Pressures That Try Our Faith
James 1:2-3

Introduction:
A. Everyone experiences the pressures of life from time to time (Ill. Employee sorting potatoes)
   1. Obeying the Lord relieves many pressures:
      a. Replaces guilt with forgiveness.
      b. Replaces despair with hope.
   2. Obeying the Lord brings on more pressures.
      a. We can react either pessimistically or optimistically.
      b. Our text shows that we should face them optimistically (“count it all joy”)
B. We want to discuss some faith-trying pressures that faithful Christians must overcome by faith.

Discussion:
I. The Pressure to Conform to the World (cf. Rom. 12:2)
   A. To avoid being considered strange (1 Pet. 4:3,4)
   B. To “go with the flow” rather than consulting the Scriptures.

II. The Pressure of Suffering.
   A. The pressure to blame God for suffering common to humanity.
   B. The pressure to sin in the face of sufferings for Christ’s sake (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12)
      1. By considering persecution a curse rather than blessing (Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41).
      2. By abandoning principle to ease the persecution.

III. The Pressure of Materialism.
   A. Affects both the poor and the rich (1 Tim. 6:9-10, 17-19)
   B. Can cause one put spiritual things on the back burner (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18; Matt. 6:19-21, 33).

IV. The Pressure of Relationships.
   A. The pressure to maintain good relationships at all cost (Luke 14:26)
   B. The pressure of having to sometime leave loved one for the gospel’s sake (Mark 10:29, 30)

V. The Pressure of Heresies/Factions.
   A. Too many allow “church troubles” to throw them
      1. May “take sides” without regard for truth.
      2. May just quit of disgust for the strife.
   B. God can overrule factions to serve a good purpose (1 Cor. 11:19)

VI. The Pressure of Disappointment.
   A. Christians and congregations sometimes disappoint us.
   B. Disappointment is no excuse for us to quit or make shipwreck of our faith.
      1. Jesus did not quit when many turned away (John 6:66)
      2. The eleven did not quit when Judas betrayed.
      3. Paul did not quit, nor suggest that other quit, because he was disappointed in some.
   C. Remember that the foundation is sure, not matter what brethren do (2 Tim. 2:17-19)

Conclusion:
A. We can allow pressures to weaken our faith and resolve.
B. Or, we can allow them to inspire endurance (patience) to overcome.
C. We can allow them to stumbling blocks or stepping stones.

Another Sermon by Edward O Bragwell