

God-Centered Thinking in Trials, Part 2 (James 1:2-4)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on May 24, 2009

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I want to introduce this sermon by introducing a man and a marriage that was truly a *living sermon* of our passage.

- Christopher Love was a Puritan pastor in England in the 1600s
- You may not know his name, but he is a true hero in every sense of the word. As a preacher, it's said 'he was greatly loved by those to whom he ministered, even by those who disagreed with him on the matters of the church. While ministering at ... his post a plague struck the town and castle. As many died around him, Christopher courageously stayed on to minister. Though he exposed himself to infections and the dying, the Lord preserved him.'¹
- He was no stranger to the 'various trials' James 1:2 speaks of
- He and his wife Mary had 5 children in their brief marriage, but the first 2 (both named Mary) died tragically when they were very young. Christopher died before seeing the birth of their 5th child
- Christopher's life and ministry ended at the age I am now, age 33, not a long life, marriage, ministry, but his written works surpass many other more famous Puritans from his time
- It was only in the past decade that his works were reprinted more
- Don Kistler explains why he resurrected his story and works:

'Christopher Love was, for me, the first person to acceptably answer the question I had heard asked so many times, "Why did God ordain sin?" His answer was that God ordained sin so that we would know Him in the fullness of His attributes. If God had never ordained sin we would only have known Him as a Creator, but because of sin we can know Him as a Redeemer ... Time and again, as I read Love, I saw thoughts and answers I had not seen before. The brilliance of his mind made me want to know him better. The story of a man who lost his life for his convictions (while others of his colleagues were released) and a wife who was left with young children and no husband touched me on a emotional level to the same extent that his sermons touched me on an intellectual and theological level. I began to think that others might appreciate their story as much as I did.'²

When Christopher Love's wife Mary was nearing her third trimester of pregnancy, Christopher was imprisoned unjustly. He would never see his unborn son *James* (fitting name in light of study in book of James, written by a pastor to Christians in trials).

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Last week we looked at some in Scripture who considered it all joy and rejoiced even when in prison and persecuted. As encouraging as it is to read of biblical heroes like Paul and Silas in Philippi, sometimes we may wonder if such things occur outside of the pages of Scripture. Well, Christopher Love was a real flesh-and-blood man of weakness closer to our time, a man who was like us in many ways and who by the same grace of God available to us fulfilled the command to consider it all joy in his greatest trials.

His joy was sustained in prison by the Scriptures he knew and the sermons he was able to write. When he was in prison they tried to take away his joy in writing sermons by confiscating his pen and paper and preventing him from penning his prison experience, but in those various trials he told his wife ‘that **he never enjoyed more of God than when he was in close confinement**. He told friends that his comfort was that though they could shut him up from his relations, they could not imprison him from his God.’³ Despite his desperate situation his spirits remained high. A depth of **joy that had been previously unknown** filled him as he communed with God, Whom he would soon see face to face.⁴

How did his wife respond when she got the news that the court had unjustly sentenced her husband to die very soon by public execution? What would you say to your husband preparing for death? Here’s what Mary Love wrote to Christopher July 14, 1651

‘I desire freely to give you up into your Father's hands, and not only look upon it as a crown of glory for you to die for Christ, but as an honor to me that I should have a husband to leave for Christ... **I am persuaded that He will sweeten the way for you to come to the enjoyment of it**. When you art putting on your clothes that morning, O think, "I am now putting on my wedding garments to go to be everlastingly married to my Redeemer."

When the messenger of death comes to you, let him not seem dreadful to you, but look on him as a messenger that brings you tidings of eternal life. When you go up the scaffold, think (as you said to me) that it is but your fiery chariot to carry you up to your Father's house.

And when you lay down your precious head to receive your Father's stroke, remember that you said to me: Though your head was severed from the body, yet in a moment your soul should be united to your Head, the Lord Jesus, in heaven ... And though it may seem something bitter, that by the hands of men we are parted a little sooner than otherwise we might have been, yet let us consider that **it is the decree and will of our Father** [God is sovereign], and it will not be long ere we shall **enjoy** one another in heaven again. [in other words, there was a “joy set before him” as there was for Christ] ... Remember that you may eat your dinner with bitter herbs, yet you shall have a sweet supper with Christ that night. My dear, by what I write unto you, I do not hereby undertake to teach you; for **these comforts I have received from the Lord by you ...**⁵

On August 21st, Mary’s pregnancy was about full-term and she would give birth less than 2 weeks later to James when she wrote to her husband the for last time, the day before his execution (what would you write to your loved one about to die the next day?)

I call [you “My Heavenly Dear”] because God has put heaven into you before He has taken you to heaven ... tomorrow, heaven's gates will be opened and you shall be in the full **enjoyment** of all those glories which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can the heart of man understand ... you shall be swallowed up in the **enjoyment** of heaven ... **O lift up your heart with joy when you lay your dear head on the block** in the thought of this: that you are laying your head to rest in your Father's bosom ... O let not one troubled thought for your wife and babes arise within you. Your God will be our God and our portion. He will be a husband to your widow and a father to your children [she had quoted Jer. 49:11 earlier]; the grace of your God will be sufficient for us.

Now, my dear, **I desire willingly and cheerfully to resign my right in you to your Father and my Father**, who has the greatest interest in you. And confident I am, though men have separated us for a time yet our God will ere long bring us together again where we shall **eternally enjoy** one another, never to part more.

O let me hear how God bears up your heart, and **let me taste of those comforts that support you, that they may be as pillars of marble to bear up my sinking spirit**. I can write no more. Farewell, farewell, my dear, till we meet there where we shall never bid farewell more; till which time I leave you in the bosom of a loving, tender-hearted Father, and so I rest till I shall forever rest in Heaven, *Mary Love*.⁶

She looked forward to meeting her husband in heaven, and I look forward to meeting in heaven this extraordinary woman and her extraordinary husband who lived this passage in James 1 far better than I can ever preach it. It's very moving to me to see how God's truth and grace does its work in a life, and I pray the same truth and grace that worked in them will do its work in our lives today.

This God-centered thinking in trials we saw last week, this supernatural joy in a sovereign God by suffering man, is not unattainable and is not even entirely unusual in biblical record:

- Job: *"But it is still my consolation, And I rejoice in unsparing pain, That I have not denied the words of the Holy One."* (Job 6:10)
- David: *"I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness, Because You have seen my affliction; You have known the troubles of my soul"* (Ps 31:7)
- The prophet Habakkuk: *Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.* (3:17-18 NIV)
- The early church rejoiced in their various trials (Acts 5:41) of persecution, considering it a privilege God allowed them
- The writer of Hebrews said to the early Hebrew Christians "you ... **accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that** you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." (Hebrews 10:34)
- The psalmist writes that for even a barren woman (great trial for an OT Jewish wife), God *"makes the barren woman abide in the house As [or like] a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!"* (Psalm 113:9)
- Paul wrote in Acts 20:24 that he knew various trials awaited him everywhere he went, *"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course [NKJV "with joy"] and the ministry..."*

Several of those passages I just read have the word "consider" just like James 1:2, or "knowing that" like v. 3. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (and that includes thinking in trials which determines our joyful attitude more than our circumstances). Your mindset and thought patterns are the focus here, not your emotions. Biblical counselor Jay Adams has written at this point to help Christians who don't *feel* like joy in trials (or that they ever could):

‘The problem is that your feelings are headed in the wrong direction. That’s because the sinful response pattern to trouble you have developed triggers all the wrong emotional responses. But God doesn’t command you to *feel* joyful in trials. He knows you too well. You aren’t constructed that way – you can’t turn your feelings on and off like hot and cold water from a faucet. Emotions aren’t under your direct control.

Look at verse 2 again. James doesn’t say “feel joyful,” about the trial, but “*consider* it all joy.” ... there’s something you can do whether you feel like it or not ... The word *consider* is the key to handling both inner and outer responses to trials (the right outer responses depend ultimately on the right inner ones). The word expresses what you must learn to do inside. It has to do with your thought processes. [We] who handle trials poorly do so because of poor inner responses to them. Trouble comes, and you get angry, gloomy, or whatever, just as you have *learned* to. In fact, you taught yourself those responses so well that you automatically respond that way.

Now consider a moment what has been going on inside ... [the Christian] tells himself, *This isn’t fair. I deserve something better than that!* ... The more he allows himself to think like that, the gloomier he becomes and the worse things get.

“Yes, you say, that’s exactly what happens. But I still claim I can’t control my feelings.” Right! But you can control your thinking. It’s what [your mind] *considers* the trial to be that controls [your] feelings. And that’s explicitly where God tells you to focus your attention: on your thoughts, *not* on your feelings. Learn to *consider* the trial a ground for rejoicing. Don’t allow the slightest negative thought about it to enter your mind. See this as God’s world, under His sovereign control and *everything* that happens as a means of honoring Him and bringing good to His children ... [the original Greek word translated] “consider, count, regard” comes from the idea of “*leading* one’s self to think” one way or another ...

In trials you cannot directly control your emotions, but you can change them indirectly by *leading* your mind toward the right biblical considerations. Thinking about trials God’s way generates proper inner and outer responses. As you begin to see trials more and more from God’s viewpoint, eventually you will reach the place where you too can rejoice in them.

This doesn’t just happen; it takes a deliberate act to wrench your mind out of the pagan cesspool of thought into which you have allowed it to wade ... paths into which your sinful nature used to lead your mind. But now [as a Christian by God’s grace] seize control of the reins and lead your mind to the pure, refreshing waters of life.’⁷

The first 2 keys to God-centered thinking in trials from last week:

1. A Slave Attitude (v. 1)
2. A Joyful Mindset (v. 2)
3. **An Enduring Faith (v. 3)**

³ *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

The phrase “testing of your faith” is one of the keys to the entire book. Some writers call it a theme / *the* theme or purpose of the book of James: *the tests of true faith*. True faith will endure (as Jesus said, “he who endures to the end will be saved”), not meaning human effort saves us, but that God’s saving power produces enduring faith, not just intellectual belief (2:19).

But even true faith is lacking in certain areas, and this text says that’s one of the reasons for trials, to grow our faith, to produce more endurance so we can endure to the end.

We might think we could never endure a trial like Christopher and Mary Love (neither did Christopher think he could when he was asked if he was ready to suffer during his ordination), but the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is God will not allow His children to go through temptations or trials beyond what they are able to bear. His *future grace* at the moment will be sufficient whenever we “encounter various trials.”

The word “trials / temptations” in that 1 Corinthians passage and also in James 1:2 is defined as:

‘trial or testing *directed towards an end*, and the end is that he who is tested should emerge stronger and purer from the testing ... The idea [in James 1:2] is not that of seduction into sin but of strengthening and purifying. For instance, a young bird is said to test [same Greek root] its wings. The Queen of Sheba was said to come to test [same word] the wisdom of Solomon. God was said to test [same Grk. word] Abraham, when he appeared to be demanding the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:1) [which James 2:21 will use as an illustration to prove his faith]. When Israel came into the Promised Land, God did not remove the people who were already there. He left them so that Israel might be tested [same word again] in the struggle against them (Judges 2:22; 3:1, 4) ...

[Life’s various trials all come from a sovereign and loving God and] are not meant to make us fall; they are meant to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not meant to make us weaker; they are meant to make us stronger. Therefore we should not [run at all costs from] them; we should rejoice in them. The Christian is like the athlete. The heavier the course of training he undergoes, the more he is glad, because he knows that it is fitting him all the better for victorious effort.’⁸

Athletes know there’s no thrill of victory without pain of practice.

Parallel in Romans 5:3 (ESV): “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance”

Very similar language is used by both James and Paul. In both cases, the joy is only possible in *knowing that* (choosing to fix our minds on and remind ourselves that) the momentary temporary testing and suffering is producing something greater in the future.

The athletic imagery we see in the NT is such a clear illustration of this point. If you ever played on a school sports team, you know the value of endurance through practice and pain by *knowing that* future pleasure in the game could not come without it. If we just looked at the present day’s level of ease or wind-sprints, we might give up and go home to relax watching TV, but we endured for the future gain that was greater. The joy set before us helped us to endure as we focused on the end result, not the day’s feelings.

Lifting weights can be enjoyable, working out and sweating hard can and does give people joy, because they know that in the physical realm: No pain, no gain. Muscles have to be stretched and tested to grow. Somehow we think in the spiritual realm we should be able to gain with no pain or tests. But the NT calls the Christian life a race, a marathon that requires we train in pain to endurance.

Heb. 12:1-3: “let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of **faith**, who **for the joy** set before Him **endured** the cross...**consider Him** who has **endured** ... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Look at James 1:3 again: “... the testing of your faith produces endurance.” That word “testing” is a word with a different nuance than v. 2, the imagery moves to the refining process of the ancient world. The same root word is used in the familiar AWANA passage 2 Tim. 2:15: “study to show yourself *approved* unto God.”

In this context, Thomas Manton points out, trials are “not only to approve but to *improve*.” In fact, the refining process of that day not only proved the genuineness of items like gold and silver, but they also removed the impurities and dross that can only be burned off when the heat is really turned up high. Job could endure his various trials with this perspective: “*But [God] knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*” (23:10)

Peter told his suffering readers to rejoice with this perspective:

1 Peter 1:6-8 *In this you **greatly rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by **various trials**, so that the **proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though **tested by fire**, may be found to result in praise ...you **greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible** ...*

The refiner would heat up the metals so that impurities would rise to the surface and then could be taken away. He would look into the molten metal, and if necessary, would repeat the process as many times until it was pure enough that he could see his own reflection. That’s the image in James 1:3 -- the Lord is the Refiner who tests us by turning up the heat of trials so that impurities in our life will come to the surface and can be removed. And He will keep repeating the process until the reflection of Christ is seen

v. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing [i.e., like Jesus]

God-Centered Thinking in Trials also includes:

4. A Submissive Will (v. 4)

Verse 4 says, “*Let endurance have its perfect result*”

The word *endurance* in the Greek is from 2 roots, *hupo* (under) and *meno* (stay, remain, abide) - means literally abiding under and thus remaining under some discipline or some person or some thing which calls for the submission of one's will to when our natural tendency would be to rebel. *Hupomone* portrays the picture of steadfastly and unflinchingly bearing up under a heavy load. It describes the quality of one's character which does not cause them to give in to circumstances or succumb under trial. Inherent in the concept of *hupomone* is a forward look or the ability to focus on what is beyond the current pressure, trial or affliction. Clearly this is a supernatural work in the believer's heart by the Spirit of God, as we interact with the trials God allows or sends into our life.⁹

So the definition of the word “endurance” by itself includes remaining with a submissive will to God’s will, and verse 4 makes this even more explicit: “let endurance have its perfect result.”

The clear implication is that if we do not submit our will to what God says and patiently endure trials outside our control, if our focus is getting out at all costs and we refuse to consider it joy if we must bear under the trial, we are disobeying God’s command here and we are short-circuiting God’s work in us for our growth.

Maybe you’ve heard the story of the man who found a cocoon. One day a small opening appeared; he sat and watched a butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled weak wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man in his haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were God’s way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

God sends various trials not just to hurt, but to help, whether tests, trials or tribulations. Sometimes they are of our own making and at other times they are just a part of life’s problems that we all experience. If God allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. And we could never fly.

We would have never been saved if it were not for the pain of conviction and as 2 Corinthians 7 describes the “godly sorrow over our sin that brings repentance unto life.” And we would not be sanctified or growing without continual repentance and refining. The Greek word for repentance has the root *meta* that we get the word “metamorphosis” from, a transformation like a butterfly. We need to let God’s work continue to its intended result, as Eph. 5 says, that the church would be sanctified and purified and presented in all her glory and beauty as the bride of Christ.

God-Centered Thinking in Trials lastly includes:

5. **A Goal of Christlikeness (v. 4b)** – not a goal of comfort

“... so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”

Or as I summed that up last week, as much like Christ as we can be

Paraphrase by J. B. Phillips: *When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realise that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed ...*

Listen to 1:2-4 again in a different amplified version, Kenneth Wuest's *Expanded Translation of the Greek NT*:

'Be constantly rejoicing. Consider it a matter for unadulterated joy ... whenever you fall into the midst of variegated trials which surround you, knowing experientially that the approving of your faith, that faith having been put to the test for the purpose of being approved, and having met the test, has been approved, [this process] produces a patience which bears up and does not lose heart or courage under trials. But be allowing the aforementioned patience to be having its complete work in order that you may be spiritually mature and complete in every detail, lacking in nothing.'

Turn to John 15. We could look at the different terms for perfect, complete, lacking nothing, but what I want to do in closing is look at the perfect example of all, our perfect Savior, who fulfilled perfectly what his half-brother James commands in our text, including considering it all joy in trials. I don't know if you often think of the Lord as joyful and having perfect joy, but what struck me is that we are not only to have joy *in the Lord*, God also desires we have the joy *of the Lord*, the very joy of God in Christ!

John 15:11 (NASB95) ¹¹ *"These things I have spoken to you so that **My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.***

John 16:21 *"Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because **of the joy that a child has been born into the world.**"* ²² *"Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and **your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.***
 ... ²⁴ *"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.***

That's similar to what the next verse in our study in James (1:5) says as part of this instruction for joy in trials; ask for wisdom and God will give it, and God gives a supernatural joy as well in trials.

John 17:13 *"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that **they may have My joy made full in themselves.**"*

One of the reasons our Lord spoke the words on earth He did was so that we would have His joy made full in us. Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured, gives us His joy as well to endure trial.

It's not just joy *in the Lord*, but as Nehemiah said to the Jews who'd been in captivity, "the joy *of the Lord* is your strength." Or as I said last week, tying in with the slave attitude James starts with, God will say to His good and faithful slaves on the last day "Enter the **joy of your Master.**" Luke 15 says there is great joy in heaven in the presence of angels when a sinner repents.

If you are here this morning and have never repented of your sins, if you are pursuing your happiness in the world, if you delight in your sin and not the Savior, if you are seeking pleasures to satisfy you in other places, that's the wrong place; I plead with you today:

- Lay it down and bow down before the Lord in whose presence Psalm 16 says “is fullness of joy, in His right hand are never-ending pleasures,” true pleasures, eternal joy!
- Isaiah 55 asks why do you consume what does not have real substance, and “*what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me [God says] and eat what is good, and **delight yourself in abundance ... come to Me ... Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way ... you will go out with joy***”
- Repent of your sin and trust in His death on the cross for you, for the joy before Him; and as you trust Him as Savior and Lord/Master, you can enter the joy of your Master!

You may not often think of God as a God of joy, but there is a joy of God, from God, and in God that we are to enter into and as believers to consider all joy in light of in our trials, to God be the glory as we seek to enjoy Him now and forever, in life or death.

What did Christopher Love write back to his wife as he prepared to be martyred for his faith? Notice as I read his letter; his joyful mindset, his enduring faith, his submissive will to God’s will, and his goal of Christlikeness, not comfort. He had joy in his great trial

More Dear to Me than Ever,

... It adds to my **rejoicing** that I have so good and gracious a wife to part with for the Lord Jesus. In your grief, I have been grieved; but **in your joy I have been comforted**. Surely, nature could never help you to bear so heavy a stroke with so much silence and submission to the hand of God! Oh, dearest, every line which you write **gladdens my heart**. I dare not think that there is such a creature as Mary Love in the world. For Kit and Mall [the two living children], I can think of them without trouble, leaving them to so good a God and so good a mother.

Be comforted concerning your husband, who may more honor God in his death than in his life. **The will of the Lord be done; [your husband is] fully satisfied with the hand of God**. Though there is but little between him and death, he knows there is but little between him and heaven, and **that ravishes his heart ...**

His final letter from the Tower of London:

August 22, 1651

The Day of My Glorification

My most gracious beloved,

I am now going from a prison to a palace. I have finished my work, I am now to receive my wages. I am now going to heaven where are two of my children, and leaving you on the earth where are three of my babes. Those two above need not my care, but the three below need yours. It comforts me to think two of my children are in the bosom of Abraham and three of them will be in the arms and care of so tender a godly mother.

I know you are a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet be comforted; though your sorrow be great for your husband's going out of the world, yet the pains shall be the less in bringing your child into the world. You shall be a joyful mother [sounds like what Jesus said], though you be a sad widow. God has many mercies in store for you; the prayers of a dying husband for you will not be lost. To my shame I speak it: I never prayed so much for you at liberty as I have done in prison. I cannot write more, but I have a few practical counsels to leave with you:

... **Swallow up your will in the will of God.** It is a bitter cup we are to drink, but it is the cup our Father has put into our hands. When Paul was to go to suffer at Jerusalem, the Christians could say, "**The will of the Lord be done.**" Oh, say you, when I go to Tower Hill, "The will of the Lord be done."

Rejoice in my joy ... The joy of the Lord is my strength; oh, let it be yours also!

Dear wife, farewell. I will call you wife no more. I shall see your face no more, yet I am not much troubled for now I am going to meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I shall be eternally married.

Your dying yet most affectionate friend till death,
*Christopher Love*¹⁰

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon... August 22, 1651, Christopher Love ascended the steps to the platform of the scaffold at Tower Hill. Accompanying him were some of his fellow ministers, Edmund Calamy, Simeon Ashe, and Thomas Watson, who were there to stand with him before he stepped into Paradise. The scaffold was surrounded by a huge crowd that had shown up either to see one last time the face of this beloved saint of God, or to watch this [one they hated] have his blood spilt. One report said that a particular man in the crowd who had come for the second reason, upon hearing the final words and prayer of [Rev.]¹¹ Love, he bewailed his sins and was converted there that day as the Rev. Love died.

Upon receiving leave to speak to the crowd and to pray, Rev. Love opened his mouth and poured out his final words spoken on earth. "... I am exchanging a guard of soldiers for a guard of angels, to carry me to Abraham's bosom." ... Love stated that he bore no ill toward any. With his last word he desired to speak of **the glory of God rather than himself**. Expressing his pastoral heart even at this point of death, he warned the peoples of the evils of the time and in London. To the city he urged them on to love their ministers, to submit to their church leadership, to keep faithful to the Scriptures and be wary of strange doctrines, to bewail the loss of the godly ministers who have recently been martyred, and to seek peace (particularly with the brothers of Scotland). Next, he expressed his love toward and **gratitude for** his congregation ... Rev. Love prayed for his accusers, for England and Scotland to be one, and for the future King Charles II. Also, he prayed for a friend who was to be executed after him. He closed by begging God for strength to complete his task in these final moments and by committing his spirit into the hands of God.

Love thanked the sheriff [presiding officer] for his kindness and said, "Well, I go from a block to the bosom of my Savior." ... Blessing the name of Jesus, he then took leave of his fellow ministers on the scaffold with him after praying with them. "**I am full of joy and peace in believing. I lie down with a world of comfort as if I were to lie down in my bed.**" As he prepared to lay his head upon the block Mr. Ashe called out to him, "Dear brother, how do you find your heart?" Mr. Love replied, "**I bless God, sir, I am full of joy and comfort as ever my heart can hold.**"¹²

What a great story ... what a great Savior! God's grace was sufficient so that the greatest trial could not shake his joy in the Lord, and he entered the joy of His Master. God's grace will be sufficient for us as well for whatever various trials we encounter.

¹ “The Life and Death of Christopher Love,” by Christopher Fales, <http://www.semperreformanda.com/christop.htm>

² Preface to *A Spectacle Unto God: The life and death of Christopher Love*, by Don Kistler, Soli Deo Gloria Publications. [I have taken the liberty to update the old English pronouns (*thee / thou*) and verb endings (*est, eth,* etc.) only]

³ Kistler, p. 56.

⁴ Fales, *Ibid.*

⁵ Kistler, p. 1-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

⁷ Jay Adams, *A Thirst for Wholeness*, p. 17-18.

⁸ William Barclay, *The letters of James and Peter*. 1976, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, p. 42.

⁹ www.preceptaustin.org

¹⁰ Kistler, *Ibid.*

¹¹ “Rev.” added before “Love” in this account to avoid confusion.

¹² Fales, *Ibid.*