

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation. These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity. Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:**                    **January 17, 2021**

**Sermon Title:**        **Finding the Joy in Trials**

Sermon Series:        “The Book of James -  
                                  Wearing our Crowns Crooked in a Conflicted World”

Text:                     James 1:2-18

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Title: Finding the Joy in Trials  
Text: James 1:2-18  
Theme: God grows faith in us through trials.

**Introduction:**

How do we view difficulties, trials, tragedy as to their source and as to their handling?

“Earthly wisdom would consider trials great pain, great sadness, great depression, or great discouragement. Earthly wisdom says avoid trial and don’t consider them joy because other people don’t have the trials you do.”<sup>1</sup>

Prosperity Gospel and Trials –

**Jesus Wants You to Be Rich: Discover God's Unique Plan For Creating Prosperity and Wealth In Your Life Paperback – June 20, 2012 by Thomas Shepherd (Author)**

“Where are you at in your life right now? Are you happy? Are you fulfilled? Do you have everything you need and want? Have you achieved all of your life’s ambitions? My guess is you are in the exact same spot I was four years ago. At that time I had some successes in life, but many more failures. I had everything I needed to survive this life-but that was all, there was nothing extra, nothing saved for a rainy day, nothing extra to be able to take a vacation or buy new clothes. God was giving me exactly what I needed, nothing more. I was grateful to God for this, and every week I would go to church and tithe a small portion and give Him praise and thanks for helping me get by. But deep down I felt empty and abandoned. Far more many things had gone wrong in my life than had gone right, and at forty-four I secretly called myself a failure. Jesus Wants You to Be Rich is a blueprint for building a prosperous and wealthy life through the help of God. It’s also the story of a homeless, alcoholic and lost Christian who rises up from the streets of Detroit to work in the financial center of Europe in just two years-all through the grace and glory of God.”

**God Wants You to Be Rich: How and Why Everyone Can Enjoy Material and Spiritual Wealth in Our Abundant World Paperback – Illustrated, December 4, 2007**

by Paul Zane Pilzer (Author)

In *God Wants You to Be Rich*, bestselling author Paul Zane Pilzer provides an original, provocative view of how to accumulate wealth and why it is beneficial to all of humankind. A theology of economics, this book explores why God wants each of us to be rich in every way -- physically, emotionally, and financially -- and shows the way to prosperity, well-being, and peace of mind.

How can I consider it all joy when I fall into diverse trials? Is God inviting me to pray for wisdom? How can I rejoice when I am brought low? What is a person to do or think when confronted by the daily grind of uncertainty?

Let us look at the following passage and see what Christ looks like in the midst of life's trials, choices and vocation.

### **Historical Context:**

"James writes his epistle to Jewish Christians who have been driven from their homes and possessions. He addresses people who suffer because they are exploited by the rich, dragged into court, and slandered for believing in the noble name of Jesus (2:6, 7). To these people James directs a pastoral letter in which his first admonition is to rejoice."<sup>2</sup>

Let me offer a personal word about trials. **First**, trials are means [tools; instruments] to biblical maturity. They are not the items of gratitude or thanksgiving. What we consider to be "joy" is the goal of the trial. Heb. 12:2 says, "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." The cross wasn't His cause for joy. The end or goal was. Paul notes twice how we are to "give thanks for and in all things" (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18). The trial isn't the "thing" we are thankful for, the purpose or end or goal of the trial is. Every trial is for your good; embrace God's purpose for it.

Second, there are significant and layered secondary causes that bring about trials, but ultimately God orders the events. Why? Because trials are His means of shaping us and His means of bringing to pass His Vision for all of creation.

Third, from the Book of Revelation, we need to embrace the collapse of kingdoms/empires/nations/countries, even as we pray for the installment of His. Let us not think our kingdom is going to co-exist alongside of His or our will informs His will. If you pray the Lord's Prayer, then you are praying for the fall of all lesser kingdoms. There is only one kingdom that remains intact with the arrival of His and that is His Church.

### **Theological Context:**

James is a respected "rabbi" sourced in the Jewish Law and culture teaching and guiding Messianic Jews. He probably writes between Acts 8-12 and most assuredly before Acts 15. He is one of the first New Testament authors to write. The vocabulary and theology he uses comes from the Hebrew Scripture. For the most part, the tensions in the book are generated by his vocabulary, not his theology.

### **What is the Melodic Line:**

"Genuine faith always results in obedience to Jesus' teachings."<sup>3</sup> Or as we are prone to say, "The Jesus Seed always and inevitably produces Gospel Fruit."

## Structural Context:

In reading chapter one, let us keep in mind its historical and theological framework. Let us work to keep it somewhat separated from Systematic Theology. The text starts the thought [Biblical Theology], but does not complete it [Systematic Theology].

### I. His Introduction (1:2-4)

- <sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

His premise is based on their historical context of suffering and struggle.

#### A. Trials are Instructional (“count it all joy; you know; testing”)

TRIALS are intrusions into your mind, your thinking. Trials grab your mind and keep you up all night with anxiety. Trials push you to pray. Consider the following words.

#### COUNT

“Count it (hêgêsasthe). First aorist middle imperative of hêgeomai, old verb to consider. Do it now and once for all.” **James wants his audience to “think” first and “feel” later.**

#### KNOW

“Knowing (ginôskontes). Ginôskô (experimental knowledge, the only way of getting this view of "trials" as "all joy").” Trials should not surprise you. Life is hard anyone telling you otherwise is trying to sell you something.

“Knowing (ginôskontes). Present active participle of ginôskô (experimental knowledge, the only way of getting this view of "trials" as "all joy"). The proof (to dokimion). Now known (Deissmann, Bible Studies, pp. 259ff.) from the papyri examples of dokimios as an adjective in the same sense (**good** gold, **standard** gold) as dokimos proved or tested (Jas 1:12). The use of to dokimion (neuter article with neuter single adjective) here and in 1Pe 1:7, clearly means **“the genuine element in your faith,” not “crucible” nor “proving.”**<sup>4</sup>

#### TEST

“Trials test faith in order to make spiritual pilgrimages complete. They are part of the ‘good gifts’ (v. 17) God gives his people in order to make them whole.”<sup>5</sup>

#### VARIOUS KINDS

According to the King James Version, Genesis 37:3 reads, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours."

The Septuagint translation of the passage uses the word ποικίλος (*poikilos*), which indicates "many colored."<sup>6</sup>

Here are how trials test you. Trials ask, "What or who do you believe in? Do you believe your assets or abilities will answer your questions or solve your problems? Trials have a way of pushing you to the point of saying, "I can't."

Thinking is in the vertical; feeling is in the horizontal. You lead with your mind. Your mind informs and guides and guards your emotions. The means are not items of gratitude. The goal is. Every trial is for your good if you embrace God's purpose for it.

### B. Trials are Inevitable ("When you meet")

It is not "if," but "when." Trials are Inevitable

Illustration - playing tackle football and expecting never to get hit or practicing martial arts and not expecting to get punched or kicked. I'll make the difference between strength and toughness, but toughness only happens when you get pounded. You can be strong, but you can't take the hit. James wants us spiritual tough.

Mike Tyson - *"Everyone has a plan 'till they get punched in the mouth."*

Many of us need to learn the same thing about life. Getting hit is going to happen in this life. We are going to get hit; we are going to get hurt. Everyone has trials, and Christians are assured that they will suffer persecution. The specific trials James references are those brought about by our faith in Christ.

Listen to how Peter states this in 1 Pet. 4:12-19.

- <sup>12</sup> Beloved, **do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you**, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup> but to the degree that **you share the sufferings of Christ**, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. <sup>14</sup> If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; <sup>16</sup> but **if anyone suffers as a Christian**, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. <sup>17</sup> For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? <sup>19</sup> Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Paul gives us hope in the midst of trials in 1 Cor. 10:13.

- <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

### C. Trials are Intentional (“Faith produces steadfastness”)

God intentionally put trials in our life because they have a purpose filled outcome. Steadfastness / endurance isn't being able to handle it, but seeing God in it. There is a three-fold progression in trials.

- They “test” faith
  - They work toward a patient enduring steadfastness
    - They “target” a settled trust shooting toward maturity
  
- Example: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3.
  
- <sup>16</sup>Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. <sup>17</sup> If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”
  - Example: Psalm 119:65-72
    - <sup>65</sup> You have dealt well with your servant,  
O LORD, according to your word.
    - <sup>66</sup> Teach me good judgment and knowledge,  
for I believe in your commandments.
    - <sup>67</sup> Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
but now I keep your word.
    - <sup>68</sup> You are good and do good;  
teach me your statutes.
    - <sup>69</sup> The insolent smear me with lies,  
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;
    - <sup>70</sup> their heart is unfeeling like fat,  
but I delight in your law.
    - <sup>71</sup> It is good for me that I was afflicted,  
that I might learn your statutes.
    - <sup>72</sup> The law of your mouth is better to me  
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Trials are intended by God to produce in us through hope filled endurance a faith in His generosity, impartiality, and goodness. It produces in us a faith that trusts God as to His oversight and design.

It is the language of the horizontal:

“Let have (echetô). Present active imperative of echô, let it keep on having. Perfect (teleion). See Ro 5:3 for a like chain of blessings. Carry on the work to the end or completion (from telos, end) as in Joh 17:4 (to ergon teleiôsas, having finished the work). That ye may be (hina ête). Purpose clause with hina and present active subjunctive of eimi. This is the goal of patience. Perfect and entire (teleioi kai holoklêroi). Perfected at the end of the task (telos) and complete in all parts (holoklêroi, holos whole and klêros lot or part).”<sup>7</sup>

Patient Endurance leads to Maturity (v. 4).

- Biblical Maturity is accepting life as from the hand of God for my good.
- Biblical Maturity is accepting what others have meant for evil, knowing that God means it for my good.
- Biblical Maturity is believing that all of life is working together for my good.
- Biblical Maturity says, "Father, if it is your will let this cup pass before me, but nevertheless, not my will but your will be done."
- Biblical Maturity is praying for God's kingdom to come and for His will to be done.
- Biblical Maturity is being whipped and imprisoned and singing praises to God at midnight.
- Biblical Maturity says in the face of catastrophic loss, "God has given and God has taken it away, blessed be the name of God."

This does not make any human sense and as we struggle through this God invites us to pray for wisdom so that we would be able to accept this and trust Him so that we would be stable and settled.

- "God will take you where you wouldn't go to produce in you what you couldn't accomplish [and would not want {me}]." - Paul Tripp

Because the pattern holds, count it all joy

Notice how verse 4 ends with lacking (leipo) and verse 5 begins with (leipo) connecting the two paragraphs/thoughts.

What do we do when the pain is so bad we are ready to lose our minds and souls?

## II. His Invitation (1:5-8)

- <sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup>he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Based on 3:13-18 "It is likely that James has such sources of 'wisdom' in mind when he advises his readers to strive after the true wisdom that comes only through prayer."<sup>8</sup> And not through worldly, earthy sources. When things go sideways, we want answers. If confronted by a problem, we want a solution.

### A. The Invitation from God ("if any lack, let him ask")

This passage is inviting us to ask God for His worldview concerning our sufferings and struggles. Remember, to what or to whom do we turn when confronted by life's trials?

The only way you can accept your trials as good things from a good God is by having His worldview on life. For this to happen you must have His wisdom. This short paragraph invites you to ask God for His perspective on this matter. If you do not accept His worldview on your problems, then you will be “like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.” If you do not think that God is guiding your trials, then you will be “a double-minded person, who is unstable in all of your ways.”

B. The Description of God (“let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”)

The trial often causes us to ask **why** is this happening, but God wants us to see **who** He is in and through the trial.

1. He is Generous

This particular word only occurs here in the New Testament [haplos]. The idea is liberally. It isn't that He fills your cup full. He fills it to overflow.

2. He is Impartial

God will not withhold. He will provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

3. He is Good (1:17)

4. He is Unchanging (v. 17)

5. He is Wise (3:17)

Remember, in all our trials, God is too wise to make a mistake and too loving to be unkind.

C. The Condition for us (“But let him ask in faith” vv. 6-8)

Two approaches are presented. You will either trust God and depend on Him in your trial or you will trust yourself and seek your wisdom elsewhere.

Only time occurs in New Testament. It means two-souled.

- Jas 1:8 A **double minded** man is unstable in all his ways.
- Jas 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye **double minded**.

Those who do not seek their answers from God will find themselves living unstable lives.

### III. His Observation (1:9-11)

- <sup>9</sup> [AND/BUT] let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup> and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Verses 9-11 tell us that trials wean us from this world's entanglement, attraction, and inequities. Trials are impartial and powerful. They level the playing field.

A. The theological paradox - The lowly will be elevated and the rich will be debased.

Remember, to whom he writes. Old Testament theology speaks of the righteous being blessed and the unrighteous being cursed. Wealth was considered a sign of God's blessings BECAUSE OF personal righteousness. Think of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16). Think also of the religious establishment.

B. The practical outcome - trials treat everyone the same and level the playing field. Riches are temporal and offer no eternal help.

Trials have the divine design to strip from us all self-centered pride and self-sufficiency. It causes all of our works-righteousness to wither, fall, perish, and fade away. Trials treat us all the same.

Trials will destroy the wealth of the rich. In the end, they will be just like the poor. Trials treat everyone equally. The only one's who last are those who trust God.

### IV. His Conclusion (1:12-18)

- <sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. <sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. <sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup> Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

A. James reiterates his opening premise (v. 12; cf. 1:2).

He then gives us the theology behind his premise. The enduring crown of life contrasts with the fading flowers of finitude. "The Apostle returns to the consideration of the afflicted Christian."<sup>9</sup>

Trials show us for what we are. Trials show us the faithfulness of God to bring us to His conclusion and design for us.

## B. James states his theological framework (vv. 13-16)

This verse taken out of context has created a theology that dismisses suffering and struggle as outside of God's will for your life. This passage teaches us that God is the one who brings suffering and struggle. That He is the one who "leads us into temptation." What this passage also teaches us is that when we begin blaming God for our poor responses and assigning more power to the devil than he is due, we are wrong.

God prepares the meal, but we bring the appetite (Cf. Genesis 3:1ff).

God did bring this moment into your life, so see it as significant and purposeful. God, however, did not and will never make you respond to the trial poorly. You and I will always own our sin. We are responsible for our sinful responses to life's trials. He did not make you do it. The challenge, the temptation, the suffering, the struggle, He is most certainly there, but He will not make you do the sinful thing. That compulsion to sin comes from within yourself.

## C. James defines biblical maturity (vv. 16-18).

- <sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. <sup>17</sup>Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup>Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The good and perfect gift is the trial, the suffering produces in us a faith that trusts Him more. Trials increase our dependency on God.

His conclusion on the matter is then stated in verses 17 and 18. God's goal always has our goodness and His glory as its end. God's meta-narrative is redemptive. God's Vision is not thwarted by trials. In fact, Scripture/Word is advancing God's Vision, and it is this Word we are to embrace in 1:19-27. Accepting that defines biblical maturity.

There is an intentional parallelism between the process of sin bringing forth death (v. 15) and God bringing forth life (v. 18).

## Now What?

1. Trials are for your good.
2. Ask God to help you see them from His vantage point
3. Know the truth about economic and social classifications.
4. In trials, you are your own worst enemy.
5. Let the trial work the good in you by trusting God exclusively.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pjtibayan.wordpress.com/2012/01/31/3-reasons-to-consider-our-trials-great-joy-a-james-12-4-crossview-sermon/>

<sup>2</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *James, etc.*, NTC, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> BibleProject, *Overview: James*, 3:30 mark.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson's NT Word Pictures on James 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> ESV Study Bible on James 1:2-18.

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat\\_of\\_many\\_colors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_many_colors)

<sup>7</sup> Robertson's NT Word Pictures on James 1:4.

<sup>8</sup> Bo Reicke, *James, Peter, and Jude*, Anchor Bible, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers on James 1:12-18.