

The Crown of Life 4.2.17 #cccsermons

James 1:1 (NIV) *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.*

- First of all, the book of James was written by Jesus' brother, James, who had already **endured his trials**, who once rejected his older brother as the Christ, but later saw Jesus as his risen Lord and Savior. He is writing this book to Christians "scattered abroad", who were going through difficult times and James wrote this letter **as an encouragement** to them so that they may not fall away because of their circumstances.

James 1:2 (NIV) ² *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,*

- First of all, James does not say **IF** trials come, but **WHEN** they do come.
- **No one is EXEMPT from trials, troubles and testing!**
- Just because you are a believer, you are not exempt from trials or storms (see **Matthew 5:45**). Yet, for the Christian, trials and troubles are **PURPOSEFUL** in our growth.
- **So James says when trials come, we can overcome trials by RESPONDING with a joyful attitude.**
- Joy is a matter of **CHOICE**.

James 1:3-4 (NIV) ³ *because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- **We should ENTERTAIN what testing can do for us.**
- According to James, God doesn't just want us to GO through trials, but wants us to **GROW** when trials come.
- God wants to complete us so we need the **PROCESS** of perseverance.
- Without trials and testing of our faith, there would be nothing to impact or grow our character. (see **2 Corinthians 12:10**)
- **2 Corinthians 12:10** (NLT) ¹⁰ *That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
- God's goal for our lives is not to just barely make it into heaven, but it's for us to grow to spiritual **MATURITY**.

James 1:5 (NIV) ⁵ *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

- **Instead of looking for EXCUSES, God says to ask Him for wisdom.**
- Friends don't always give you the best advice (see Job), but God does every time! God knows what's best for us and wants what's best for us, the true test is do we trust Him enough to seek Him first and foremost before we make any decision in life.

James 1:12 (NIV) *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."*

- The word **blessed** means to be "happy" or "**FORTUNATE**".
- **God doesn't REMOVE most of our trials because He wants them to work for our growth and maturity.**
- Don't make the mistake of trying to shelter yourselves or your children from trials of life because then you and your children may never grow up spiritually to where God wants you to be.
- I like word perseverance over endurance because endurance only suggests using strength to continue and tolerate despite hardships, but perseverance suggests going against these very hardships to succeed till the end.
- The best part is when a Christian endures trials, there is compensation both now and ahead:
- **Now** in the form of **ABUNDANT** life (see **John 10:10**) with improved character, strength, and patience.
- **Ahead** in the form of **ETERNAL** life which the Bible promises **ETERNAL** life to those who call on the name of the Lord and endure the hardships of this life by remaining faithful. (see **John 3:16, 8:51** and **Galatians 6:8**).

So what? Know this when trials come your way:

#1 Satan wants to use the trials to BULLY us, but God uses them to BUILD us up.

- **2 Corinthians 4:17** (NIV) *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all".*

#2 God cares much more about our CHARACTER than our COMFORT.

- **Matthew 6:19-20** (NIV) ¹⁹ *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

#3 We value the end PRODUCT, but God values the whole PROCESS.

- **Hebrews 12:1-3** (NIV) *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*
- Life is a journey of ups and downs, don't stay down, but let God lift you up (see **James 4:10**).

#4 We might have to experience GLOOM NOW in order to experience GLORY LATER.

- **Romans 8:28** (NIV) *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*
- Repeat this with me, **This too shall pass.** (see)
- **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** (NLT) *"For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever. So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."*

#5 Stop trying to get your CROWN without your CHALLENGES.

- **Charles Spurgeon** once said, *"There are no CROWN-WEARERS in Heaven who were not CROSS-BEARERS here below."*

#6 Rather than trying to FLEE every battle, there are some battles you will need to FIGHT in order to persevere.

- **Ephesians 6:12** (NIV) ¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*
- We must fight to gain and maintain a close, dynamic relationship with God.
- We must fight our doubts and feed our faith.
- We must fight to keep focus on the **PROBLEM SOLVER** and not the problem.
- We must fight to **RESOLVE** conflict and **RESTORE** broken relationships.
- We must fight to **RECOVER** the precious things that have been seized by our enemy.
- We must fight to keep our entire family under the canopy of God's grace and favor.

Don't give up! Persevere! Fight! We are called to abundant life!