

### Pt 3 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – Enduring Temptation

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 02-28-2018

#### † James 1:9-12

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his days.

12 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.

As we continue with our studies in the Book of James we come to verse 9 which almost seems totally unrelated to everything else we've studied. But we have to be careful and consider the subject matter James has been discussing – temptations, or trials in the life of a believer.

So, if we look at this in context of trials we find this is addressing we find James teaching on having faith in times of transition in one's financial condition.

Look at it in verse 9 *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:*

While I realize that the term "**brother of low degree**" could have several possible meanings such as one in a lower social class, or working class, but I think James is referring to his financial class because after this he mentions those with riches.

The truth is many people are swayed by their financial position. For example; many times, we find that people we would consider "poor" seem to be more faithful or godly than those we would consider "rich." Now that doesn't mean everyone that is poor is faithful or that everyone that is rich is not faithful; however, it does seem to be that way in a lot of cases.

There are some folks that at one time were faithful to the Church and seemed to walk with the LORD and suddenly they came into some money and it was as if they no longer needed the LORD. They had financial stability and felt that they were fine on their own and they stopped going to Church and began living an ungodly lifestyle.

If God blesses you with riches or more than you once had, we should rejoice in the fact that He has blessed us. We should not then be tempted to use the things God has blessed with us for sinful things or waste it on things of the world, we should be all the more dependent on the LORD and pray for Him to guide us in the proper usage of what He has blessed us with. That's called good stewardship. But riches are a temptation for many people.

This is what Paul warned Timothy about over in **1 Timothy 6:7-10**: *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

And, let's also not forget what the Bible says in **Luke 6:20** *And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.*

While some may not have much, they can look forward to heavenly blessings.

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his days.

Here we have the opposite from verse 9. Instead of the poor suddenly gaining wealth, we now have those that were rich becoming poor. Their wealth has been taken away for some reason. In the day James was writing this it was not uncommon for the Jews that once had wealth to lose it after they become followers of Christ. Once found out they would come under heavy persecution from the Romans and other unbelieving Jews. Often, they would have to flee their homes and hide out and they would suddenly find themselves living a lifestyle they are not used to.

For these early New Testament believers, they often viewed this harsh treatment and the persecution as something good because they understood how the Lord Jesus Christ was persecuted and killed and therefore they felt it an honor when they suffered for the sake of the Gospel.

That is why both James and Peter spent so much time discussing persecution, trials, and suffering. For example, in the very opening of James's letter he writes:

**James 1:2** *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;* (Remember that word **divers** means "all types or many kinds of")

Then over in Peter's letters he writes: **1 Peter 1:6-7** *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

And in **1 Peter 3:17-18** *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

Lastly, perhaps some of the greatest writing on Christian suffering in

**1 Peter 4:12-16** *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

So, the point James is trying to make is faithfulness of the believer despite his circumstances or financial condition. Very much as Paul described to the Church **Philippians 4:11-13** *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Remember the ground at the cross is level. None are above anyone else – no matter if you are rich or poor. And, one thing is for sure, you can't take it with you when you leave here.

.12 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.

Then he explains a great Scriptural truth concerning enduring trials and temptations and that is those that endure will be rewarded. Here James mentions “the crown of life.”

I’ve never been one to preach a lot about heavenly rewards or crowns. I have on occasion but I don’t think our motivation should be to gain rewards. Our motivation should be to glorify Christ. But the Bible does speak of rewards or “crowns,” that will be given to believers at the judgement seat of Christ.

We don’t have time to go very deeply into those during this study but very quickly let me just give you a list of those crowns that are promised to the believer and where you can find it in your Bible:

1. **Incorruptible crown - 1 Corinthians 9:24-25** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*
2. **Crown of righteousness – 2 Timothy 4:8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.
3. **Crown of Rejoicing – 1 Thessalonians 2:19** For what *is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*
4. **Crown of Glory – 1 Peter 5:4** And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.
5. **Crown of Life – James 1:12** 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.

It’s been a while since I’ve preached on the believer’s rewards, perhaps the Lord will direct me there sometime in the near future.

But, for our study in James, he is referring to the “crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” The word “crown” as used here, comes from the Greek word “**Stephanos**.” It means: **to encircle, twine or wreath** – *it was a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard.*

These were the rewards that were given out during the Greek and Roman games. Our modern-day equivalent to the Olympics. The Greeks would place a crown of Laurel leaves on the winner’s head. Sometimes these would be made of gold in the appearance of laurel leaves or olive leaves. That is no longer done in the Olympics. Nowadays they give out medals to the winners.

In the days of James, Paul, and Peter, the games were very popular. Paul uses sports metaphors all throughout his writing such as: **Run the race, Strive for the prize, Reach for the mark**, and so on. So, I’m sure James has in mind of that crown given to the victor because that is the image that we find; a crown of life for the believer. Of course this “crown of life,” is the crown of everlasting life, or eternal life.

The Lord Jesus also mentions this crown of life to the Church at Smyrna in the Book of **Revelation 2:10** **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**

Notice that He also mentions it along with suffering and faithfulness.

I want us to pay particular notice to the fact that believers are not promised an earthly life of ease. All throughout the Bible you will find that believers in Christ suffered for their faith. So, while following Christ does not exempt us from suffering, or trials, or temptations, it certainly does give us the strength to endure.

I know I mention this a lot and I’m trying to scare anybody but I want everyone to keep in mind that we have it good in the United States. Despite the craziness that goes on here and the “fake news” bombarding us, when it comes to Christian persecution we have it very easy.

Let me give you a few facts concerning Christian persecution that is going on right now in this world.

According to a study by a group called “**Aid to the Church in Need**,” The persecution and genocide of Christians across the world is worse today than at any time in history.

This past November, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that Christianity is “the most persecuted religion in the world.”

According to Open Doors USA:

1. 255 Christians are killed every month.
2. 104 Christians are abducted every month.
3. 180 Christian women are raped, sexually harassed, or forced into marriage every month.
4. 66 Churches are attacked every month.
5. 160 Christians are detained and held without trial every month.
6. North Korea is the most dangerous place on earth for Christians.

The Christians in James’s day understood full-well about Christian persecution. That is why it is mentioned so much in the different Epistles of the New Testament. Remember, in 64 AD the Roman Emperor, Nero, burned down Rome and blamed the Christians. It was full-scale attack on all Christians after that.

In fact, according to Foxes Book of Martyrs, James, the writer of this Epistle, **At the age of ninety-four he was beat and stoned by the Jews; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller’s club.**

I sincerely pray that we never have to experience that kind of persecution here in America, but we are not promised that. If we get the wrong leadership in and keep passing the anti-Christian laws that are being passed in this country, we could very well see something like this happen.

The question is, how will our faith in Christ endure? How will we stand firm in the time of trials and persecution?

Remember, the title of our sermon series is “Faith Made Perfect.” That is what these trials in our lives are designed to do.

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† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version