

Enduring Trials

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).

Peter Jackson



Chapter one of the epistle of James teaches us that trials are used by God to bring maturity into the life of a believer just as David experienced many trials that God used to fit him for the task of ruling Israel.

David was despised by his eldest brother Eliab; his wife Michal was taken from him by Saul and given to another man; for years David hid from Saul and with a band of faithful men, lived in caves or in Philistine country; his parents had to relocate and live in the land of Moab and the Philistines occupied his home town of Bethlehem.

Many Psalms reflect the difficult times David endured but he could testify to the faithfulness of God saying:

“He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me...The LORD was my stay” (Ps.18:17-18).

Paul also indicated that

“tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom.5:3-5), and

*“in all things **approving ourselves** as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses” (2Cor.6:4).*

Joy in Trials?

James opens his epistle with these words:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (various trials)” (James 1:2).

It is not a question of “if” we are tested but “when” we are tested. The Christians in the early Church faced persecution from unbelieving Jews and from the pagans which no doubt brought financial loss, and family pressures.

Trials come in many different forms; sickness, the loss of a loved one, unemployment etc. Peter wrote

“though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold (various) temptations (1Peter 1:6).

All trials eventually pass; they are “for a season” and we should look beyond them to the future God has for us. Nobody was tested more than the Lord Jesus and the writer to the Hebrews wrote of Christ:

“Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.”

There was no joy in the cross, but He looked forward to the day when He would be “set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2) and as the captain of our salvation, bring “many sons to glory” (Heb.2:10).

The joy was not the suffering for “He was in an agony...His sweat was as it were great drops of blood”, but He had the prospect that one day, as King of kings and Lord of lords, He will share His glory with His bride, evil will be eternally banished, and creation restored and blessed.

James tells us to “count it all joy”. The word “count” is a financial term that means to evaluate. All of the trials that come across our path have a purpose; God is using them to shape us into people that will bring glory to Him.

Testing is the means that God uses to bring Christians to maturity. We test something to prove its true worth and so that it can be improved; not to destroy it. The proving of pure gold is to refine it and remove the worthless dross.

James goes on to say,

“the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3).

Trials test our faith in God to continue trusting in Him and to learn “patient endurance.” It is this quality that enables a person to weather the storms, and remain on their feet. James is telling his readers not to try to escape from trials but to submit with endurance and joy. This may be hard as someone once said, “When you are surrounded by alligators, it is difficult to remember that your initial intention was to drain the swamp.”

Relief from Trial

God is not vindictive or unkind. He loves us and is doing all things for our good. He will never allow us to be tested beyond our capacity to bear it for

“there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1Cor.10:13).

Nevertheless, we are to *“let patience have her perfect work” (James 1:4).*

Corrie Ten Boom wrote,

“I have heard people say, ‘How good God is! We prayed that it would not rain for our church picnic, and look at the lovely weather!’ Yes, God is good when He sends good weather. But God was also good when He allowed my sister, Betsie, to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp. I remember one occasion when I was very discouraged there. Everything around us was dark, and there was darkness in my heart. I remember telling Betsie that I thought God had forgotten us. ‘No, Corrie,’ said Betsie, ‘He has not forgotten us. Remember His Word: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.”

Corrie concludes,

“There is an ocean of God’s love available - there is plenty for everyone. May God grant you never to doubt that victorious love - whatever the circumstances.”

Maturing the Christian

God’s goal for our life is spiritual maturity. He wants to do a perfect work, *“that ye may be perfect (mature) and entire (complete), wanting (lacking) nothing (a finished product).* (James 1:4).

The Hebrews were encouraged to leave *“the principles of the doctrine of Christ,”* and to *“go on unto perfection (maturity)”* (Heb.6:1).

They knew all about salvation but they were not persevering in the Christian life and going on to maturity. One pastor said, *“After over a quarter century of ministry, I am convinced that*

(lack of) spiritual immaturity is the number one problem in our churches.”

We have, as believers, experienced justification by faith, but James is presenting the fact that we have to live by faith. Daily life is the place where we prove our trust in God and trials are the way God draws us closer to Himself.

Understanding Trials.

How do we understand why difficulties come our way. James says, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God”* (James 1:5).

There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge has to do with grasping facts; wisdom the ability to apply what we have learned. He is saying if any of us lack the ability to understand God’s purpose in allowing trials, just ask God to give us that wisdom to see things in their true light and when wisdom is requested from God, He

*“giveth to all men **liberally** and **upbraideth not**”* (James 1:5).

God can give us, through the Holy Spirit, wisdom beyond measure, and he does so abundantly and without rebuke. He only requires that we trust Him:

*“But let him **ask in faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:6-8).

This Scripture conveys the picture of turbulent water. A ship in a storm can face certain destruction unless it is securely anchored. If our faith is fixed on the Rock of Ages we will weather the storm and eventually understand God’s purpose in the trial.

James calls the vacillating person *“double minded”* and *“unstable.”* It literally means a *“two souled”* person, someone with divided allegiance who is staggering like a drunk because his mind is confused.

The Long View of Trials

The Chinese tell a story about a man who had a horse and an only son. One day the horse broke out of his corral and fled to the hills. *“What bad luck”* exclaimed his neighbours.

"Why?" said the old farmer "how do you know that?" The next night the animal returned for his usual watering and feeding, and with him were 12 wild stallions. Quickly the son slipped out and closed the gate. Now they had 13 horses instead of one.

When the neighbours learned of this, they came to the farmer excitedly. "My, what good luck!" they congratulated. Calmly the old man replied, "How do you know that?"

Some days later when his son was trying to break one of the wild stallions, he was thrown off and broke his leg. Quickly the neighbours returned saying, "What bad luck!" Again the wise farmer answered, "How do you know that?"

A few days afterward a warlord came through the town and conscripted every able-bodied young man, taking them off to war from which they never returned but the farmer's son remained at home because he had broken his leg.

While a Christian is under-going trials, he must always keep the final outcome in view. There's a blessing if we trust and patiently endure.

A Crown of Life Better than Riches

Some believers are poor and others are wealthy and James says, "*Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted*"

(James 1:9).

He is reminding the materially poor that they should be focusing their eyes on the spiritual riches they have in Christ while the rich are warned,

"that as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away" (James 1:10).

Material wealth cannot compare with the rewards available to those who patiently endure the tests sent by God.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

The person that endures trials is a "blessed" person. He also says that they will be the recipients of a "crown of life." God always

rewards faithfulness as the hymn says:

“Oft times the day seems long, our trials hard to bear,
But Christ will soon appear to catch His Bride away,
All tears forever over in God’s eternal day.
It will be worth it all
When we see Christ.”

A crown of life awaits all those who *“love Him”*. Let us trust Him in the trials of life. *“All things work together for good **to them that love God**”*