

## *20/20 Vision For Our Trials*

#2 in series “Doing What We Believe”  
(A Study in the Book of James)

2020 is here. It is a brand-new year – that may renew an old nomenclature... For those of us who were alive in the last century, we remember each year being referred to as NINETEEN whatever... As the last second ticked away in 1999, our language changed and we have all referred to each year as *Two Thousand whatever*... And though many may have referred to this past year as *Two Thousand19* – it is doubtful that *two thousand twenty* should survive... I suspect that we will hear *twenty-twenty* as the vernacular reference for this new year, and that *twenty whatever* will mark the years I have remaining in this life...

*Twenty-twenty*... But when you hear that expression, most of us still think of 20/20 vision. 20/20 vision is a term used to express normal visual perception... It actually refers to the clarity or sharpness of vision – measured at a distance of 20 feet... If you have 20/20 vision, you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance... If you have 20/100 vision – that means that you must be as close as 20 feet to see what a person with normal vision can see at 100 feet...

And yet, there is another way we metaphorically refer to 20/20 vision – and that is *seen* in the phrase; “*Hind-sight is 20/20*”... Which simply means that when we look back on an experience, it is then that we often gain an accurate perspective – that we would like to have had before entering into that experience... If we had such perspective, we likely would avoid many experiences that we otherwise run headlong into with little or no thought...

Please don’t leave me... If you are thinking; “Why is he talking about this so much?”... There is a purpose... We need an accurate 20/20 perspective – not just in hind-sight – but in foresight... And where can we go to get that?...

In reality – to truly have *20/20 vision* about our human experience – is simply to have God’s perspective about that matter... We need truth and God is the source of truth – so we need to seek His perspectives about life! That alone would often protect us from, and even deliver us through the experiences of life – that otherwise can often overwhelm us... We need God’s perspective on life!

Today’s focal passage provides us the perfect “corrective lenses” for having God’s perspective about our common human experiences that we try to avoid, or often try to get out of as quickly as we can... Those are the experiences we refer to as “*trials*”... From God’s perspective – how should we view the trials we experience in our lives?

Turn again to James chapter one...

## James 1:1-4 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Still by way of introduction – let’s revisit verse one:

As we saw last week – James, the half-brother of Jesus is the human instrument that God uses to give us this book.

We need to take a moment to consider the original recipients of this letter. Look at verse one again:

### “the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad”

James’ target audience were Jews living outside the land of Palestine. The term “**twelve tribes**” refers only to the people of Israel – the Jewish nation (Acts 26:7)... The Jewish history, in short, is that God “scattered them” – out of Israel, because of their unfaithfulness to Him and His Word... We read about His warning in Deut. 4:25 and following... You recall that when Peter addressed that huge Jewish congregation on the Day of Pentecost – he spoke to people from many different nations (Acts 2:9–11). James sent his letter to Christian Jews. We are going to read where James, at least 19 times addressed these readers as “**brethren**”. He is not only acknowledging that they are “brothers in the flesh” (fellow Jews) – but that they are also “brothers in the Lord”... James was very clear on the doctrine of the new birth (James 1:18).

James 1:18 (NASB) “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”

There will be times when James addresses wicked people – and we will deal with that as it comes – but when he did, it was in order to teach and encourage the saved Jews that was his primary target audience...

After his formal **Greeting** – let’s see what the Lord said first to these scattered Jewish Christians that James wrote:

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Christian Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire experience a lot of trials...

**Warren Wiersbe** said that – “Being Jews, they would be rejected by the Gentiles, and being Christian Jews, they would be rejected by their own countrymen. This letter indicates that most

of these believers were poor, and some of them were being oppressed by the rich.” (The Weirsbe Bible Commentary, p. 849)

As we look at this passage God gave us through James – We find a 20/20 perspective on how to see our trials... We need God’s corrective lenses to see trials in their reality – to see how God intends to use them in our lives.

Since there are only two major points – I suppose we could think of these two points as two lenses in a pair of glasses... They are both needed, and in this case, they each have a different prescription for each eye:

The first corrective lens is –

1. Have a Determined Attitude in Our Trials

The Book of James is filled with imperatives ... commands.

Relatively speaking, the Book of James is a short book. It is presented to us in only five chapters... I read that there 50 imperative form verbs in this book...

*Fifty!* That’s fifty commands – and the first one is a call to –

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy... when you encounter various trials,

Trials by their very nature, are experiences that test just about everything about us... They test us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They test our patience, our emotions, and our attitudes... They can even test our relationships – our relationships with one another and even our relationship with God... Trials are experiences we tend to despise.

The Lord tells us to expect trials. It is NOT “*if you encounter various trials*” but “when you encounter various trials”... The Christian who expects their life to be easy is in for a shock. Jesus warned His disciples –

John 16:33 (NASB) “... In the world you have tribulation...”

Paul was offering words of encouragement when he said –

Acts 14:22 (NASB) “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

So why would the Lord, through James, command the brethren to “consider them joy”? In fact “consider it all joy”?... God must know something that we do not... He must know there is something good that is needed in our lives that comes from, or through trials ... I want to say that again – God must know something that we do not... He must know there is something good that is needed in our lives that comes from, or through trials

How could I say something like that? It is because we know that God Himself is good – and all that He does is good, and all that He ALLOWS must have an ultimate good for His glory.

There are many precious places to turn in God’s Word to see this truth:

Ps. 25:8a (NASB) “Good and upright is the Lord...”

Exo. 34:6 (NASB) “... The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

In fact – Jesus Himself declared that the Only One Who is good is God Himself (Mark 10:18).

James declares in verse 17 of this chapter that –

Jam. 1:17 (NASB) “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”

Followers of Christ today say along with the Psalmist –

Ps. 34:8 (NASB) “O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!”

Consider that word refuge... It has the idea of “protection”. Ps. 34:8 speaks not only of God’s goodness, but it speaks of great blessedness for those who take refuge in Him!

When are you in need of refuge?... It is whenever you are going through a trial! Again – Jesus said –

John 16:33 (NASB) “... In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Nahum 1:7 (NASB) “The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who

take refuge in Him.”

James said – Consider it all joy!

We need to understand that God is not commanding something that is impossible... The word **consider** is a call to “think”, to “deem, or account” – it’s an accounting term. Think on the facts – and draw an accurate conclusion!

Jesus, Who is more than our example, but nevertheless *is* our example – was looking past the cross and focusing on the result of the cross – which would enable Him to “consider” the cross itself “with all joy”

–  
Heb. 12:2 (NASB) “... Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

**2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,  
3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let  
endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete,  
lacking in nothing.**

We have considered the attitude we need when facing trials. Next, we need the “corrective lens” that helps us –

2. Realize God’s Purpose for Our Trials

That’s found in verse 3.

**3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let  
endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete,  
lacking in nothing.**

The first thing we need to grapple with in this verse is the word “knowing”... This verse contains truths that we desperately need to *know*!

**Warren Wiersbe**, in commentary of the Book of James – says this – “There is no substitute for an understanding mind. Satan can defeat the ignorant believer, but he cannot overcome the Christian who knows his Bible and understands the purposes of God.” (The Weirsbe Bible Commentary, p. 851)

I think that is one of the most accurate and profound truths I read about why we need to *know* what God says to us in His Word... And this very verse tells us things we desperately need to know concerning the context of trials...

Another quote:

Many of us have often heard **Pastor Phil** say – “Don’t waste your trials”. What does he mean by that?... Simply that there is a God-given purpose for that trial in your life and you need to seek God in that trial... The wasting of our trials happens when we fail to seek God in those trials for the fulfilment of His purpose for those trials...

What does the Lord tell us through James is the purpose for trials?... In this passage we can see four purposes:

The first is – trials –

Tests Faith

knowing that the testing of your faith

Question: Does God “test your faith” to see if you have any?... No! He knows everything about you! He tests your faith to “prove” your faith... You might say – to “improve” your faith!

The word translated “test” – means “that by which something is tried or proved, a test” (Strong’s Concordance). The original word is found only twice in the NT – here and in 1 Pet. 1:7, but we need to read that verse in its context –

1 Pet. 1:3-8 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>8</sup> and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Secondly, trials –  
Produce Endurance

<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

The word endurance has a specific application. **Strong's Concordance** says – “in the NT (endurance has) the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings”

Notice that this passage is not merely saying you need endurance for your trials – but that trials produce this kind of endurance!

[ ] It is similar to running a marathon – which is obviously something I have never done ... It takes endurance to complete a marathon, but you have to run a lot for a long time just to build up the ability to run a lot for a long time!

Endurance is the God-produced fruit in the life of His child who knows that the testing of our faith produces endurance... We can endure now, because we know that God is using this trial to strengthen and build us!

Who here needs greater patience and endurance for the trials you face in life? Then seek to “not waste” the current trial you may be in right now!

Again, hear the appeal of David in –

Ps. 34:8 (NASB) “O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!”

Take your refuge in God!... If you don't know how – CALL on Him! Ask Him to accomplish His purpose in you – whatever it takes!

There is a third purpose derived from this text for our trials... Trials prove and improve our faith. Trials produce endurance. And endurance –

Produces Maturity

<sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result (lit. *work*), so that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking in nothing.

Notice that the word “perfect” appears twice in this verse... We have the tendency of thinking of the term *perfection* – and that it means being without any fault... But the meaning of the term “perfect” speaks more of *maturity* – being “*grown up*”, or having been “*brought to its end, finished*”.

That is what we need to have in our minds as we read this verse. Look at it again:

... let endurance have its perfect (be brought to its end) result (literally – *work*), so that you may be perfect (mature)

God's desire for our lives is maturity...

John uses the terms “little children”, “young men” and “fathers” to refer to spiritual maturity in 1 John 2...

1 John 2:12-14 (NASB)

<sup>12</sup> I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's

sake. <sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. <sup>14</sup> I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

God wants the “little children” to become “young men,” and the “young men” to become “fathers”. How are you “maturing” in your relationship with Christ?

Finally, we see that enduring trials –  
Equips Completely

Notice that endurance not only *matures* us – but they *equip* us.

<sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result (lit. *work*), so that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking in nothing.

The equipping is seen in the final phrase –  
... and complete, lacking in nothing.

Trials not only cause us to “grow up” – but God uses them to equip us with what we need for future opportunities and challenges... God not only wants you to be mature, He wants to equip you for what you face in the future!

Consider the word “complete”. The original word, translated “complete” here, is also found only twice in the NT. The other place is –

1 Thess. 5:23 (NASB) “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In his book, *Looking UP, When Life Gets You DOWN*, Warren Wiersbe says – “At least in the world we know, it takes trials to make something beautiful and useful out of the raw materials of life. The student's struggle with truth develops his intelligence; the athlete's struggle with his records and his opponents helps to develop his muscles and coordination; the musician's struggle with more difficult pieces develops his playing skill; and the soul's struggle with the trials of life helps to build character.” (*Looking UP, When Life Gets You DOWN*, p. 125)

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So – how do we get a “20/20 Vision for Our Trials”?... Simply “look UP” ... PRAY!

Hear the appeal of the Holy Spirit through King David –

Ps. 34:17-19 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> The righteous cry, and the Lord hears  
And delivers them out of all their troubles.

<sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to the brokenhearted  
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
But the Lord delivers him out of them all.

One more passage to prayerfully think upon –  
Ps. 31:19-20 (NASB)

<sup>19</sup> How great is Your goodness,  
Which You have stored up for those who fear You,  
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,  
Before the sons of men!

<sup>20</sup> You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man;  
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.

Questions to consider in Community Group:

- How do you refer to the new year? Two Thousand Twenty, or Twenty/Twenty?
- Which “James” did God use to give us this book?
- Who were the “Twelve tribes scattered abroad”? Why were they scattered?
- In considering the “corrective lenses” we need to have “20/20 Vision for our trials” – the first point had to do with attitude. What is your typical attitude you experience when you are going through trials? How, and why can we “consider it joy”?
- If God is good, and all that He does is good – why would He allow His children to experience trials? What Scripture can we turn to that demonstrates God’s goodness in Who He is and what He does?
- It was stated that “trials – by their very nature, are experiences that test just about everything about us. They test us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They test our patience, our emotions, and our attitudes. They can even test our relationships – our relationships with one another and even our relationship with God.” Have you experienced anything like this in your life recently? If so, are you willing to share it?
- What are your thoughts about the Warren Wiersbe quote: “There is no substitute for an understanding mind. Satan can defeat the ignorant believer, but he cannot overcome the Christian who knows his Bible and understands the purposes of God.”
- What are the four purposes for trials in a Christian’s life that are stated in the focal passage? (Tests faith, produces endurance, produces maturity, completely equips) Which of these points challenged you the most? Which one encourages you the most?
- There were several passages of Scripture referenced in the message. Which one(s) ministered to you the most, and why?
- What other Scripture comes to your mind, when you think about God’s purposes for trials in the lives of His children?
- For what should we be praying for each other throughout this week?