

Counting It All Joy

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Tough times are tough, and no one of us should pretend otherwise. James does write that we should count it all joy when we encounter various kinds of trials, to be sure (James 1:2). And Jesus says that we are in good company when people persecute us and say all kinds of evil against us on account of Him (Matthew 5:10-12). But how do you actually develop that kind of attitude? How is it possible to actually love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44)?

The only way it can be done is to sacrifice yourself and your feelings. Please accept this in the spirit it is intended. A lot of our complaints about having to endure suffering come from the attitude that this isn't fair. "I shouldn't have to suffer like this!" I need someone to remind me that God is always with me. Now, maybe what you and I are suffering really isn't fair. And maybe we shouldn't have to suffer like this. And maybe someone does need to remind us that God is always with us, but did you catch who the center of attention in each of these complaints is? It's me!

Before I can obey the commands to "count it all joy," or love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me, I'm going to have to make a decision. I'm going to have to decide that I am not here to be served, but to serve. Was it fair for Jesus to die on the cross in my place? No, it was not! But Jesus made the decision to serve, rather than to be served.

If you make the decision to be great by becoming a servant to all, or to be first by making yourself last (a slave) some unfair things might still happen to you. On the other hand, you will have much more strength to overcome the things that will threaten to overcome you.

It's hard to die to self, but that is the only way we can live. Look up at the cross in your mind's eye right now. See the love on His face as He stretches out His hands and dies for you. Then, follow His example and win an eternal victory!