



1st Five Seconds

Most battles, while they may take a while to complete, are effectively won or lost at the beginning, in the 1st Five seconds. One combatant takes the offensive, planning and expecting to win, while the other is defensive, just hoping to get by, through and away. Often the winner triumphs simply based on the element of surprise – his opponent wasn't expecting the attack and, in the beginning, may even mentally deny the threat and danger. The 1st Five seconds are usually crucial to success!

There is one well-known verse in the *Bible*, critical to and for the 1st Five Seconds, that I have not believed. Oh I can say I believe it, but it would be clear to anyone that saw how I lived, and what I did, that I did not REALLY believe it.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. James 1:2

I may have seen the truth of this verse after having come through some battles, on the “back-end” of various trials, but not when I faced them, within the critical 1st Five Seconds!

“Discipline” & “Trials” – we think of them as negative, bad, things to avoid; the *Bible* says they are key friends we need to cultivate IF we are to develop, improve and mature. Parents protect and shield young children while, at the same time, teaching them disciplines necessary to protect themselves. God slowly (or quickly in some cases) removes his protection (allowing trials) so we seek and embrace appropriate disciplines to mitigate or protect against threats of the world, both physical and spiritual. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds” is the discipline of remembering we are at war until the day we die; and the skirmishes (trials), large and small, will be largely won or lost in the 1st Five Seconds!

My reaction to the *James 1:2* verse hauntingly reminds me of the following warning of Jesus – surprisingly, the term “Lord, Lord” only appears 3 times in the *Bible*, twice in the first set of verses below, from *Matthew*, and the other time in the parallel verses in *Luke*:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Mt 7:21 - 24

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.” Lk 6:46 - 49

In a like manner, when I read about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah I think about the religious people in those two cities. You can be sure that on the day fire destroyed everything and everyone, the “better” people were confident of their position with God – “How can God not be pleased with me when I am so much better than the other, very wicked, people all around?” They considered themselves the religious “cream of the crop,” yet we are told, in spite of this, they were destroyed as well! Being better than others, even everyone around, offers no real comfort when the *Bible* clearly and consistently teaches we are “saved” or destroyed based not on our relationship or comparison with anyone EXCEPT Jesus Christ!

These, and other *Bible* stories (and outright statements of a similar vein), should be a great warning to us all that the very religious may be on the wrong path entirely – it is not words and confidence that make the difference, but who we are and the actions evolving from this reality! So, yes, when I find I am not even close to believing something the *Bible* says is necessary and important (a living, active, believing, not cheap, do nothing, “faith”) I am frightened! Back to the case at hand, looking at the 1st Five Seconds and how better to control and benefit from them.

Joy appears 210 times in the *Bible*; *pure joy*, on the other hand, occurs a single time to emphasize, in this case, the REAL joy that SHOULD accompany trials:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, [and while God is not obliged to tell why the why, He does] **because** you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. Jas 1:2 – 6

No, I have not believed this verse – in fact, I have done just about everything to avoid trials (including sins of all different types – none help). But, **by grace**, this is going to change – NOW! As is true of all Grace, it only comes after a realistic look at ourselves (how pitiful and helpless we really are – humbling ourselves) and seeking God’s help to do what we cannot otherwise, in ourselves, do!

And to change, the 1st Five Seconds are going to have to be the focus and developing discipline – before I panic, plot, scheme, sin . . . to get away from a trial (it is amazing how much wrong can be done in such a short time period).

The first thing the devil shouts in my ear, when I face a trial, is: “What are you doing wrong? Do ANYTHING you have to but get out of this trial – it is bad! . . .” As long as I listen to (and worse yet dialogue with) him I am defeated! A trial may or may not be my fault, but, in any case, each trial offers an opportunity to face it with joy and Great Expectations it is for my good in developing perseverance so that I will become mature and complete, not lacking anything! Trials – to see if we will do right and where we don’t highlight where we need more grace, faith and D2 (Defining Disciplines) to successfully face future, greater, trials. We know, in observing others, it is not the size of trials that dictates our success, but our ability to face and “lift” them! Trials either crush a 90 pound weakling or work for and to their good so the devil and world cannot continue throwing sand in their face.



Trials are forks in the road revealing who/what we choose – the straight, right, bold way or the crooked, perverse and wrong way! The discipline of the 1st Five Seconds is key in this battle.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Ro 12:2

God’s will is that trials come our way – they are His chosen vehicle to show us our shortcomings and weaknesses, humbling us so we see our need of, and seek, grace (again!)

Developing the discipline of this awareness, being prepared for a successful 1st Five Seconds, is key to our benefiting from trials rather than their defeating us.

Trials increase with age. Money offers little or no security against them. Being “religious” protects us only when it is a real and true knowledge and faith in One who can guard and safeguard us. To be successful against trials we must train and strengthen ourselves with daily physical and spiritual D² (Defining Disciplines) – see [Seeking an Equilibrium of Excellence](#) for some of these key disciplines.

Trials WILL come! Expect and subdue them in the 1st Five Seconds!