

**Home Group study: week beginning 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

## **When the Going Gets Tough**

### **Coping with Trials**

What things have tested you in your lifetime? How did it feel at the time?

Did it harm you for life or did it do you some good?

**Read: James 1: 1-8, Romans 5: 1-5, Matthew 5: 11-12**

Can you recall from Dave's sermon on Sunday who exactly the writer of James was? (*Jesus' brother, son of Mary, one of the people Jesus appeared to after his resurrection [1 Cor 15: 7], leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem, leader of the Council of Jerusalem [Acts 15]*)

How does this very important and influential person describe himself in James 1: 1?

What does that tell us about the way God wants us to be?

Is God more impressed by impressive individuals or by servants?

### **Understanding**

When James wrote his letter, what were the trials the recipients of the letter would have been facing (v1 gives us an indication)? What are the trials we face today?

How do they compare with what the first century Christians to whom James was writing would have been facing at the time? How does James suggest we should regard trials?

Is this possible or is it just pie in the sky?

Have a look at Romans 5: 3-5: how does that begin to suggest that we might find joy in trials? Matthew 5: 11-12 also suggests how we might find joy in trials; in what ways?

Who is the speaker in these verses in Matthew? How closely do his words resonate with those of Paul in Romans 5 and those of James in James 1?

When James says 'Consider it pure joy...', do you think he is:

- a) giving us a command;
- b) giving us some helpful advice;
- c) trying to encourage us or
- d) just trying to soften the blow a bit when the going gets tough?

What is Paul's approach to the topic in Romans 5: 1-2?

In both the James and Romans passages what is the outcome of the trials we face? Why according to James is this important? Do you agree that trials result in perseverance? Or are they more likely to make you give up? Does the attitude to trials suggested here by both James and Paul make us more likely to persevere?

### **Application**

In his book 'Early Christian Letters for Everyone' Tom Wright says:

'When a Christian is tested it shows something real is happening. There are many kinds of test: actual persecution, which many face today; fierce and nasty temptations which can strike you suddenly when you're not expecting them; physical sickness or bereavement; family or financial troubles; and so on.

'But you wouldn't be tested unless you were doing something serious. Those who follow Jesus the Messiah are not simply supposed to survive. They are supposed to count, to make a difference in the world, whether through the quiet daily witness of a faithful and gentle life or the chance, given to some, to speak and act in a way which reveals the gospel to many others'.

Do you agree with him that:

- a) You wouldn't be tested unless you were doing something serious?
- b) Those who follow Jesus the Messiah are not simply supposed to survive?
- c) We are supposed to make a difference in the world?

Does the way we work out our faith show this to be true? Or would we rather have a faith that is between us and God and involves just enjoying his presence and being part of a fellowship of believers?