humility - we learn we are powerless without God (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 - c. Dependence upon God and not ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:9-10).
 4. Overcoming adversity is all about character.
- F. Seek spiritual help.

1. We must allow ourselves to be helped (2 Timothy 4:17).
 2. God offers comfort and help in at least two ways:
 - a. Through His word (Romans 15:4).
 - b. Through His people (2 Corinthians 1:3).
 3. We need to remember that we get comfort from comforting others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- G. Maintain a conqueror's attitude.
1. Paul suffered much but he remained faithful.
 2. We need to remember:
 - a. God's love transcends all adversity (Romans 8:38-39).
 - b. A godly person is a conqueror (Romans 8:31, 33-35, 37).
 3. Our roots must be deep in Christ, our anchor firmly sunk in the Rock that is Christ.
 4. Godly people get depressed, but do not stay depressed.

From a sermon by Bobby Gayton