

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1-11-15 AM NOTES  
"ESSENTIALS FOR GOING THROUGH TRIALS"  
JAMES 1:5-12  
#2 in Series, "James: Practical Wisdom"

**James 1:2-4 (NKJV)** "2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

I. We Need Wisdom in Our Trials (v. 5)

Wisdom—Seeing our trials from God's perspective.

**Proverbs 2:6a (NKJV)** "For the Lord gives wisdom..."

**Psalms 103:7 (NKJV)** "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel."

Wisdom—Insight into God's ways.

**1 Peter 5:10 (NKJV)** "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*."

II. We Need Faith in Our Trials (vv. 6-8)

**Matthew 21:22 (NKJV)** "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

III. We Need Humility in Our Trials (vv. 9-11)

**James 2:6a (NKJV)** "But you have dishonored the poor man."

**James 2:15-16 (NKJV)** "15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?"

**Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)** "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ."

"As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ, the two are equal."  
—R. C. H. Lenski

IV. We Need an Eternal Focus in Our Trials (v. 12)

**James 1:2 (NKJV)** "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials."

**1 Peter 1:3-7 (NKJV)** "3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

**Romans 8:18 (NASB)** "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

**1 Corinthians 16:22 (NKJV)** "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!"

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“ESSENTIALS FOR GOING THROUGH TRIALS”  
JAMES 1:5-12  
#2 in Series, “James: Practical Wisdom”

It is interesting that when James begins writing a book on practical wisdom, the Holy Spirit inspires him to start with trials. Trials are universal in a believer’s life. Certainly some Christians have more trials than others, but no Christian is going to escape troubles, testings, and trials. While you would never desire trials, if you have been a Christian for very long, you have to admit that **your greatest growth has not come in times of prosperity, but in times of trial**. For a surrendered child of God, our Heavenly Father’s presence is never sweeter and never more clearly sensed than in times of trial. The Puritan Thomas Case said, “Prosperity is the nurse of atheism.” He meant that unbelief grows in times when we are relatively free from trouble and trials. I have a friend who used to say, “Most of us don’t trust or believe God until we have to”. In times of prosperity, our tendency is to trust in ourselves and not God. It is in times of trial that we call upon Him and draw close to Him because eventually we realize that we have no other place to go. An old hymn asks a very important question:

*Where shall I go, where shall I go  
Seeking a refuge for my soul  
I need a friend to guide me to the end  
Where shall I go but to the Lord*

In the first message in this study of James we saw that because trials draw us to the Lord and because they produce patience and maturity, we can actually rejoice when trials come. **James 1:2-4 (NKJV)** “<sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” In this message we are going to see some essentials for going through trials. We all desperately need these truths about trials! As I have often said, “You are either just coming out of a time of trial, you are in the middle of a time of trial, or you are heading into a time of trial that may start today! You need to be ready, because **the most horrible thing imaginable would be to miss what God has for us in a trial and just waste it**. Since God has determined that we need trials (and we don’t get a vote), it is essential that we cooperate with God and get every single thing that He has for us in the trial. The goal of this message is to equip you to do just that!

The first essential for going through trials is:

I. We Need Wisdom in Our Trials (V5)

Allow me to first deal with that little word “if”. One of the greatest linguistic scholars that our denomination ever produced was Dr. A. T. Robertson (1863-1934). He said that this sentence is a “condition of first class, assumed as true...” In other words, we **all** lack wisdom as we go through trials. Your first prayer in a time of trial should be something like this: “**Lord, give me the wisdom to see this trial from your perspective and not miss what You want to give me and show me through the trial**”. Our deepest desire ought to be that we would see our trial result in spiritual maturity for the glory of God. Seeing this result **will** require wisdom on our part – wisdom beyond natural human wisdom. When you go through a trial, are you first asking God for wisdom or first asking Him to get you out of the trial? *Selah!*

Let’s first make sure that we understand what James means by “wisdom” in this passage. This kind of wisdom has nothing to do with IQ or education. What are we asking God for when we ask Him for wisdom? The simplest definition for wisdom as it is used here is that **wisdom is seeing our trials from God’s perspective**. I want us to go a little beyond that in this passage. Yes, wisdom is seeing our trials from God’s perspective, but it is more than that. Wisdom is insight into God’s plans, God’s ways, and God’s purposes. This kind of wisdom does not come from taking a class, listening to a sermon, or attending a lecture. **Proverbs 2:6a (NKJV)** “For the Lord gives wisdom...” Though the word “wisdom” is not used, it is what the psalmist is talking about in **Psalms 103:7 (NKJV)** “He made known His ways

to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.” All that the Israelites saw was the work of God – His acts. **Moses went further; he was given by God insight into the ways of God.** That insight is wisdom.

When you find yourself in a trial, either you will simply see only the painful circumstance that God has caused or allowed (His “acts”) or you may ask Him for wisdom and then get insight into His ways. If all that you see are His acts (the loss of a job, the test coming back positive, the spouse leaving you, the pain of a child), you will tend to be discouraged or even bitter. When you seek for and believe God for wisdom, you begin to see God’s ways and how He will use the trial to bring glory to Himself and mature you and conform you to the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:29). If you don’t see the trial with God’s wisdom, you will waste your trial and drift from God rather than be drawn closer to Him. Drawing close to God in times of trial is not an automatic. I have counseled with and prayed for many who have grown bitter through trials instead of better (more like Christ).

Here is something exciting. **Our Heavenly Father desires to give us His wisdom.** Verse 5 literally says, “...let him ask of the giving God...” One paraphrase says, “He gives with an open hand”. He is not the God of the clinched fist – He is the God of the open hand who gives “liberally”. That word is translated “generously” in most translations. The phrase “without reproach” means “without finding fault”. Here is how we give with reproach. We say, “Yes, I’ll give you this request, but how many times are you going to ask me this?” “Yes, I’ll help you get ready for this, but you should have started preparing much earlier.” God gives without reproach, without finding fault, without criticizing us for asking. He answers in a way that does not humiliate the petitioner. He is glorified and thus delighted when we ask Him for wisdom. I love this little poem I learned many years ago (I forgot its source):

*Thou art coming to a King;  
Large petitions with thee bring.  
For His grace and power are such  
That none can ever ask too much!*

Notice the promise – “and it will be given to him.” That is called a present participle. It literally says that He will **continuously** give us this wisdom when we ask. I don’t think that this promise means that we will understand all of the “whys”: “why this trial and not another?” or “why this timing?” What He is promising is that we will receive wisdom as to what He desires to do in our life related to our perseverance, our maturity, our being conformed to the image of Christ. We can expect an answer from our Lord that will involve doing what He promises in **1 Peter 5:10 (NKJV)** “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.” This is a glorious promise! We need wisdom in our trials.

## II. We Need Faith in Our Trials (V6-8)

There is a condition attached to this promise for wisdom. The condition is that we ask believing that God will do what He has promised to do. This “believing” is not something that we must work up. We have a promise from God that He will give us wisdom. Our response is simply to ask and then trust in God’s character, God’s purposes, and God’s promises and God’s faithfulness. Jesus said in **Matthew 21:22 (NKJV)** “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” We can believe because He has promised. Here is the bottom line. If you don’t understand what God desires to do in your life through the trials He has allowed, it is because you’ve not asked Him, or you have not asked Him in faith, without doubting. When we pray, faith says “yes”; unbelief says “no”; doubt says “yes” but then “no” and then “yes”, etc. When we have a clear promise as we have here, I agree with the person who said, “It is as simple as this: pray, believe, and you’ll receive; pray, doubt, and you’ll do without.” I don’t mean to be flippant, but God has promised to give you His wisdom in trials. You can trust Him to keep His promises.

Notice the word pictures used in verses 6-7. The Christian who asks wisdom concerning the application of his or her trial and then doubts is like a wave driven by the wind going back and forth and sideways – totally at the mercy of the wind. In verse 8, the illustration of doubting is like a “double minded man”. The HCSB says an “indecisive man”. The Greek word translated “double minded” is only used here and

in James 4:8. Many scholars believe that James coined this word. What a picture it gives of a tormented man who believes and then doubts. He has a believing mind and an unbelieving mind. What a picture of doubt. In John Bunyan's classic allegory, "Pilgrim's Progress", one of the characters who struggles with doubt is "Mr. Facing-Both Ways". That is a picture of "double minded".

We need wisdom in our trials; we need faith in our trials.

### III. We Need Humility in Our Trials (V9-11)

Some see verse 9 as the beginning of a whole new subject for James. I don't think so; I think that he is still talking about some essentials for going through trials. Always, but especially in times of trial we need the humility to rely on His resources and to accept who He says we are in Christ. From some of the things that James says in this book, it seems that money and social status was a problem among the Christians that made up the first recipients of this inspired letter. We certainly deal with the same problem today. **James 2:6a (NKJV)** "But you have dishonored the poor man." **James 2:15-16 (NKJV)** "<sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?" James 5:1-5 is a rebuke aimed at the rich who oppressed the poor. James is saying to these Christians who are scattered because of persecution that the rich and the poor must be humble and focus on what is theirs in Christ and not on the material possessions that they have or might not have. Trials have a leveling effect on the materially wealthy and the materially poor.

First, James addresses "the lowly brother" or "the brother of humble circumstances" (HCSB). He is speaking of those that are poor. He tells the poor that they should "glory in [their] exaltation". That Greek word translated "glory" has the idea of rejoicing. In times of trial, the poor man is to focus on, rejoice in his exalted position in Christ. He may be poor materially, but in Christ he is an adopted son of the most high God; he is an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. He is a partaker of the divine nature and no longer a slave to sin. The poor in Christ are in reality rich. When a person's material status is inferior, he rejoices in the riches he has in Christ. **Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)** "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us [the materially rich and poor] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ". A poor man's humble circumstances means that his life is not cluttered with material possessions, and that makes it easier to focus on the riches he has in Christ.

Second, James addresses the "rich". The rich rejoices in all that is his in Christ and is humbled by the fact that every material thing that he has is temporary and will soon be gone. Just as the beautiful wild flowers are here today and gone tomorrow, even so our material wealth can vanish so quickly. There is no earthly investment that is a "sure thing". It will all one day be burned up and the rich will be left with nothing material. James is not saying that it is a sin to have material things; he is saying that it is a sin to trust in them or think that having them makes you superior to those that do not have them. It is not the rich person's material resources that will take them through the testings of life; it is his spiritual blessings in Christ. The materially poor Christian is not at a disadvantage in trials, because he has exactly the same spiritual resources as the rich man. The materially rich Christian and the materially poor Christian are on level ground because they share the same things in the realm of the eternal – **Ephesians 1:3b (NKJV)** "...every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ". All stand on level ground at the cross of Jesus Christ. R. C. H. Lenski has a great summary quote: "As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ the two are equal." [Quoted in Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, page 93].

We need wisdom in our trials; we need faith in our trials; we need humility in our trials.

### IV. We Need an Eternal Focus in Our Trials (V12)

As a reminder, the same Greek word can be translated "trial" or "temptation"; the context has to guide the translation. Almost every other translation uses "trial" here. I agree with them that James is still talking about trials and not enticements to sin. What we have in verse 12 is the eternal perspective on trials. When we endure our trials, there is a reward that will be ours. For the Christian, trials do not last

forever. There comes an end to them. That end is heaven. We need to be reminded of that and rest in that. This is what I mean by an eternal focus.

Let's look at some key words that will help us understand exactly what the Holy Spirit is saying through James. The Greek word translated "blessed" in verse 12 is the same one used in the Beatitudes. It means "to be congratulated", "fortunate" "fully satisfied". It carries the idea of inner joy and satisfaction. The first part of verse 12 takes us back to verse 2 and reinforces the same truth. **James 1:2 (NKJV)** "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials". In verse 2 we see that a proper approach to trials enables us to count it all joy. In verse 12, a right approach to trials enables us to be fully satisfied, and filled with joy. This being blessed is not from **escaping trials**; it is from **enduring trials**. The word translated "endures" doesn't mean to just "stick it out"; it has the idea of submitting to, of learning from, and to grow in maturity through the trial. Peter enlarges on what James says here. **1 Peter 1:3-7 (NKJV)** "3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance [another word for our reward] incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, **reserved** [a sure thing; safely kept] in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this **you greatly rejoice**, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ". What does that phrase in James 1:12, "when he has been approved" refer to? It literally means "to pass the test". It was used of the process of testing metals to determine their genuineness. We are approved when we allow the trial to do its intended work in us. It is when we grow in spiritual maturity and in Christ likeness through the trial.

What exactly is the reward? It is spoken of here as "the crown of life". Don't picture some gem-studded headpiece worn by some kings and queens. The word used here was the wreath put on the athlete's head at the end of a race that he had won. The picture is running through the trials of life with endurance and then receiving the crown, the reward for the race we ran and won by enduring, by not quitting. James is not saying that the sinner is saved by enduring trials; he is saying that the believer is rewarded by enduring trials. We have already spoken of the rewards that are ours in this life – spiritual maturity and Christ likeness. I believe that verse 12 is referring to eternal rewards, not those we get here as the result of enduring trials. In other places in Scripture crowns are given after our life here is done. I believe that the "crown of life" is the fullness of the eternal life that we received when we were united to Christ. I think that it includes the glory that will be revealed in us that is spoken of in **Romans 8:18 (NASB)** "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Notice that this crown of life is promised to all who love Christ. The New Testament uses "those who love Christ" as a description of those who are saved, those who are in Christ. **1 Corinthians 16:22 (NKJV)** "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!" A real Christian is not just someone who has professed faith in Him; it is a person who demonstrates true faith by a continuing and growing love for Christ that is not dampened or extinguished and certainly not destroyed by going through trials.

When we focus on the promised reward for our trials, God gives us the power to endure victoriously and reap the full benefit of the trials that He has allowed.

#### CONCLUSION

Which category are you in? Are you just coming out of a great trial? Are you in the middle of a trial? If you answered no to both of those first two questions, I can assure you that the third one is true of you. You are headed into a trial. Don't be afraid of trials. No, they're not pleasant, but the growth and the future reward tied to them are worth the pain. This life in Christ on a fallen planet is no pleasure cruise. It's a training ground and a battle field. Don't waste your trials!