

1 **James**

EXHORTATIONS TO PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

2 **What does it mean to be a slave for Christ?**

ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE

ABSOLUTE HUMILITY

ABSOLUTE LOYALTY

A CERTAIN PRIDE IN BELONGING TO JESUS

3 **Intentional Rejoicing during Purposeful Testing**

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

JAMES 1:2-4

4 **Notice what is missing**

▶ In most epistles, the author takes time to give thanks for his readers or offers a blessing to God for His abundant spiritual provision.

▶ Not James. He jumps right into exhortation.

▶ The tough times faced by Jewish converts are a key reason for James writing this epistle.

▶ He says suffering has a purpose which is accomplished only if we respond in the right way to those problems.

5 **James 1:2-4**

1 *Consider it all joy, my brothers, whenever you encounter various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4, LEB)*

2 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James 1:2-4, KJV 1900)*

6 **Practical counsel to suffering Christians**

▶ The practical character of his letter is at once apparent. "Count it all joy when you fall in various trials."

▶ They were all undergoing trials and tests as believing Jews, who had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

▶ The First Epistle of Peter, which is also addressed to believing Hebrews tells the same story.

▶ They were in heaviness through manifold temptations.

▶ Their faith was severely tried as with fire (1 Peter 1:6-7).

7 **What kinds of trials?**

PERSECUTION

SICKNESS

POVERTY

DISCRIMINATION

WITHHELD WAGES

... TO NAME A FEW

8 **What kinds of trials?**

▶ Persecution

▶ *But you have dishonored the poor! Are not the rich exploiting you and they themselves dragging*

you into the courts? Do they themselves not blaspheme the good name of the one to whom you belong? (James 2:6–7, LEB)

▶ *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there, and carry on business and make a profit," (James 4:13, LEB)*

9 **Sickness**

Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the elders of the church and they should pray over him, anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord. (James 5:14, LEB)

10 **Poverty**

Now let the brother of humble circumstances boast in his high position, but the rich person in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a flower of the grass. For the sun rises with its burning heat and dries up the grass, and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is lost. So also the rich person in his pursuits will wither away. (James 1:9–11, LEB)

11 **Discrimination**

My brothers, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with partiality. For if someone enters into your assembly in fine clothing with a gold ring on his finger, and a poor person in filthy clothing also enters, and you look favorably on the one wearing the fine clothing and you say, "Be seated here in a good place," and to the poor person you say, "You stand or be seated there by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers! Did not God choose the poor of the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor! Are not the rich exploiting you and they themselves dragging you into the courts? Do they themselves not blaspheme the good name of the one to whom you belong? (James 2:1–7, LEB)

12 **Withheld pay**

Come now, you rich people, weep and cry aloud over the miseries that are coming upon you! Your wealth has rotted, and your clothing has become moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have become corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you, and it will consume your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages that were held back by you from the workers who reap your fields cry out, and the cries of the reapers have come to the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived self-indulgently on the earth and have lived luxuriously. You have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the righteous person; he does not resist you. (James 5:1–6, LEB)

13 **Face trials with an attitude of PURE joy**

▶ Do not see trials as:

▶ Punishment

▶ Curse

▶ Calamity

▶ The paradox of intentionally rejoicing in affliction

▶ "Praise the Lord anyway!" – Great phrase for plumbing...

▶ Consider it pure supreme joy – not just some joy, or joy coupled with grief; a "nothing but joy" joy!

14 **Suffering identifies us with Christ**

▶ *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (1 Peter 2:21, KJV 1900)*

▶ *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you*

should follow in his footsteps, (1 Peter 2:21, LEB)

▶Think about that the next time you sing "Footsteps of Jesus"

15 **An intentional reckoning**

- ▶Count it joy – An accounting term – "Put it on the books as joy." Suffering is providentially allowed.
- ▶James warmly refers to his fellow Jewish believers as his "brethren" – uses this term 14 times.
 - ▶He feels compassion for his readers.
 - ▶He knew they were going through tough times being viewed as heretics from the Jewish faith

16 **The FALL into trials**

- ▶The verb translated "face" might more literally be expressed as "fall into," *peripēsēte*, much as the poor man "*fell among robbers*" (Luke 10:30).
- ▶The verb here means to fall into something unexpectedly so as to be suddenly surrounded or overwhelmed by opposition or trial.

17 **Joy IN the trials**

- ▶James does not say that we should be joyful FOR all the trials but that we should rejoice IN the trials.
- ▶The "trials of many kinds" (*peirasmois ... poikilois*) were also referred to by Peter, who used the same Greek words, though in reverse order (1 Peter 1:6). When surrounded by these trials, one should respond with joy.
- ▶Most people count it all joy when they escape trials. James said to count it all joy in the midst of trials (cf. 1 Peter 1:6, 8).

18 **What kind of trials?**

- ▶It is clear that the reference here is to external trials, or tests of stamina (*peirasmois*).
- ▶*Peirasmos* is trial or testing directed towards an end, and the end is that anyone who is tested should emerge stronger and purer from the experience.

19 **Testing with a purpose**

- ▶Some translations have "tempt" but the idea is not that of enticement into sin but of strengthening and purifying.
 - ▶A young bird is said to test (*peirazein*) its wings.
 - ▶The Queen of Sheba was said to come to test (*peirazein*) the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 10:1).

20 **God "tested" Abraham**

- ▶God was said to test (*peirazein*) Abraham, when he appeared to be demanding the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:1).
 - ▶*And it happened that after these things, God tested Abraham. And he said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."* (Genesis 22:1, LEB)
 - ▶*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.* (Genesis 22:1, KJV 1900)
- ▶Can testing turn to temptation?

21 **Testing vs. tempting**

- ▶The Greek *peirasmos* can denote either an outward trial or process of "testing" or they can denote the inner enticement to sin: "temptation" or "tempt."
- ▶1 Tim. 6:9: "*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction*" (see also Luke 22:40, 46)
- ▶1 Pet. 4:12, on the other hand, is a good example of the other meaning: "*Dear friends, do not be*

surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you"

▶Wrongly responded to, testings can turn to temptations.

22 **Testing with a purpose (2)**

▶God left the peoples of the Promised Land that were there so that Israel might be tested (peirazein) in the struggle against them (Judges 2:22, 3:1, 3:4).

▶*in order to test Israel whether or not they would observe the way of Yahweh, to walk in it just as their ancestors did."* (Judges 2:22, LEB)

▶*These are the nations that Yahweh left, to test Israel by them (that is, to test all those who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan, (Judges 3:1, LEB)*

23 **Testings make the people of God**

▶The experiences in Israel were tests which contributed to the making of the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:34, 7:19).

▶*Or has a god ever attempted to go to take for himself a nation from the midst of a nation, using trials and signs and wonders and war, with an outstretched arm and with great and awesome deeds, like all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (Deuteronomy 4:34, LEB)*

▶*...the great trials that your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the workings of the strong hand and the outstretched arm by which Yahweh your God brought you out; so Yahweh your God will do to all of the peoples because of whom you are in fear before them. (Deuteronomy 7:19, LEB)*

24 **What God can do in our trials**

▶Embrace your trials with rejoicing because of what God can accomplish through them.

▶God can glorify himself

▶God can strengthen our faith

▶God can help us see who our true friends are

▶God can motivate us to spend time in His loving presence

▶God can show the world that He can take care of His children

▶God can teach us to swim when we think we are drowning

▶God can remind us that He is our loving and supplying Father

25 **F.J.A. Hort**

▶*"The Christian must expect to be jostled by trials on the Christian way.' All kinds of experiences will come to us. There will be the test of the sorrows and the disappointments which seek to take our faith away. There will be the test of the seductions which seek to lure us from the right way. There will be the tests of the dangers, the sacrifices and the unpopularity which are so much a part of the Christian way.*

26 **F.J.A. Hort (2)**

▶*But they are not meant to make us fall; they are meant to make us soar. They are not meant to defeat us; they are meant to be defeated. They are not meant to make us weaker; they are meant to make us stronger.*

▶*Therefore we should not complain about them; we should rejoice in them. Christians are like athletes. The heavier the course of training they undergo, the more they are glad, because they know that it is preparing them all the better for victorious effort."*

▶

27 **The results of testing**

28 **Unswerving constancy**

▶ *James 1:3*

▶ *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (KJV)*

▶ *Because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (LEB)*

▶ *Dokimion* perseveres towards goal vs. just tolerates a circumstance.

▶ It is the ability to turn difficulties into greatness and glory.

29 **What is endurance?**

▶ Endurance is a growing determination in the face of adversity, based on hope.

▶ Those who suffer can express joy (v. 2) during times of trial because of their confidence in the day in which Christ will vindicate them.

▶ *But to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice and be glad. (1 Peter 4:13, LEB)*

▶

▶

30 **Example of the martyrs**

▶ The thing which amazed the non-Christians in the centuries of Christian persecution was that the martyrs did not die grimly, they died singing.

▶ One smiled in the flames; they asked him what he found to smile at there. 'I saw the glory of God,' he said, 'and was glad.'

31 **Don't bail! Finish the growth!**

▶ We must intentionally "let endurance (*hupomone*) have its complete work.

▶ So easy to bail out of a situation before God has finished the work He is doing in us.

▶ Quitting a diet before the time; stopping exercise because you don't see new muscles immediately – you have to wait for results!

▶ One of the reasons that the average tenure of a pastor in the U.S. is 22 months.

▶ Staying at a task is painful. And we might want recognition, or for things to get easier. But stay where God plants you!

32 **1. Testing makes us mature**

▶ *And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:4, LEB)*

▶ Perfect = *teleios* -- perfection towards a given end (goal)

▶ A sacrificial animal is *teleios* if it is fit to offer to God.

▶ A scholar is *teleios* if he or she is mature.

▶ A person who is fully grown is *teleios*. T

▶ KEY: How we meet every experience in life, determines whether we are making ourselves fit or unfit for the task which God meant us to do.

33 **Perfect?**

▶ The word "perfect" has been misinterpreted by some as if it meant an assumed Christian perfection or sinlessness.

▶ It does not mean that, but it means the perfect work of patience, enduring to the end, when self-will is subdued and the will of God is fully accepted.

▶ The result is that there is no deficiency in the practical life of the believer.

▶ The Lord Jesus is an example of it. He never did His own will, but patiently waited for the will of

God and yielded a perfect obedience. Faith is power to suffer and to endure trials and testings.

34 **2. Testing makes us complete**

- ▶ *Holoklaroi* (holoklēros) – Complete and entire, perfect in every part.
 - ▶ Used of the animal which is fit to be offered to God and of the priest who is fit to serve him. It means that the animal or the person has no disfiguring and disqualifying blemishes.
 - ▶ Gradually, this intentional unswerving constancy removes the weaknesses and the imperfections from a person's character.
 - ▶ Daily, it enables us to conquer old sins, to shed old blemishes and to gain new virtues, until in the end we become entirely fit for the service of God and of one another.

35 **3. Testing equips us so we are not deficient**

- ▶ "*In nothing lacking*"
 - ▶ Greek is *leipesthai*, and it is used of the defeat of an army, of the giving up of a struggle, of the failure to reach a standard that should have been reached.
 - ▶ We lose when we give up or give in during a trial.
 - ▶ If we meet our testing in the right way, if day by day we develop this unswerving constancy, day by day we will live more victoriously and grow in Christlikeness.

36 **But how?**

- ▶ Ok, so I can face trials with joy because when I face trials through with faith, perseverance results. And perseverance will develop me into a thoroughly mature Christian who lacks nothing. It makes me what God wants me to be.
- ▶ But still, how do I welcome trials with joy? I'm not feeling it! – Answer in the next sermon.