



“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)

Faith Tested

Central Truth: Faith strengthens you during trials.

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“God had one Son without sin, but He has had no son without trials.” How true! Do not doubt God when difficulties come in your life. He does not promise to deliver you from them, but rather to deliver you through them.

Trials are not an indication that you are being punished by God. If you were as sinless and sufficient as Jesus Christ, you would still experience trials. He was “*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

There are no “accidents” in the lives of God's children. Even your trials are permitted for divine purposes. When trouble comes, remember that God is in loving control of all persons and things. Face your trials with faith in God. As your trials increase, your faith will grow. Make your trials a testimony to your faith in God.

The devil will never let goodness go unchallenged. He opposes God and all who recognize Him. The trials of your faith may be his challenge to you. Hold steady and watch God work out your deliverance and His glory.

Testings Will Come (James 1:2)

James did not write, “My brethren, count it all joy IF you fall into various trials,” as if they might or might not experience them. He rather wrote, “Count it all joy WHEN you fall,” because he knew they would come. It is no unusual thing when trials come, even upon the people of God.

Jesus warned of trials ahead for His disciples. “*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). You can take His word for it. Trials will come on you, but they will not overcome you.

The apostles warned of trials for the people of God. Paul wrote, “*When we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass*” (I Thessalonians 3:4). The unanimous testimony of the New Testament is that “*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22).

Life's experiences prove that testings come to God's people. Job testified that as certainly as sparks fly upward from the fire, so we will experience trials (Job 5:7). Every one of us lives only for a few days which are full of trouble (Job 14:1).

So watch your attitude in testings. To “*count it all joy*” is to make it greatest joy, nothing but joy, to be happy indeed. You do not rejoice in your trials because they are there, but because of what they produce in your life. The athlete is glad when the season for his sport arrives, even though he will suffer many sore muscles and pressures in the game.

Testings Promote Growth (James 1:3, 4)

There are three great blessings which come from enduring trials: patience, maturity, and sufficiency.

Testings produce patience. “*The trying of your faith worketh patience*” (James 1:3). Patience has a double meaning of stability (staying under the load) and progress (carrying the load forward). Trials produce both. Patience is a virtue highly valued in Holy Scripture. You never know whether or not you will stand until you have faced trials. But when you have stood firm in one trial, it prepares you to stand firm in other, even worse, ones. Remember your personal experience of growth through trials.

But testings produce patience only if you see the trial through without rebellion. To run from or to rebel against the trial is to miss the blessing it brings.

Testings produce maturity. “*Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire*” (James 1:4). The finished work of patience purposes to make you fully developed and perfectly equipped for Christian service. Read Romans 5:3-5 and note how one virtue leads to the next: tribulation produces patience, which produces perseverance, which produces hope, which produces unashamed confidence. And it all begins with the

trouble we think we would be better off without!

How does the athlete become skilled in his game? He undergoes rigorous discipline. How do you develop a lifestyle appropriate to your profession as a child of God? You undergo rigorous discipline. You may have “growth pains” along the way, but you rejoice in them because they produce growth. That is the truth for you in James 1:3, 4.

Testings produce sufficiency. They enable you to be “*entire, wanting nothing*” (James 1:4). Praise the Lord. That means you will be deficient in no respect, will come short in nothing, if you deal with your trials in the right way. Think about that. It will cure all complaining when difficulties come.

The Bible mentions many virtues of the Christian life. Consider the following which come from your testings.

(1) Testings produce holiness. “*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*” (I Peter 4:1).

(2) Testings produce steadfastness. “*The God of all grace, . . . after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*” (I Peter 5:10).

(3) Testings produce obedience. Even though Jesus was “*a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered*” (Hebrews 5:8). That is how you will learn to obey, also.

(4) Testings produce discernment. It is there that you learn to “*count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:8).

(5) Testings produce a servant's heart. When we have been comforted in all our tribulation, we are enabled to comfort those who are in any trouble with the same comfort by which God has comforted us (II Corinthians 1:4).

Testings Demand Wisdom (James 1:5)

Why does James mention a prayer for wisdom in the midst of his discussion of trials? You need wisdom to answer the questions “How?” and “Why?” in dealing with your testings.

You need wisdom to deal with the *why* of your sufferings. There are many possible reasons why trials may come upon you. (1) They may be the consequence of living in a depraved society where justice does not always triumph and where the innocent often suffer with the guilty. (2) They may be God's discipline upon you for personal sin, just as you discipline the child you love. (3) They may be for the purpose of promoting your spiritual

growth. It is in your helplessness that you realize His help. (4) They may be a testimony to mankind and angels. Consider the trials of Job. God used them to show spirit beings the devotion of a true man of God.

However, remember as you ask “Why?” that Job asked the same question but God did not tell him. God never explained Job's sufferings, but He bestowed grace upon him as a consequence of them. God may answer your why, or He may not. Trust His love either way.

You need wisdom to answer the *how* of your sufferings. The how question should be, “How can I use this trial so that it will work out for the glory of God and the good of people?” That takes your attention off the trial, places it on others, and greatly relieves your distress. God comforts you, not to make you comfortable but to make you a comforter (II Corinthians 1:4). And the comfort you give is not mere human help, but the same comfort with which God has comforted you. The wisdom to comfort others is a blessed gift of God.

Testings Call You to Prayer (James 1:5-8)

One of the great benefits of burdens is that they drive you to your knees before the Lord. Can you remember times when trials have driven you to your Lord and He came to your rescue? But what do you ask for and how do you ask when you pray in times of trial?

Ask for wisdom to deal with the trial (verse 5). You need God's assistance here. Without divine insight you may accuse God of unconcern about your hurts. Job did. You may think God has forsaken you. Job did. You may get angry at those around you as you suffer. Job did. How different your trial will be when you pray, “Father, give me wisdom to receive Your strength and discern my proper response as You see me through this trial”

Ask with confidence that God delights to give wisdom (verse 5). He will give what you ask. He will give more than you ask. He gives “*liberally*,” generously and from an open hand. Ask without a question as to whether He will give. He has promised to give whatever we ask in Jesus' name (John 14:13, 14). He delights to give in response to the prayers of His dear children.

Ask with unreserved faith (verses 6-8). “*Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe*” (Hebrews 11:6). Doubting God or His promises is an insult to Him. Trust Him with all your power and ask Him for grace to trust beyond your power. The prayer that is prayed with an outstretched hand receives an answer (Mark 11:24).

Testings Will Vary (James 1:9-11)

You may be tested by being exalted (verse 9). Joseph could not be led from God as a slave, but what about the temptations he faced while sitting on the throne? Israel trusted God for food and water in the desert, but would she forget Him when she was settled in a fertile farming region? When you prosper, be careful not to forget your God (Deuteronomy 6:9-13). Many a Christian has suffered spiritual defeat by being promoted.

You may be tested by being humbled (verses 10, 11). Joseph was faithful as the business manager of a great estate; but would he hold his integrity when imprisoned under a false accusation? Job was faithful to God when his family was happy, when he was in good health, and when his business prospered. But what would he do when his children died, his health broke, and he went bankrupt? What would you do in like circumstances? Ask God for wisdom to bear it through.

Testings Will End (James 1:12)

Endure them. They will not last forever. They have a worthy purpose. Hold steady through them and you will be approved after standing the test. God's reward is a "crown of life," which you will receive for faithful endurance.

Do not despair when testing comes. It is the "heat" which will refine you and make you pure. Never permit trials to destroy your faith in the presence and protection of your heavenly Father. "Life is a grindstone, and whether it sharpens you up or wears you down depends on what you are made of." "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.*"

Questions for Discussion

1. Why does everyone have to endure trials?
2. Why do faithful Christians have to endure trials?
3. How can you "count it all joy" when you endure trials?
4. How do trials produce patience?
5. What effect does patience have on your spiritual growth?
6. Why should you pray for wisdom in times of trials?
7. How can you have unwavering faith in times of trials?