**Series**: Stories from Lockdown

**Title**: 3. Joy in Lockdown

**Scripture**: James 1:2-4

**Description**: There is great joy in trials, waiting for any believer... Choose your chains!

# Story: Paul and Silas

Story of Paul and Silas unjustly thrown into prison, deepest part, feet in stocks. Act 16:25 "at midnight, praying and singing hymns to God and all the other prisoners listening to them"! - what kind of hymns? Gospel of such hope that the first words the warden speaks - "What must I do to have that salvation!"

# Passage: James 1

(One of those key passages - memorised easily, ground-breaking for trials

**Jas 1:2-4 - read**

* following on our series, *faith in Lockdown* - last week, "*a major part* = ***peirasmos***, trials > temptation". James says to the 'brothers', ***trials need not end in sin***! In fact, **complete opposite**! Though we are always swamped, ought to end in PERFECTION!! The most incredible ending - what is **so dark,** ending in **delight**. [and a great example of that in Act 16 - it's **real**!]
* ILLUS: Absurdity: we look for emojis to convey our psyche: for trials; and for joy - but never would we use one for the other - yet that is v2 at face value:

James gives an incredible grand-opening to his letter, unforgettable counsel to any brother or sister in ***peirasmos***: "*Consider it / "****pure" Joy****"*.

> We need to see this today : **there is Joy to be experienced under Lockdown**

* Now some people have been saying they have been en**joy**ing lockdown. What they mean is the pleasure of this way of life. Don't get confused. That's not the joy under lockdown which James is writing about! If you're thinking "*I'm enjoying lockdown - I love this new way"*, that's not joy under lockdown. What we're talking about here is when you **encounter pain** in lockdown, and **feel pressed** (when your *mood* drops and your *rope* gets short, and the physical circumstances press down on you ) -> Joy right there. If you are *suffering*, this is everything you need to hear!...

**Pray**

# Proposition: Joy is found in the Chain of perfection

How can we find Joy under Lockdown? Our text says: in a "chain"; a series beginning in "**trials**", and ending in "**perfection**" .

It's incredible : Perfection comes from Trials, and **this** is where believers will find their joy - I'll call it **the Chain / of Perfection**. Q: Can you see it there? [testing faith > steadfastness . perfection]

("Chain" is a useful word because it contrasts with those chains on Paul and Silas - given to harm)

First we'll try to understand this chain, and then, how to use it

## Understand the Chain

The chain is described in 2 sections - v3 & v4

**1st section.** (v**3**) "*the testing of your faith produces steadfastness"* [Don't spend too much time here - be brief, brushed]

* What must we see in lockdown? "*trials of various kinds*"(2) = is synonymous with "*the testing of your faith*" (3)
* in 1 Pet 1:7 trials make Peter think of gold being refined - moving impurities aside and revealing the essence of what's there.
  + **It's not** **God** **trying to see** if you have faith. He knows already. He sees the heart.
  + But your **trial** is exposing your faith to YOU
    - (As last week:) 'A trial squeezes what's inside, out'. In **(3)** the "*Testing of your Faith"* means real Faith surfaces - If there ***is Faith- (***And for a believer there is!***)*** In the trial you Discern it, Identify it, Unveil it, Clarify it, Show its genuineness, and its role in your life.
    - That's where the chain begins.
    - **ILLUS**: I've been comforted to identify my faith this week - Sometimes I wonder! It's been a hard week - but it's pressed me to go and sit before the Lord - not from routine, but '*to whom else can I go*'; And sat there plugging into the fountain - all I had was Him; and I enjoyed that familiar confidence in the Living God - my faith surfaced and engaged in a way it wouldn't have without the trial.
* But v3 is not just **unveiling faith** - we can't stop there When James says, "it's All Joy, (NIV, Pure Joy)" it's also because - there's more; your lockdown trial is productive
* So firstly, the trial reveals what was there (faith), and then it produces what wasn't there: Q: And what wasn't there: steadfastness, "perseverance, endurance".
* **That's the middle of the chain**
  + **Rom 5:3**, *"we rejoice in our sufferings because suffering produces endurance"*
  + more about this later.
* [this is not rocket science; even unbelievers see that stumbling blocks can be stepping stones...... what's unique here is that only 'Christian faith' has God's purpose and power behind it]

**v4 is the 2nd section, and it overlaps the first** "and... steadfastness have its full effect" - it's like a supply-chain

* (there's a play on words - LIT: steadfastness' perfect work is a perfect person)
* Here is **the end** of the chain, and it is a stunning claim: the chain culminates in **'that you may be *perfect*, *complete*, *lacking in nothing*':**
  + **No lack //** : perfect=Quality; complete= Quantity / a Perfect person
  + >> [this is 'rocket science' - non-believers can turn lemons and into lemonade but not peirasmos into perfection] // That's why I call this, "the Chain of Perfection".
* what does this mean?
  + **not** sinless perfection : 1 John
  + **not** momentary flashes of angelic behaviour (no, this is a result of a process - trials, endurance, wholeness)
  + **but : Christ-likeness**
    - now, not that we'd ever 'attain' **cf Php 3**
    - legit and easier translate "mature" - but let's not diminish the purpose of the chain and the cause of **Joy**! These 3 words making a point - could James be any more clear!
      * We long for the perfect body, the perfect career, the perfect family - and all these longings steal joy... but here's perfection that brings it!
    - It's the "Glory" of Christ taking place in a person
      * The Whole Point of Life here: !! Redemption of the image of God in man
      * cf in line with Paul in ***2 Cor 3 to 5***, *transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another*.
  + APP > The moment is dark, but you have to see God's chain of Perfection! **Redemption of the image of God** **in man -** 
    - Peirsamos to Perfection; Even Christ's mission followed this - And we still 'carry in our bodies the affliction of Christ' - But not like the world in dispair - in Joy! "For the Joy set before Him, he endured the cross"
    - overly quoted, and yet missed: Rom 8:28-29 - All things, *incl trials*, **to conform us** to glory, which seen in **His Son**
  + *Look at it: 2 words*
    - *"perfect"*: **maturity**/
    - "*complete*": 'the whole' , **all faculties** that God has allotted to you
    - (e.g. James 3 - a perfect man bridles tongue, and whole body; learned in trials)
* Now, See the chain - (2) trials of various kinds [none excluded] = (3) testing of faith [eliciting,observing of] => produces perseverance => (4) produces perfection [likeness, whole].
  + CONTRAST!! **Peirasmos:** 3D pattern: desire, deed, death...**, converted into opposite**!
  + **The chain of perfection**: It binds trials to glory, *"Consider it* ***Pure*** *Joy"*  - it's a true story!:

## ILLUS

* Macedonian hope, huge event: God opens doors! Conversion, church-plant, Timothy added
* But then : mobbed with false accusations, identified with rebels; victims of satanic business practices, pitted against the society they came to save...cast into the stocks, chained to the inner-most cell
* But Look at their **Joy**. Before rescued. Still under lockdown... See the ***Glory*** over that prison in the dark of night - probably with the eye nothing to see, only: the praises of God,   
  in the imagination of those who listened intently, to Good News of Hope - that there was a greater truth playing out, and a Saviour God who delivers.
* It's a true story, and it can be yours too - Joy under Lockdown

**So how do we Experience the Joy : ...We've understood the chain, but now we must**

## Choose the Chain

That sounds negative - It's not. If you don't lock yourself into the **chain of perfection**, you'll remain in the chain of despair. The point is - We Experience the Joy ***By Choice***. 2 imperatives that guide us:

1. **Choose**

* (2) First imperative: "***Consider***"
* = intentionally change what you naturally think of trials into spiritual perspective: [exchange your emoji.]
  + No one *chooses* trials. We "*fall into*" them. But you ***can* choose how you view them**.
  + As with Paul and Silas - there was nothing happy about that arrest - in fact Paul was incensed at the injustice and demanded recompense!! **Yet they never lost Joy**.
* Choosing to see your trial as Joy is not ignorance - **it's rational**, See (2) "***consider it*** ***all Joy, for you know that***"
  + We know 1. (review): God's limits and exits in peirasmos (protector, provider)
  + We know 2. God's plan - His God's glory covering the earth as waters the sea, Habakkuk 2:14
  + We know 3. God's strategy! 1pet1:6 "*for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials*"
  + and we know by experience = what our trials produced when we trusted!
* Therefore - **Choose** the Chain... Choose to Experience the Joy - it is a RATIONAL choice

2. Secondly, ***Choose repeatedly***

* 2nd imperative in (4), says "***Let***" steadfastness have its full effect...
* So the chain is only productive, when you ***let*** it (v4, "let..."). ie It's possible to interrupt the work. (**cf** 1:6, and 12)
* acknowledge: **Perseverance isn't automatic**. If you choose now and just now, but then not just-just now the alternative just just-now is *temptations - sin - death*!
* ILLUS: "A Chain is only as strong as **its weakest link**", and there is only 1 link here: *Perseverance* = *to remain under*; - **choose repeatedly**
  + I said we'd come back to perseverance - it's the make or break.
  + Rom 5:3 endurance makes character...an ability to remain; stickability, tenacity-, discipline, courage
  + **APP**: Perseverance = **the muscle of faith**. [Better you get, the more reps you do, More reps, the better you get]. When you get
    - in that hard situation with creditor, debtor; to not flee neither oppress: ***repeatedly*** behave to the glory of Christ;
    - in conflict with someone; to neither destroy nor ignore: ***repeatedly*** seek peace
    - when confronted with temptation,... to turn it into glory, exercising the faith-muscle ***once again***. (Until you got muscles like Jared)
* There was a time when the Jailer considered them prisoners in chains - but **their only chain was chain of perfection**: Look what muscles they'd developed and the glory that manifested, glory that even changed the Jailer and his household for eternity
* **The KEY** to **Joy.** ... is the **Chain of Perfection** ;
* **Choose the Joy, and Choose Repeatedly by letting perseverance have it's perfect work**