



SERIES: JANUARY – BECOMING SPIRITUALLY FIT

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Tuesday, 02/01/2022

Scripture: James 1:2-4

TITLE: Purpose of Pain

What is the purpose of suffering? What's the point of pain? These are some common and understandable questions. Because no matter where you look, there is pain and suffering. It seems like we end one trial to simply begin the next. But is there a point to this troubling cycle of hardship? There is. Listen to these troubling words from James 1:2-4 (CSB).

Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Okay, James' first words here seem insulting. He says, consider it a great joy when you experience trials. Just to prevent us from slapping James, he totally recognizes that these are trials. He doesn't call them boo-boos. He doesn't call them parties. These are tough hardships. And you get this when you dig in a bit more.

He says, "whenever you experience." This is a word picture. It's the imagery of a person who's walking down the street and, out of nowhere, gets mugged. You're having a nice day, and someone hits you over the head, grabs your wallet or purse, and runs away.

But it gets even more vivid. James says various trials. Various means rainbow-colored. It means various shapes, sizes, and degrees of trials. So consider it total joy when you experience the unexpected small, medium, and large trials.

Okay, you're not feeling much better, are you? But let's just go a bit further, and you will. James says, "because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance." Why? James says you can become mature and complete lacking in nothing.

Do you remember my opening question? What's the purpose of pain and suffering? God uses our pain and hardship for our good. It grows us up. It benefits us.

My son has undergone 15 surgeries in 12 years. I hate it. It kills me to see him in pain and, at times, scared. But I know the pain now is part of the wholeness later. It has great benefit for him.

The same is true for every one of our trials. It serves as a powerful tool to refine our focus back to Jesus and transform our lives into faithful maturity to Christ. Yes, the trials are hard. Yes, the hardships are undesired and unexpected. But our challenge is to keep our eyes on the prize: heaven with Christ and keep dependent upon Him through the trials.

So my challenge for you today is to lean into the trial. God has a purpose for your hardship today. God takes your brokenness and transforms it into growth. God leverages your need into a blessing.

The key is to knowing who's going to sustain you through the suffering and trial. For us, it's God. Because He is watching over us and has a powerful end in mind, we can lean into each trial.

When we lean into the trials by trusting in God, we will win the day.