



“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life” . . . , James 1:12.

Trials of Our Faith

Lesson Aim: To encourage the Christian to remain steadfast under trials

L275. Date: July 1971. **Text:** James 1:1-12.

Topic: Faith: Trials of; Suffering.

INTRODUCTION—One of the great marvels about the Bible is its practicality. Though it was written between 1450 B.C. and 100 A.D. (from 3,500 to 1900 years ago), it is amazingly up to date. Its teachings are as practical now as they were when first penned. Only divine inspiration can account for this quality.

Consider, for example, the quarter of study begun with this lesson. Scripture texts taken from James I & II Peter, I & II & III John, and Jude will be the basis of study. (These are called the “general epistles” because they were written to believers in general and not to specific persons or congregations.) What these passages say about morality and man’s duty to God are applicable to us today.

Today’s lesson deals with the subject of trials. Do we need help in this area? Definitely! Someone has well said, “God had one Son without sin but He has had no son without sorrows.” Even Jesus warned believers. . . **“In the world ye shall have tribulation. . .”** John 16:33

The aim of today’s study is to encourage the Christian to remain steadfast under trials. In order to do so, we must have some understanding of trials, what is to be the believer's attitude in them, and what help God offers to overcome them.

The wonderful Word of God gives the help we need. It tells us that trials are natural. It tells us that trials can work out good when they are over. It tells us God is concerned about those who are tried. It tells us God's grace is sufficient to fortify in the midst of every trial. This is the kind of

information we need to be consistent Christians. Today's study is most practical and needed.

EXPOSITION

I. THE FACT OF TRIALS

The Bible every where assumes the reality of testings, trials and temptations. The reality of trials underlies the lesson text which the Spirit gave by James.

Take particular note of the term “temptation” which appears in James 1:1-12. The word may mean either (1) testings, trials, or (2) enticement to evil. In the lesson text studied today it evidently means trials and not just enticement to sin. But an enticement to sin may also be a testing of one's faith and fidelity to God.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you,” I Peter 4:12. It would rather be strange if the believer were not tried. No one should be surprised or taken unaware by trials.

The believer lives in a hostile environment. The world hates him because he is not of the same nature as the world, John 17:14; 15:19. The evil world system is contrary to spiritual things. It is no surprise, therefore, if the believer is challenged to prove the reality of his faith.

The believer may be tested in many areas. His trial may be an enticement to evil, Luke 4:1. It may be in delayed realization of hope, Proverbs 13:12. It may be through material sorrow and loss, as with Job. It may be through prosperity and power, Hebrew's 11:24-26. It may be God's call to sacrifice, Genesis 22. But come it will whatever form the test may take. And sometimes the testing is severe, Luke 21:12-17. Don't be surprised if it happens to you.

Strong trials are no indication of God's displeasure with you. They are no indication of punishment for specific sin. They are, on the contrary, an opportunity for believers to know the sufficiency of God's provision, to grow in grace, and to demonstrate to the world the reality of Christian faith.

Believers may pass through the fire. But they can be sure that One goes with them whose form is like the Son of God, Daniel 3:25!

II. ATTITUDE IN TRIALS

“... Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” verse 2. How strange! How are believers to count their testings? As “all joy” which

means “the greatest joy, whole joy, unmixed joy.” Mind you, not “some joy mixed with grief” but pure and unblemished joy. How very strange!

These testings are something one “falls” into. There are times when one is in the midst of trials so that he is totally surrounded and can see no way out. It is at such times when whole and unmixed joy can be his. Note that James does not say trials are joyous. Rather one can find joy in the midst of them. Even when they come in every sort, varicolored and motley, they can be an occasion of joy.

How? Look at what the end of them can be! They can result in strengthening the believer, encouraging fellow Christians, and magnifying the name of God. And that should be an occasion for joy for each one who belongs to Christ.

God has promised no guarantee of divinely ordered peace and prosperity for a Christian in this world. The world wants pleasure and possessions. But the Christian wants to develop his character and win the approval of his Heavenly Father. He knows the eternal is more important than the transitory. And since his fibre is strengthened by fight, he is willing to endure trials. Indeed, he is more than willing to endure. He finds joy in testings knowing what treasures are to be found therein.

God is saying to you, “Do not grow despondent nor lose hope in your trials. I am working out something of eternal value in you. Let me complete the work and you will rejoice to see what I have done.” Do you trust God sufficiently so that you can endure difficulties without questioning or complaint?

III. TREASURES IN TRIALS

Not everything will work to our bodily comfort nor earthly prosperity. Neither will we be spared from pain, sorrow, discomfort nor loss. But all is under the hand of God. He will work it out to our eternal good. This is how faith interprets James 1:3-4. Read these verses again!

Faith, like gold, will stand the test of fire. The testing will only prove it is genuine. Hence trials work out the genuine element in your faith. There are two great blessings which follow: (1) our relationships to God is deepened and (2) our Christian character is perfected. What treasures can come out of troubles!

“... **The trying of your faith worketh patience,**” verse 3. And what is patience? It is staying power, steadfastness, steady endurance, constancy, brave perseverance, strong manhood. Through testing the dross is removed and greater purity results.

This strengthening is not a human deed. Through testings believers are “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness,” Colossians 1:11 Trials make us rely on God whose power becomes our sufficiency.

Nor is this all. When patience has completed its work through testings the believer will be mature and complete—fully developed and perfectly equipped—not lacking anything that is needful to spiritual maturity. What a goal! No wonder the Apostle James said to “count it whole and unmixed joy” when testings come.

Look at the chain of blessings which accompany trials. “. . .

Tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope; And hope maketh not ashamed, . . . Romans 5:3-5 Through these the man of God becomes perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

In view of this blessed truth, have you faith enough to thank God for trials? Can you honestly pray, “Father, I don't know why this testing is come. But I know that in love you will work it out for good. Therefore, I thank you for the good you will work out of this trial.” You do believe Romans 8:28, don't you? It reads, **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”** Believe that and have peace.

IV. FAITH IN TRIALS

Someone replies, “I just can't see it. It might work out to some good in a few situations, but it just isn't reasonable nor natural to find joy in trouble.” James knew there would be such objections. Hence, the Holy Spirit caused him to write a special word concerning faith. Read it in verses 5:11.

1. Have faith in God. **“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him,”** verse 5. The reason why we doubt and rebel under testings is that we do not have spiritual wisdom to rightly understand them. So if you cannot see how to behave in trials so as to please God, ask Him to show you.

The grammatical form of the verb “let him ask” suggests repeated action. It means “In him keep on asking.” Since trials are so varied we need to ask once and again. Take note of the things for which we are to ask. Not the cessation of trials nor blessings apart from trials, but for wisdom in the midst of trials.

God will give! Generously, unconditionally, graciously, abundantly, kindly, liberally and without rebuke, God will give wisdom to those who ask.

This term “to ask” is used in business to mean one has the right to ask for something. God has given us such a right. Ask and God will give. Have faith in God to do as He says.

2, Have a firm faith. Faith must be settled belief in God's beneficent activity and personal reliability. There must be no internal doubt in him who asks of God. Simple trust must come and ask for wisdom to trust the more.

Look how God sees a doubter! He is like the restless swaying to and fro of the surface of the water blown upon by the shifting wind. He is the very picture of instability. Like a wave, a doubter is doubly unstable. A wave not only goes back and forth as the wind shifts but it also goes up and down as the current flows.

James takes a new word to describe the now-believer-now doubter. He is “double minded” like John Bunyan's character named “Mr. facing-both-ways” Such an unsteady, fickle, staggering, reeling-like-a-drunken-man person will not receive anything (much less something so great as wisdom) from God. Read verses 6-8 and heed the call for firm and stable faith.

3. Have faith in all situations. The poor man should have faith that God has exalted him in grace. The rich man should have faith for God has made him equal of the lowest at the cross. Not one is self-sufficient. Not one has reason to glory over another. Each should delight in being a bondsman of Jesus Christ and in Him a child of the King. Read James 1:9-11

V. THE END OF FAITH

James 1:12 is related to 1:2-4. Keep in mind the subject is finding joy in trials. Why should the believer be joyful? What possible good can come out of times of testings? James mentions two. (1) Immediate benefit—trials produce patience. Patience, when permitted to exercise itself fully, produces spiritual maturity, verses 2-4. (2) Ultimate benefit—heaven has awaiting a crown of life for each one who remains firm under trials, His testings will prove him complete and God will give him a crown which is life abundant. And what an honorable adornment that will be.

CONCLUSION - Trials will come. They can work either a good or bad result in the believer. The outcome depends on his reliance on God and wisdom with which he meets the test. Can you trust God in trouble? If not, whom else can you trust?

Here are some pertinent truths made evident in this study. (1) Trials come upon all believers. (2) They will be of many different types. (3) They can be of great profit when met with humble dependence and trust in God.

(4) God uses trials to promote mature character in His children. (5) Prayer for wisdom is a great aid in times of testing. (6) The crown of life is a special reward for those who are tried and prove their worth by enduring.

Pause now and ask God to give you grace to remain steadfast under trial. He will hear and answer.

QUESTIONS

1. What is “temptation” in today's lesson?
2. Why is faith tried?
3. How do trials produce spiritual maturity?
4. How has your faith been tested?
5. What does James 1:5 mean to you?
6. How can trials produce joy?
7. How are believers tested today?
8. What does Psalm 94:12 say on this subject?
9. How does Hebrews 12:11 relate?
10. How has this study profited you personally?