

Daily Bible Study

“How To Grow In Trials – Part 1” James 1:2-4

February 19– February 25, 2023

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –This week we continue our study of the book of **James** and take as our text, **James 1:2-4**: “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” A few weeks ago we introduced the book of James by looking at the character of the man himself as well as his inspired message. Specifically, we saw in our sermon outline; His Person, Personality, and Purpose. We learned that James, the earthly brother of our Lord was a humble man who saw himself as a *servant* or *slave* of Christ (doulos δούλος – in the original Greek). By using another rich Greek word he gave them (chairein χαίρω – gracious *greetings*, so that they could be encouraged and rejoice in knowing that they had genuine saving faith which could be verified by the lives they lived. He is about to lay out a case in this letter that genuine faith is a faith that can be proven through good works. We mentioned the old saying which is so very true; “Faith alone saves but the faith that saves is never alone”. It is not our good works that save us; instead it is God’s grace and mercy given to us through Jesus as outlined to us in **Ephesians 2:8-10**; “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” This week’s study is entitled “**How To Grow In Trials**”. James is concerned with the growth of the Christians to whom he is writing and this is a theme he gets to right away as he explains there is a goal, and it is maturity: *that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (4b)*. He wants us to grow into mature believers. In order for us to grow, he tells us there is a pathway we must follow and it is the pathway of testing. As we go through this *testing* we are told it *produces patience* and this process is described by James as a *perfect work (3b–4a)*. We will look closer at this throughout the week.

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Help me see and understand that You want me to grow and become more like Jesus in how I live.*

TUESDAY – **James 1:2**: “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...*” James starts this verse out by giving his *brethren* an imperative in the Greek with the word *Count...* The Williams NT translates it as “*you must consider.*” James is calling on believers to make a decisive personal choice about how they face their life situations. He then goes on to say we are to *count it all joy*. Joy is not a natural human response to trouble and therefore we

have to be commanded by The Lord to look upon our trials with *joy*. The phrase is very rich in meaning and speaks to pure, unmixed, complete and total joy. James is speaking to a unique fullness of joy that The Lord graciously gives to His children when they willingly without complaining trust Him fully while enduring trials. Joseph had this attitude; suffering *trials* came upon him in wave after wave. His hateful brothers sold him into slavery and he ended up in Egypt where Potiphar’s wife falsely accused him of rape and after being framed for something he did not do was cast into prison. And it all came upon him through no real fault of his own. Joseph must have spent a good bit of time wondering, why? Nothing is clearer in Scripture than the truth that God sends *trials* and difficulties into the lives of His children because He has certain purposes to achieve. Years later, Joseph had his answer as he was able to see that God had a purpose in it all. It was so that he, Joseph, could be the means of saving his people from terrible famine. Joseph put it in these words: **Genesis 50:20**, “*But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive..*” We also see in **Romans 8:28** the assurance from God to all who would trust Him; “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*”. As John MacArthur says, “If we cannot rejoice in our trials our values are wrong”. To us this may all sound quite amazing, but to James it is the clue to the proper understanding of life. He is nothing if not realistic: life is certainly a tale of *various trials*. The Greek here is more vivid than the English word *various*. In classical Greek poikilos ποικίλος literally means “many-colored, variegated, rainbowed”, and it came to be used figuratively as “diversified, a variety, of various kinds”. His point is that trials we experience come in many degrees, forms and types. Our response to and attitude in them always reflects and reveals our spiritual condition.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank You that it is possible for me to be joyful in whatever kind of trial I may go through. Help me to trust you completely. May I rest in Jesus knowing You’re in complete control and will work out all things for my good as your child.*

WEDNESDAY – **James 1:3**: “*...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*” The verb *knowing* is the key word. The believer *knows* that the *trials* he endures do not come by chance but believes that everything comes to him by the hand of God. Zacharius Ursinus in a sixteenth-century catechism said: “All things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but from his fatherly hand.” God The Father stands behind every trial and test and wants us to know this by experience, so that we not only see his hand but also feel it. We place our hand in the hand of God and in every adversity that we face, we keep our trust in our heavenly Father *knowing* that He sends us these trials to *test our faith*. We believe that he is in complete control of every situation and *testing*. The Greek term dokimos (*testing*) was used of testing metals to prove their genuineness (**Proverbs 27:21**). It developed the connotation of “to test with a view toward approval” (**1 Peter 1:6-7**). God tests His children (**Genesis 22:1, Deuteronomy 8:2**), but it is always for strengthening, never for destruction. Finally in this verse we read the *testing*

of your faith produces patience. Here, the word for *faith* is *pistis* in the Greek and is used in the sense of personal trust in God through Christ. It may be translated in English as “trust,” “believe,” or “faith.” When God called Abraham to live by faith, He tested him in order to increase his faith. God always tests us to bring out the *best*. The testing of our faith proves that we are truly born again and it *produces patience*. This is a present middle indicative in Greek which means it is an ongoing process, not an instantaneous result. We also see this process in **Romans 5:3–4**. Salvation is a gift as well as a process (**James 1:12, 1 Peter 1:3-9**). The word *Patience* (perseverance, endurance, steadfastness) is a quality that demands admiration. Job had this and it has nothing in common with resignation. We live in an age of quitters, even in the church of Jesus Christ. Some people resign themselves and give into the pressures of trial and they quit fighting sin and self-reliance. They adopt the slogan “Que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be”. But where resignation is passive, *Patient* perseverance is active. Resignation results in defeat while perseverance results in triumph. Believers persevere by looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (**Hebrews 12:2**). The believer trusts in God for help and strength in testing and knows that God always responds to faith and provides the means to sustain. The steadfast believer clings to God in faith, perseveres in doing God’s will, and cannot be diverted from his avowed purpose to serve Him.

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, help me learn to know and trust You in all circumstances. Help me also understand that there are ups and downs in life, trials and tests that come my way to test my faith. May I walk close to You, seeking to obey Your word and not set all my hope in what I see happening here in this temporal life. Help me to produce patience and perseverance.*

THURSDAY – James 1:4: “*But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” The word *let* is a present active imperative in the Greek. Of the 108 verses in the book of James there are 54 IMPERATIVES. It is a book of commands and exhortations to practical Christian living. We are a people that can’t be patient for anything. We live in a must have now world and demand instant gratification and fixes to our problems. But we are commanded to *let patience have its perfect work*. *Patience* (perseverance) has a work to do, and it can be accomplished only by persistence in trials with a faith that doesn’t give up. The word for *patience* in the Greek is *hupomonē*, but the translation as *patience* is far too passive. *Hupomonē* is not simply the capacity to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances but it is the ability to then grow in the testing and turn it into greatness and glory. One example would be that the thing which amazed the non-Christians in the centuries of Christian persecution was that the martyrs did not die grimly, they died singing. It is said of one martyr that as he smiled in the flames he was asked what he found to smile at there. His response was “I saw the glory of God, and was glad.” *Hupomonē* is the quality which makes people able not simply to suffer things but to overcome them. We see the t-shirts and bumper stickers which speak to someone that has “borne the battle”. The effect of *testing* and *patience* given by God *produces* strength to bear still more and to conquer in still harder battles.

This *letting patience have its perfect work* is for the purpose *that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*. Three things are produced for the believer who perseveres. (1) It makes us *perfect*. The Greek is *teleios*, which usually has the meaning of *perfection towards a given end*. A sacrificial animal was *teleios* if it was without blemish and fit to offer to God. A student is *teleios* if he or she is mature. A person who is fully grown is *teleios*. This consistent growth which comes from a positive response to *testing*, makes each one of us *teleios* in the sense that we are being fit for the task we were sent into the world to do. By the way in which we meet every experience in life, we are making ourselves either fit or unfit for the task God meant for us to do. (2) It makes them *complete*. The Greek is *holoklēros*, which means *entire, whole, perfect in every part*. It is used of both the animal which is fit to be offered to God and of the priest who is fit to offer him. It means that both the animal and the priest had no disqualifying blemishes. This *letting patience have its perfect work* is what God by His Holy Spirit uses to remove the weaknesses and the imperfections from a person’s character. Daily, it enables us to conquer old sins, to shed old blemishes and to gain new virtues, until in the end we become entirely fit for the service of God and of one another and more like Christ. (3) It makes them *lacking nothing*. The Greek is *leipesthai*, and it is used of the defeat of an army, of the giving up of a struggle, of the failure to reach a standard that should have been reached. If we *let patience have its perfect work* and day by day and trial by trial we produce this patience, we will live more victoriously and be conformed more and more to Jesus Christ Himself.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me to let patience have its perfect work in me. I often want to make something happen rather than let you make something happen in my life.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – James 1:4: “*But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” We spoke early this week about James being concerned with us as believers growing and becoming mature followers of Christ. The goal in view in this text was that believers *may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*. This is not that we become sinless as Scripture does not indicate that believers reach perfection in this life. It means like the Greek word *holoklēros* which describes something that has all its parts, we become *complete*. And all of this is again in a picture of process and development the result which may well be described as maturity or *lacking nothing*. James’ main point was to show how to **Grow In Trials** and achieve spiritual maturity. The Bible constantly warns us not to become so intoxicated with this life that we fail to look beyond it to the life to come. That forward look has the marvelous ability to transform the suffering of this present time. As we dwell on the glory to be revealed we will most certainly find ourselves saying with the apostle Paul, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” (**Romans 8:18**).

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, help me count it all joy when I experience trials knowing that although they are painful, in my suffering you will be there, helping me grow, pointing me to a day when all of this struggle with sin will be over because of what Jesus has done for me. ”*