***James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.***

Our world likes fast. Everything quick. One-click Amazon, delivered directly to the door. Oh how we love our Amazon brought directly to our door. And, when we’re honest with ourselves, we want God to be that way too. Microwave Miracles, Instant Interventions, Superior returns with minimal investment. But that is not the God we serve. When we have a clear understanding of God and what He is working in our lives, we appreciate the Truth of the scripture today. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* Hebrews 11:1. Faith is believing, trusting, and persevering – sure, oh so certainly sure, that God is at work, and we will be the better for it. Faith is the start that must endure to the end.

Our God is a Craftsman. As any good craftsman will tell you, there are certain things that can be done very quickly and there are some that happen far more slowly. Cutting 2 ft sections of a 2x4? Quick! Waiting for that third coat of polyurethane to cure? Not as quick. Hand carving intricate detail? Much longer. God is a Craftsman, and He is working a mighty work in you.

We love the stories about Blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10, the Centurions servant in Matthew 8, Jairus’s daughter in Luke 9. Jesus speaks and miracles happen – Microwave Quick with Gourmet results.

But what if God’s great work in your life is more like Joseph’s 2+ years in prison? More like Abraham’s 25 years waiting for Isaac? More like Joshua’s 40+ years wandering in the desert, with people who refused to listen to him and Caleb? Or more like Noah’s 75-125 years building the ark while the neighbors scoffed and sneered? God’s miracle may not be Minute Rice fast, but Redwood tree slow. Faith is the string ties us to God, no matter how long the journey.

Verse 2 says *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.* Now, I cannot be alone here when I tell you that I find this a hard saying. Account it as cheerfulness, that’s what the Greek word means here, when you are surrounded by adversities. Be cheerful. Count it all joy. People take this verse to mean that joy springs from the various trials. If someone came to me and said, “I find so much joy in things going wrong in my life! I just hope one day to experience bankruptcy and maybe some extra grief or sadness thrown in to really raise my joy”, I’d be looking for the name of a good psychiatrist!

We must not look for the reason to count adversities as joy in verse 2. We find our reason to count it all joy in verse 3. Verse 3 *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.* We don’t find our joy in the adversity, but in the knowledge that God is at work in our lives. Knowing, being certain of, believing with no doubt that the testing of our faith, tested by this adversity, tested by the various trials and difficulties back in verse 2 is producing something in our life. The crafting blade that we feel as God works on the beautiful relief carving, the wonderful scene that He is creating… the pain, the grief, the frustration, the sadness… is producing something. Our joy comes from knowing what God is producing. Patience. That word should look very familiar. When Jesus is talking about the ground that received the His Word and produced 100-fold in Luke 8:15 *But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.* The word for patience is that same – Cheerful endurance. Pursuing the things hoped for, even when they cannot be seen. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, manifesting God’s Joy in our life.

Verse 4 - *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.* Let – allow patience, cheerful endurance, produced through the testing of faith, because of the adversities that we encountered and endured… sounds like we’re closing the loop here… have it’s perfect work – let patience complete the task, complete the work that God is working… why? That you might be perfect, complete in the transformation that Jesus is bringing in you, bringing in me, so we are complete, lacking nothing.

Faith, complete trust in God, that, come what may, whatever we are facing, we know, are certain, that He is completing a mighty work in us. Our job is to believe and allow that work to be completed. *Psalm 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me.* Every day we choose the way of truth. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life. In order to come to the Father, we come by way of Faith in Him. God’s work doesn’t take a short time. God’s work takes our lifetime. Though we love to hear of the storm calming at Jesus speaking 3 words, we must remember that the preparation of Moses took 80 years, and his purpose was not complete for another 40. Noah got on the Ark, and it rained 40 days and 40 nights… but when the rain stopped, it took almost a year until he stepped out onto dry land.

This week, let’s look at our lives. What are the adversities that are testing our faith? Let’s recall that the testing of faith is producing something called patience, cheerful endurance – which will ultimately make us complete, lacking nothing. That is where we find the Joy. Our Most High God is working a great masterpiece in our lives, but it’s handmade, not mass produced.