

JAMES 1:1-4

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to James chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we begin this letter that James wrote “**To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.**” James 1:1.

Keep in mind that this letter is only five-chapters long and yet, it is very controversial. In fact, some see such a conflict with the rest of what the New Testament is saying that they feel it does not belong with the Scriptures, it should not be part of the Bible!

Let me just start out by saying this. The letter of James is part of the Bible and as much as some may feel that it is refuting what Paul wrote about being saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone because James is speaking of a works salvation, they are wrong.

Again, let me be clear on this. That is not what James is saying, not at all!

Now, because of all this conflict, I think it is important that we understand exactly what the problem was and what the answer to that problem is so we can defend our faith, we can give people the reason for the hope that is in us and we understand what James is speaking of.

There are some who feel that because there is no major doctrines regarding God but this letter is totally focused upon the works in a believer’s life, because of that, it should not be a part of the Scriptures.

Because of these issues, Martin Luther, the great reformer, struggled with this letter as he came out of the Catholic Church with its salvation based in a works theology, which goes against what the Scriptures teach. Like I have said, and what Martin Luther believed, we are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through Works!

Listen to what Martin Luther said about the letter of James in the introduction to the first edition of his German New Testament, (1522). He said,

In fine, Saint John's Gospel and his first epistle, Saint Paul's epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Saint Peter's first epistle, - these are the books which show thee Christ, and teach thee everything that is needful and blessed for thee to know even though thou never see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore in Saint James's epistle a right strawy epistle in comparison with them, for it has no gospel character to it.

- Cited in James H. Ropes, The Epistle of St. James, p. 106

Do you see the struggle he was having?

But this is what many people miss regarding this letter. This letter is about what should be manifested in a Christians life.

And this is pretty simple when you think about it and it is the main point of this letter, that faith alone saves us but a faith that saves us is never alone.

In other words, what we believe is manifested in our lives, it doesn't save us, but it is the evidence showing that we are saved.

But again, some like to argue that Paul and James wrote opposing views regarding salvation. I disagree.

Again, this is pretty simple. Paul wrote about saving faith and James gives to us another perspective, the outward workings of saving faith.

Paul is speaking of legal justification before the eyes of God, which is found in true, humble faith before Him.

James, on the other hand, is speaking of visible justification before the eyes of men, what we are doing in our lives, the works that flow from a faith in Jesus!

If our faith was on trial in a court of law, is there enough evidence to show that we are saved? Are we manifesting in our lives the things of God or do people see the works of the flesh?

It is as James 2:26 says, **“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”** That just makes sense!

Of this letter, J. Ronald Blue had this to say in his introduction to this letter of James. He wrote,

There is enough needles in this haystack to prick the conscience of every dull, defeated, and degenerated Christian in the world. Here is a “right stirring epistle” designed to exhort and encourage, to challenge and convict, to rebuke and revive, to describe practical holiness and drive believers toward the goal of faith that works. James is severely ethical and refreshingly practical.

- Walvoord & Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 815

Make no mistake about it, this letter is challenging, very challenging, very convicting. It is not for those who don't want to be challenged because James does not pull any punches. He just tells it like it is. I guess you can say that he is not seeker friendly!

I will give you one example and that is what James says about the tongue, and I think we all should be convicted by this, by what James has to say. Not for condemnation as Christians, but so that we can grow in the Lord, we can see those areas that God wants us to work on.

Listen carefully to what James wrote in James 3:310, **“Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.”**

Ouch, right!

As we are going to see over the next several weeks, this letter is very challenging and very convicting. There is no fluff in this letter and really, don’t tell me something that is not true just because it sounds good and makes me feel good. I want the truth, as difficult as it may be to swallow.

And as you look at all that James has to say in this letter, he is basically telling us that if you are a Christian your life will manifest these qualities and if you don’t, your words are empty because there is no evidence for your faith, just a lot of hot air you might say!

I hope I have not scared any of you away, because, like Peter reminds us in II Peter 3:17-18, **“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

So being challenged is a good thing because it helps us to grow in the Lord. I pray you are not afraid of this letter, but you are excited to see what God has for you as you grow in Him!

Now, the big question is, *“Who wrote this letter?”*

And don't say, *“James!”* We know that, but which James wrote this letter since we see several people named James in the New Testament. So, which one is it? Let me see if I can help narrow it down for us and I think you will see exactly who wrote this letter.

First of all there is *James the son of Zebedee and the brother of John* – disciples of Jesus, one of the twelve apostles. (Matthew 4:21-22, Mark 1:19-20).

The problem with this James being the writer is that Herod Agrippa I martyred him for his faith in 44 A. D. before this letter was written.

We are told in Acts 12:1-2, **“Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”**

So this could not be the James, the brother of John and the son of Zebedee. He is not the person who wrote this letter.

Then there is *James the son of Alphaeus* mentioned in Mark 3:18, one of the twelve apostles.

The problem here is that we read nothing more of this man and thus, it is unlikely that he wrote this letter.

We also have *James, the father of Judas, not Iscariot* according to Luke 6:16. But again, nothing more is written of him and thus, it is very unlikely that he wrote this letter.

And the next one is the one I believe who wrote this letter, *James the half-brother of Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph.*

I believe that it is this James that wrote this letter.

I know, it is hard for some to believe because they have been taught that Mary was a virgin all of her life. They believe that Mary and Joseph never had sexual relations and thus, they never had any other children.

The problem with that teaching is that the Scriptures don't support that. In fact, the Scriptures tell us the exact opposite is true! Let me show you what I mean, and I pray that you believe what God's Word has to say over the opinion or the teaching of man.

First of all, in Matthew 1:24-25 we are told, "**Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.**"

Notice, Joseph did not know Mary his wife, they did not have sexual relations until after Jesus was born and then they had a healthy marriage and they did have other children. Matthew tells us that he "**. . . did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son.**"

One writer put it, "*The marriage was thus formally completed, but not consummated before the birth of Jesus. The Greek expression for not until would normally suggest that intercourse did take place after the end of this period. . . . There is no biblical warrant for the tradition of the 'perpetual virginity' of Mary.*" (France)

Keep in mind that this false doctrine of Mary and Joseph not having sexual relations at all did not appear on the scene until the fifth century!

But again, that is hard for some to accept, but let the Scriptures speak for themselves instead of listening to the doctrines of men.

In Matthew 13:54-56 we are told, **“When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’”**

So Jesus did have brothers and sisters and I believe it is James the half-brother of Jesus that wrote this epistle, and Jude, another half-brother of Jesus wrote the epistle of Jude.

Paul also mentions that Jesus had brothers in Galatians 1:19, **“But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.”** Paul specifically mentions James being the Lord’s brother!

Now please understand that before the death and resurrection of Jesus, his brothers and sisters did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, they thought He was crazy.

In John 7:5 we are told, **“For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”**

But then, after the death and resurrection of Jesus they did come to believe for in Acts 1:12-14 we are told, **“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”**

How did James come to saving faith?

I believe it was because James saw the resurrected Christ as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:7, **“After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.”**

I believe that this convinced James that Jesus truly was the Messiah and Savior of the world.

No doubt James shared his newfound faith with his brothers and sisters, and, like I have said, Judas got saved and possibly all of Jesus’ half-siblings.

And, as you can imagine, what an impact this had on James, seeing the resurrected Lord, and his life was transformed.

By the time we get to Acts 12 James is the head of the church in Jerusalem, the pastor you might say. And in Acts chapter 15 he oversees the first council meeting regarding how Gentiles are to be saved, by the Law or by Grace.

And after Peter and Paul spoke, James gave his decision on this subject, sending letters to the Gentile churches in Antioch telling them that salvation is by Grace through Faith in Jesus Christ, end of story!

Again, that is another good point to show us that James did not believe in a works salvation or that you are saved by the Law, not at all.

We also learn from early church history that James was such a man of prayer that his knees had large, thick calluses, making them look like the knees of a camel. And, because of that, it earned him the nickname “*Camel Knees.*”

And from historical information, we know that James was martyred for his faith in Jesus Christ in 62 A. D. according to first century historian Flavius Josephus.

And according to tradition he was pushed off the pinnacle of the Temple and survived.

Who did this dastardly deed to James?

It was the Jewish religious leaders, specifically the Pharisees who hated James and his unwavering testimony of Jesus Christ. And they were the ones that threw him off the pinnacle of the Temple to kill him.

And after this incident, as he was on the ground, he then got on his knees and prayed, “*O Lord God, Father, I beseech Thee to forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”

I am not sure that is what I would have said, but James responded as His Lord and Savior did from the cross of Calvary and that is how we are to respond to people, pray for them, forgive them, because they have no idea what they are doing!

At this point, still wanting to kill James, the Pharisees picked up stones to stone him but yet he lived.

And finally, this time they were going to make sure he was dead, they picked up clubs and they beat him to death!

This occurred in 62 A. D. Which tells us that this letter, obviously, had to be written before 62 A. D., before his death!

But his testimony lives on as he shares with us, by the power of God's Spirit, these truths of God.

Now, when was this letter written, and, like I have said, it has to be written before his death in 62 A. D.?

Since there is no mention of the Jerusalem council meeting that occurred in 49 A. D., which of course was very important, it would seem that James wrote this letter somewhere between 45 to 48 A. D.

We call this letter James, and in the Greek, it is IAKOBS and in the Hebrew it is YAAKOV or Jacob.

And James wrote this letter to challenge his readers to examine their faith to see if it was genuine saving faith, if they were living what they said they believed.

As I have said, faith alone saves us but the faith that saves us is never alone, works flow from our lives, not for salvation but as evidence that we are saved!

As we are going to see, James is writing to Jewish Christians who were scattered and persecuted for their faith. And most of this attack was from fellow, non-believing Jews.

And with persecution, there can come discouragement and it would seem that is one of the reasons that James wrote this letter, to encourage them to forge ahead, not to give up, but to keep going forward in their walk with the Lord and their ministries that God had given to them.

Listen to what Warren Wiersbe wrote regarding the main point of this letter, which is really spiritual immaturity on their part and the call to grow up. He wrote,

These Christians simply were not growing up. This gives us a hint as to the basic theme of this letter: the marks of maturity in the Christian life. James used the word perfect several times, a word that means "mature, complete."

By “a perfect man” (James 3:2) James did not mean a sinless man, but rather one who is mature, balanced, grown-up.

Spiritual maturity is one of the greatest needs in churches today. Too many churches are playpens for babies instead of workshops for adults.

The members are not mature enough to eat the solid spiritual food that they need, so they have to be fed on milk (Heb. 5:11–14).

Just look at the problems James dealt with and you can see that each of them is characteristic of little children: Impatience in difficulties (1:1–4); Talking but not living the truth (2:14); No control of the tongue (3:1); Fighting and coveting (4:1) and Collecting material “toys” (5:1).

- Warren Wiersbe

So we have a very interesting and challenging study for us here in the letter of James.

One last point before we get to our text this evening and that is the outline of this letter. I like to keep things simple and thus, this is how this letter is divided up:

- 1. THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING – JAMES 1**
- 2. THE BELIEVER AND SERVICE – JAMES 2**
- 3. THE BELIEVER AND HIS SPEECH – JAMES 3**
- 4. THE BELIEVER AND A SEPARATED LIFE – JAMES 4**
- 5. THE BELIEVER AND THE SECOND COMING – JAMES 5**

With that as our background, and I realize that we have spent a lot of time on this but it is important we understand what this letter is all about before we dig into it, let's begin reading in James chapter 1, starting in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through God's Word and we begin to look at *The Believer and Suffering*.

JAMES 1

VERSE 1

Notice how James opens this letter up. He first identifies himself, "**James**" but what is interesting to me is what he doesn't say next.

Most people today, if they had a family member who was famous, they would link themselves up to them, make sure everyone knew that they were important too!

Think of it like this, "*Joe, the son of the President of the United States of America, the one who made America great again, greets you!*"

Think about that for a minute, and don't laugh, but now apply that to James. James does not write, "*James, the brother of Jesus who is Almighty God, the Savior of the world, greets you!*"

Could he have done that? I guess so but what we see here is that James places himself with every believer, he doesn't exalt himself but in humility he says that he is a "**bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Now that is interesting because we hear so much about slavery today and no one wants to be a slave to anyone!

And this is not just a slave, this is a bondservant. And a bondservant was a slave who could be let go by his master and was, but he has freely chosen to remain a slave and serve his master. He then would be taken to the doorpost of the house and an awl would be used to pierce his ear and a ring put through it showing that he was a bondslave, freely serving his master.

Hiebert put it like this, *“A slave, a bondservant, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another . . . Among the Greeks, with their strong sense of personal freedom, the term carried a degrading connotation.”*

And I think that is true even today. But let me say this. We all are going to serve somebody, and like Bob Dylan sang,

You may be an ambassador to England or France
 You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
 You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
 You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes
 Indeed you're gonna have to serve somebody
 Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
 But you're gonna have to serve somebody

You might be a rock 'n' roll addict prancing on the stage
 You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage
 You may be a business man or some high-degree thief
 They may call you doctor or they may call you chief

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes you are
 You're gonna have to serve somebody
 Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
 But you're gonna have to serve somebody

- Bob Dylan, Gotta Serve Somebody

And the song goes on, but you get the idea. Are you going to serve the Lord, be a bondslave to Him or if you refuse, you will be a slave to Satan whether you like it or not? For James, he was a bondslave to Jesus Christ!

And thus, for James, it was not important that Jesus was his brother, but that Jesus was his Lord and Savior and His *DOULOS* or bonds slave!

Again, I do realize that for many, this is a hard concept, but our Lord gave us His example that we are to follow. He told us in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Now James speaks of God the Father but then he calls Jesus **“Lord.”**

And this is very confusing for some and some even come to the conclusion that James is saying that Jesus is not God?

Not at all and again, that would go against what the rest of the Scriptures are teaching us of Jesus, that He is God.

The Greek word for **“Lord”** is KURIOS and *“Hellenistic Jews used kurios as a name for God; the non-use of the article gains in significance when it is remembered that o kurios, ‘dominus,’ was a title given to the early Roman emperors in order to express their deity.”* (Oesterley in Expositor’s).

Thus, James considered Jesus God.

In John 10:31-33 listen to what we are told, **“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?’ The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.’”**

In the Greek they are saying that Jesus was continually making this claim that He is God, not just a one-time statement!

We are told in John 20:28 as Jesus appeared in His resurrection body to the disciples,

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

Did you notice that Thomas did not call Jesus “*a god*” but just “**God!**”

Also, when Thomas called Jesus God, we see that Jesus did not correct Thomas because what Thomas said was true!

Paul in Romans 9:5 said, **“of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”**

Now for those that reject the deity of Jesus, that He is God, you will die in your sins.

That is not what I have to say, it is what Jesus said in John 8:24, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins.”**

Notice, the “**He**” was added for clarity, it was not there in the original. Thus, Jesus is saying that if you don’t believe that He is the great *I AM*, if He is not your Lord and Savior, you will die in your sins!

So James is a bonds slave to the Lord Jesus Christ and notice who James is writing to, and we touched on this in the introduction.

James tells us that he is writing to Jewish Christians who have been scattered abroad or to those Jews living outside the land of Israel.

Why did they flee Jerusalem?

The reason they fled was because of the persecution they were facing because of their faith in Jesus.

In Acts 8:1, after Stephen was martyred for his faith in Jesus, we are told, **“Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”**

Then, in Acts 11:19 we read that this scattering is moving farther out as we are told, **“Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.”**

Now why didn't James write to Gentiles?

Please understand that when the church was started, it was primarily Jewish, there were no large numbers of Gentiles.

Only later on did the door open for the Gentiles to hear of the Good News, the Gospel message and thus, by the time we get to Acts 15, many Jews were questioning the salvation of the Gentiles because they were not keeping the Law of Moses. (Acts 15 took place around 48 to 50 A. D.)

Thus, James steps in, like I have said, and tells them that Jews and Gentiles are saved by Grace through Faith!

Now, even though James is writing to Jewish believers that have been scattered abroad because of their faith in Jesus, these lessons are for all believers to learn and apply to their lives!

You see, the reason James wrote this letter was to encourage them, give them hope, to strengthen them in their faith. To allow the trials they were facing in the Lord to strengthen them not destroy them, to help them to grow.

And the reality is, how we handle these trials shows the genuineness of our faith, if we truly live what we say we believe!

And as this verse closes, notice the salutation that James uses. James uses the salutation “**greetings**” or CHAIRO, (khah’-ee-ro) in the Greek.

It is a little different greeting than Paul’s “**Grace and peace.**”

But this was a typical Greek way of opening a letter and it means to rejoice or be glad, which is an interesting way to open a letter to a group of people that are facing hardships, persecutions, trials in their lives!

Why did James open up like this?

I believe he expected them to be encouraged by this letter and their despair would change to joy as they would look at the situations they were facing from a different perspective.

I don’t know where you are at right now, but if you are struggling, I pray that this letter would encourage you to look at your life’s situations from a godly perspective instead of a worldly one and I truly believe your sadness will turn to joy in the Lord.

And for all of us, there are none who will not experience trials in their life, so this is for all of us to learn from.

And James is not going to pull any punches here, he gets right into these difficulties that come upon our life to show us how we are to respond.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker that reads, “When life hands you lemons, make lemonade!” It is easier to smile at that statement than to practice it, but the basic philosophy is sound. In fact, it is biblical. Throughout the Bible are people who turned defeat into victory and trial into triumph. Instead of being victims, they become victors.

James tells us that we can have this same experience today. No matter what the trials may be on the outside (James 1:1-12) or the temptations on the inside (James 1:13-27), through faith in Christ we can experience victory. The result of this victory is spiritual maturity.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, pp. 850-851

We have just finished the book of Hebrews and that too dealt with persecution against Jewish believers for their faith by fellow Jews and how Paul encouraged them to continue on and run the race of faith with endurance. And James is going to encourage us to continue on in the faith and live what we say we believe!

VERSE 2

Here is the difference between spiritual believers and carnal believers. It is how we deal with the trials that we face in life.

For the carnal Christian their view of Christianity is based on how God blesses them, it is an earthly perspective of things. When things go well, God is good, when they go bad, God where are you!

And they tend to believe that all the bad that happens to them is some kind of Satanic plot to destroy their earthly happiness and thus, you must “**Rebuke**” the devil so that they can enjoy those blessings once again.

You see, in their mind God exists to make them happy, to bless them, and the focus is on all kinds of material things.

Now, on the opposite end of the spectrum is the spiritual believer whose focus is on the eternal and instead of laying up treasures on this earth, they are storing up heavenly treasures by taking up their cross, by denying themselves and it is all for the glory of God as they represent God on this earth!

For the spiritual Christian, trials are necessary for their spiritual growth and development. It is not some kind of Satanic plot, but it is part of God's plan to help equip them to serve the Lord.

Now let me also say this. Satan can use those trials in our lives to tempt us to sin, but God wants to use them to help us to grow! Satan can throw all kinds of things at us to trip us up, to cause us to sin, but God is using those same things to test our faith, to trust in Him, to grow by!

And thus, James starts out running here and he tells us “**when you fall into various trials**” not “*if.*”

You see, trials are all around us, you can't escape them and that is not the issue. The issue is how you handle yourself through them.

Trials are going to happen, not might, not if, but “**when**” they do happen, then you need to walk accordingly. Trials are unavoidable.

Several years ago the Presbyterian pastor Lloyd John Ogilvie underwent the worst year of his life. His wife had undergone five major surgeries, plus radiation and chemotherapy, several of his staff members had departed, large problems loomed, and discouragement assaulted his feelings.

But he wrote,

The greatest discovery that I have made in the midst of all the difficulties is that I can have joy when I can't feel like it – artesian joy. When I had every reason to feel beaten, I felt joy. In spite of everything, [God] gave me the conviction of being loved and the certainty that nothing could separate me from him. It was not happiness, gush, or jolliness but a constant flow of the Spirit through me. At no time did he give me the easy confidence that everything would work out as I wanted it on my timetable, but he was in charge and would give me and my family enough courage for each day: grace. Joy is always the result of that.

James did not say, “Consider it pure joy *if* you face trials” but “*whenever.*” Such trials are a part of every believer’s life. We are to thoughtfully find joy in our own *diaspora* experiences – when we feel alienated, disenfranchised, unpopular, even when difficulty and tragedy come our way which have no apparent connection with our Christianity. Such joy may seem irrational, but in Christ it is perfectly rational.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp.18-19

How true that is.

And we are to count these trials with joy.

“What are you crazy?”

I might be, but that is not the point. You see, we tend to think of escaping trial’s and that brings joy into our lives and James is telling us that the exact opposite should be true.

But why is that true?

Peter tells us in I Peter 1:6-9, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 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, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

You see, trials help us to grow and they show that our faith is real. In all the trials that Job suffered, we are told of this man, **“In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”** Job 1:22.

Don't let trials make you bitter; let them make you better in the Lord!

Now let me add this, and I spoke a little about this already, but we do need to understand it and we will see it once again as we get to James 1:13-14.

The word **“trials”** is the Greek word PEIRASMOS, (pi-ras-mos') and the same Greek word is used for **“temptations.”**

But I thought God never tempts us? Again, we will see that in James 1:13, where we are told, **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”**

That is important for us to understand. He doesn't tempt us! God will send a trial in our lives to strengthen our faith, but Satan will come along and try to exploit it so that we might sin, he will tempt us.

Do you see the difference?

God uses the trials in our lives to build us up, and Satan tempts us to destroy us. And these trials come in various ways, they are multifaceted.

But don't ever blame God for what you have done, God doesn't tempt us with evil, Satan does!

We saw the response of Job to the trials he faced, but his wife had a different response as she told her husband, “... **‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’**” Job 2:9.

And Job said to his wife, “... **‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.**”

Notice the different responses to this similar trial this husband and wife faced. She sinned with her lips and he praised the Lord.

And notice, Satan brought this temptation into the life of Job, but God allowed this trial to come upon his life to test his faith!

Now here's the thing. Can you count it all joy as these trials come upon your life knowing that God has a reason, a purpose and we might not always understand what that is, but can we trust Him?

Paul said in Hebrews 11:1, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].**”

Also, Paul said in Romans 8:28, “**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.”**

How many things work together for good for those who love the Lord?

Is it most things, many things, a lot of things, a few things?

No, it is **“all”** things work together for good and in the Greek do you know what that word **“all”** means? It means all, everything! The question is, ***“Do you believe it?”*** Because if you do, you will count it all joy when you fall into various trials!

I like the way that Warren Wiersbe put it in his commentary on James. He said,

Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to ‘count it all joy.’ If we live only for the present and forget the future, the trials will make us bitter not better.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 851

You see, perspective is everything!

As we read on, we will see what God is doing in our lives as these various trials come upon us, and they will. The key is what are we letting them do to us, how are we receiving them and how are they affecting our lives?

Are we allowing them to help us to grow in the faith or are we being tempted to sin and giving into sin as they come upon our lives?

VERSES 3-4

Look at what God is doing in our lives as we fall into these various trials! Because, when we fall into various trials, not if, we need to know that God is working.

The Greek word for “**knowing**” is GINOSKO, (ghin-ocē’-ko) and it speaks of knowing something more than just information or facts, but from a personal experience.

You see, it is trusting in God in the present situation I am facing knowing how He has taken care of me in the past, how He was with me then. And it gives me confidence now because I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, I know that by experience, firsthand experience!

In Isaiah 33:6 we are told, “**Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.**”

You see, it is knowing the truths of God, and then applying them to your life otherwise your faith is empty.

God is testing our faith, seeing that it is real, helping us to grow. And please understand that God knows all about our faith, thus, these trials are for us, not for Him. These trials will show us what is in our own heart.

We will see this next time as we continue on in James, as he tells us in James 1:5, “**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**”

God will give to us exactly what we need for each trial that we are going through!

Remember what Paul said regarding faith and how it grows in Romans 10:17, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**”

You see, our faith grows as we read God's Word, as we apply God's Word to our lives and then the evidence of our faith is seen in how we endure trials. God is showing us what is inside of us, what we are made of you might say!

James tells us that God is working out in our lives, through these trials, "**patience**" or HUMPOMONE, (hoop-om-on-ay') in the Greek and it speaks of active endurance.

Trials produce endurance or patience in our lives. And each time we face a trial, as we endure through it, our endurance will be strengthened, it will grow as we learn to depend more upon God and less upon our own strength. You see, being steadfast, immovable in a trial just shows that we trust in the Lord and His promises to us.

Paul, in Hebrews 12:1-4 put it this way, "**Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.**"

As you go through trials, look to men and women of faith to encourage you. Let go of those things that are weighing you down. Put off those sins that are trapping you. Run the race to win, the race of faith as you keep your eyes upon Jesus, the Author, the One who set the trail for us to follow, and the Finisher of our faith, the One who will see us through to the end!

Trials, difficulties will come our way, keep your eyes heavenward looking to the joy that we will have when we go to be with our Lord, when we are taken up into glory. Don't give in, don't give up, strive and fight to the finish line and remember, eternal life, abundant life does not begin when we get to heaven, it begins right now as we walk with our Lord!

It is as David said in Psalm 40:1-3, **“I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth - Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD.”**

As we wait upon the Lord, seek Him, and the comfort that He brings during these times, we should break out in praise to Him and that praise unto God should be seen by others and by that witness, some will come to saving faith!

But again, why is God allowing these things in our lives?

Yes, to test our faith to see if it is real and to make us complete.

Peter tells us in I Peter 5:10, **“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.”**

As patience or endurance grows in our lives the finished result is maturity!

Think of it like this. As we face trials with joy, we do so because of the faith we have in God and His Word, that He is good, that there is no darkness in Him at all!

The result of that is endurance or perseverance in our lives and as that grows it will reach its goal of maturing us fully in the faith – we will be all that God wants us to be!

That doesn't lessen the impact of the trials in our lives, they still are difficult, but God is working and in knowing that we can rest in Him!

Now, who do we turn to in those trials or troubles when we don't understand what is happening in our lives?

Obviously, the Lord and we will see that next time as we will finish up the first chapter of James as we continue to look at *The Believer and Suffering!*

Let me close with these words for you to think about. We are told,

Life on earth would not be worth much if every source of irritation were removed. Yet most of us rebel against the things that irritate us, and count as heavy loss what out to be rich gain.

We are told that the oyster is wiser; that when an irritating object, like a bit of sand, gets under the "mantle" of his shell, he simply covers it with the most precious part of his being and makes of it a pearl.

The irritation that it was causing is stopped by encrusting it with the pearly formation. A true pearl is therefore simply a victory over irritation.

Every irritation that gets into our lives today is an opportunity for pearl culture. The more irritations the devil flings at us, the more pearls we may have.

We need only to welcome them and cover them completely with love, that most precious part of us, and the irritation will be smothered out as the pearl comes into being. What a store of pearls we may have, if we will!

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, p. 21