



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

In Times of Trouble

Lesson Aim: To set forth that positive results can develop from times of testing.

L340. Date: June 1976. **Text:** James 1:1-12. **Topic:** Faith: Trials of;

Today, you begin an exciting journey in Bible study. For thirteen weeks you will investigate practical subjects such as the Christian's response to trouble, relation of your Christian faith and your daily life, how to get God's help for your personal problems, how to claim God's promises, how to enjoy spiritual victory, and kindred subjects. You will study the book of James during June, the two epistles of Peter during July, and the three epistles of John and the epistle of Jude during August. The general purpose of those studies is to help you understand how to live as a Christian.

The epistle of James was written by a half-brother of Jesus Christ. He was called “James the Just” because he was of such a pious nature. James hesitated to accept Jesus as the Messiah-Saviour, but when he did accept Him, he became one of His most devout followers. James was a leader among the early Christians. He was pastor of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17); he presided over the conference of Christians there (Acts 15:13-21). He had a long ministry there. He was still a leading elder at Paul's last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-25). He wrote the epistle that bears his name about 48 A.D. It was one of the earliest books of the New Testament, but it still bears a vital message.

Your study of James 1:1-12 aims to help you to discover the profit which can come from enduring trouble as a Christian. In these last days, it is important that the Christian learn that lesson well. Jesus warned, **“In the world ye shall have tribulation . . .”** John 16:33.

I. EXPECT TROUBLE.

“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. **“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you,”** John 15:19.

The devil resents the presence of citizens of the Kingdom of God in his domain. (He is the god of this world — II Corinthians 4:4; I John 5:19.) He does all in his power to change their allegiance and to weaken their witness. Trouble is one way which he has found effective in opposing Christians. The believer in Jesus Christ may be tested in many ways. (1) He may be enticed to evil — Luke 4:1. (2) He may suffer the deferment of hope — Proverbs 13:12. (3) He may suffer material sorrow and loss — Job 1 and 2. (4) He may be called upon to sacrifice something dear — Genesis 22. (5) His testing may be quite severe — Luke 21:12-17. One should not be surprised when “divers temptations” (different kinds of trials) come upon him.

Trouble is no indication that God is displeased with a Christian. It is no indication that one is being punished for sin. Trials are often opportunities in disguise. They allow the believer to know the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, to grow in grace, and to demonstrate the validity of the Christian faith.

Believers may pass through the fire, but one goes with them whose form is like the Son of God (Daniel 3:25). The saved should remember that when trouble assails them.

II. REJOICE IN TROUBLE.

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” James 1:2. What a surprising admonition! “All joy” means “whole joy, unmixed joy, the greatest joy.” Not some joy mixed with grief, but pure and unblemished joy is to mark the Christian when troubles beset him.

The believer's troubles are not something he meets when he chooses — at the time he is prepared for them. At any time he may “fall into” trouble so that he is totally surrounded and can see no way out.

When troubles overwhelm, the Christian is to know whole and unmixed joy. Trouble will come in many forms. It is “divers temptations” — trials of every sort — with which he is confronted. Even then trouble can be an occasion of joy. Such an admonition is hardly practical, is it? Yes, indeed! Is

there an example of a Christian's knowing joy when in such trouble? There are many examples. Paul and Silas suffered from a severe beating. They were cast into the inner dungeon of a Philippian prison, but they prayed and sang praises unto God (Acts 16). Paul was in a Roman prison at the time he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, and it is the happiest epistle in the New Testament. The Christian never lives “under the circumstances,” but is always victor in all things through Jesus Christ. That is why he can rejoice in the midst of trouble. As Williams translates II Corinthians 4:9, “The Christian may be knocked down, but he is never knocked out. He may be cast down, but he is never cast away. That is why he can rejoice in trouble.”

III. PROFIT BY TROUBLE (1:3, 4).

There are treasures in trials. Not every thing will work to one's bodily comfort or to his financial prosperity. No person need expect to be spared from pain and sorrow, discomfort and loss. But faith interprets God's work in trouble to see it working out an eternal good in God's child. That is how faith interprets James 1:3, 4. Read those verses again!

I want to be a fully developed and perfectly equipped Christian, don't you? James recorded how one may realize such a worthy goal. The testing of faith (by means of trouble) will produce patience; when patience completes her work the believer will be “perfect and entire” — fully developed and perfectly equipped.

There is no spiritual maturity apart from trials. Trials, rightly endured, will produce maturity. Paul wrote, “**. . . we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience . . . experience . . . hope . . .**,” Romans 5:3, 4. Trouble helps to make you mature so don't fight it. Permit God to work through it that you may become perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Here is a prayer one might often need to pray when undergoing times of trouble. “Father, I don't know why this testing has come. I know that you love me and have not forsaken me in trouble. I know you will work it out for God in love. Therefore, I ask grace to trust you and profit from the trial. Help me to endure it as a Christian.” You can pray that way knowing Romans 8:28 is true: “**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.**”

IV. PRAY IN TROUBLE (1:5-8).

A. You need wisdom in times of trouble, verse 5. Some one says, “I cannot see how my present problems could possibly work for any good. In fact, I can't see how it is possible for any trouble to work out for good.” Let that person heed the admonition of verse 5: **“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.”** There will be no doubting or rebelling in times of testing if one has spiritual wisdom to discern God's work in them. Yes, you need wisdom in trouble.

How does one get wisdom? “Let him ask of God,” James replies. The grammatical form of that verb “ask” suggests one should “keep on asking.” Trials are varied; they change. Trials are persistent, they sometimes remain for a long time. It is necessary for the believer to ask over and again that he may keep his heart wise in the ways of God.

What right has a Christian to ask for wisdom from God? James chose a term “ask” which was commonly used in business in that day. It means one has the right to ask for something. God has given each believer such a right. Ask, and you will receive, and your joy will be full! See Jesus' promise in John 16:24.

B. Wisdom is given the one who asks God for it in faith, verses 6-8. Asking without believing is a waste of time and energy. God warns the doubter, **“Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord,”** verse 7. Doubt is sin; God will not honor sin by answering the prayer of doubt. Pray in faith, if you wish to have God's answer.

Consider Phillips' phrasing of verses 6-8. “. . . if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has one to ask God — who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty — and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God's help or not. The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations, is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next. That sort of man cannot hope to receive any thing from the Lord, and the life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn.” Pray and believe; you will receive.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise . . .” II Peter 3:9.

V. PERSIST DURING TROUBLE.

A. Stay firm in trouble, whatever your station in life (verses 9, 10). You may be of “low degree” (humble circumstances or low position) among men, but you should rejoice in your exalted station as a Christian. Even if

trouble brings you low in worldly things, you remain exalted in Christ. A brother who is exalted in life may be brought low through the particular trouble which besets him, but neither the “high” nor the “low” should question God's sovereign work nor give up his faith in God. Stay firm in trouble, whatever your station in life.

Christian brother, do not fuss, fret, nor rebel against God's providence. He who has called you is faithful. Commit yourself to Him as to a faithful Creator. “. . . **Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning,**” Psalm 30:5. Trials will deliver the humble believer from a world-centered life. They teach a man to look at the grass of the field, observing its temporariness, and to know that he is as the grass. It shows one how quickly the savings of a life time can be wiped away. Why should one invest all his life in mere accumulation of material resources when all that will pass away? Why fret when troubles interfere with worldly gain? Trials teach the believer that his only security is in God. Have you learned that lesson?

B. Stay firm by bravely bearing up under whatever trouble comes (verse 12). **“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation . . .”** Endurance is more than resignation or submission. It is the active bearing of trials. It is one thing to resign oneself to endure trials that cannot be changed; it is a different thing to bear up under those trials, recognizing them as God's agents to work out his good. God supervises your troubles in grace. **“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,”** I Corinthians 10:13. God is keeping His eye on you in the midst of your troubles to deliver you before the load becomes too heavy to bear.

Look up! Take heart! “In all your sickness, all your pain; in every time of need; God knows. He hears. He sees, He cares. He is a friend indeed!”

VI. TRUST IN TROUBLE.

Look ahead. Pessimism and doubt will surely overwhelm the one who looks only at circumstances when trouble comes. Look away from self. Look off to God. Consider not only what is; consider what He will cause to be. Look ahead!

What will come out of trouble for the good of the Christian or the glory of God? **“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby,”** Hebrews 12:11.

How does it produce righteousness? The Psalmist said, **“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word,”** Psalm 119:67. No wonder the writer of Holy Scripture recorded **“Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law,”** Psalm 94:12. It is good for you to endure testings, for God will bring a good thing out of them.

Testings work two great benefits: (1) They perfect the believer's character by making him more mature. (2) They promise the possession of a “crown of life” hereafter. Who would not gladly undergo trouble for such a blessed result?

Consider that **“... crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him,”** verse 12. A crown is (1) a sign of authority or (2) an evidence of honorable victory. Kings of earth wear crowns, symbolizing the first meaning. Those who overcome in contests of strength and skill wear crowns of the second sort. James had yet another type of crown in mind — not a crown of gold, nor of laurel leaves, but “the crown of life.” God promises the fullest life — abundant life — to those who abide confidently in Him. He adds to that the fullest realization of eternal life in the world which is yet to come. What a loving Father you have in heaven, for He rewards you for doing that which was only your duty.

“Temptation” is used in the King James Version of the Bible with two distinct meanings: (1) “Tempt” may mean “to test,” Genesis 22:1. (2) “Tempt” may mean to entice to evil (James 1:14). The same occasion may be a testing or an enticement to evil, depending upon the way one meets it and deals with it. Watch how you respond to the testings of life.

Today's study teaches these truths: (1) All believers have trials. (2) Trials are of many different sorts. (3) Trials are profitable when met in humble dependence upon God. (4) God uses trials to produce spiritual maturity in His children. (5) Wisdom is needed in trials. (6) Wisdom is received by the prayer of faith. (7) God helps those in trials. (8) The crown of life is a special reward, awaiting those who are victors over troubles. Learn those lessons well.

Questions

1. Why do troubles come upon Christians?
2. What does John 15:19 teach?
3. How can you rejoice in trouble?
4. How does trouble produce spiritual growth?
5. What does Romans 8:28 mean?

6. Why do you need wisdom in trouble?
7. How can you get wisdom?
8. How can you keep from giving up in trials?
9. What does I Corinthians 10:13 teach?
10. How can you put the lesson truth to practical use?