

080617 The power of Perseverance

It is a mistake to romanticize the following of God...it is not the same as falling into your dream career....i want to bring reality to you...we need to understand that difficulty and pressure are par for the course for those who choose to follow Jesus. there is no amount of Bible study, weekend retreats, super living seminars, deeper life conferences, “miracle today” Christian television shows, or gospel radio programs...that will exempt you from struggle and trials.... No where in the scripture does it say Jesus calls us to a safe place with easy times

There are no promises from God in the Bible that He will place a bubble of protection around you... ask people like Job, Esther, Joseph, David, Daniel, Peter or Paul...or the person sitting next to you

Studies have shown that anything worthwhile is almost by definition something not obtained instantly, but through struggle, patience, pain, endurance, time and experience which is gained in trials.... In fact, most things gained quickly, or through instant gratification cause problems for us or are destructive to us... (drugs, alcohol, t.v., sex, money, fast food etc.) ...the problem is most of us do not take joy nor value the process of struggle which is vitally important and necessary in the accomplishment of worthwhile goals!.

Why is this so important? Because character is formed in the struggle toward an accomplishment ...and character is what will maintain the accomplishments one they are reached...But this is The depth of challenge, the length of challenge forges character formation.

and know this Challenges that we spend most of our life trying to avoid eventually and inescapably will seek us out.

And lastly, We rarely get to choose the time and the place of our loss, our trials, our frustrations, or the setbacks of life as we journey ... However it is in these we find that God is with us And he has given us the spiritual resources to deal with them and overcome them.

It is in the trials...those things that come upon us...uninvited and unexpected... that God uses to mold and shape our character ...as James puts it...

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

Who starts out a letter like this? let me rephrase it...Hi! it is really good that you are suffering! man what a joyful thing!...and persevere in this..for you will probably be in it a long time...along with other trials...but man will your faith grow as a result along with your maturity... carry on!

lets get some background... First of all the author of this book is understood to be the half brother of Jesus named the name of James. Now there are three men named James that are frequently mentioned in the New Testament. One James was the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, you know Peter , James and John, one of the inner three. He was the first apostolic martyr killed by King Herod. That's in the book of Acts. Secondly there was James the son of Alpheus. He's mentioned toward the end of the disciples. We don't know anything about him except that he was a disciple. Then there is James who is the half brother of Jesus. Scholars really don't have a lot of argument on this. People believe that he was the author of this book. We don't know a lot about him. First of all we do know that Jesus' brothers originally were non-believers.

As shared in these accounts about his brothers .. in Mark I think they were coming to do an intervention! They were worried about Him!

Mark 3:20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

- they arrive...

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

- and in John 7...later go be a celebrity ..but they did not believe him to be one!

John 7: 2 But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, 3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. 4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

- We also know they were not at the cross. At least we have no record of them being present in any part of His ministry in those three years at all.

His conversion took place after the Resurrection... *1 Cor 15:4 he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles...*

- the risen Christ appeared to him and he became a believer.
- He quickly became a leader, it is generally understood that he was probably one of the main pastors or leaders of the Jerusalem church.
- His letter is written to Jewish Christians..the twelve tribes scattered among the nations. I'm reading from the New International Version or the New King James version or something it will say to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.

- James was writing this letter to Jewish Christians who had scattered out of Jerusalem away from the center of persecution at that time. there were two ... (1) the persecution of the church by Saul in 34 CE ([Acts 7–8](#)), and (2) Herod's persecution in 44 CE ([Acts 12](#)).
- He probably wrote this book around 50A.D. six years after the second big wave of christian persecution...One of the first New Testament books written.
- He encourages them to persevere because of the great, great persecution they were in. You see this in many books such as Hebrews where they are written to people who have scattered because of persecution.
- That's why you see so many verses such as don't quit and keep on. We can only imagine what their lives were like; loss of family, loss of jobs, loss of income, physical illness, physical persecution and all of that. It is difficult for us to relate to but that is whom he was writing to.
- *they were in Poverty.* That James' audience is made up largely of poor folks is obvious from his warnings in 2:1-13 They are either poor "dirt farmers," tenants who worked the land of the rich (5:1-6), or merchants (4:13-17)
- and lastly They were immature. The audience apparently lacked maturity in the faith, as is evidenced by James' intimation of (1) their failure to "practice what they preach" (1:22-27; 2:8-11); (2) their partiality toward the rich and unwillingness to help the poor believers (2:1-26); (3) their inconsistent speech patterns (3:1-12); and (4) their tendency toward confidence in self rather than confidence in God (4:13-17).
- So this letter is explaining to them what it really means to follow Christ.
Now the theme of this book is simply this, Faith without works is dead!
If you're truly a follower of Christ, your faith will show itself in your living.

So with this knowledge...let us look at this letter through the eyes of those who would have received it...

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 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.

- You know trouble has a strange way of making people forgetful and become irresponsible in their commitments...
- James wanted the Jewish Believers, who had fled their homes because of persecution...and were trying to make new lives in new places ..to have a broader outlook on their trials...
- God knew who they were...the tribes...and where they were scattered...and he knew the various trials they were experiencing...
- take joy...for the faith they profess is being tested...

- Testing require Perseverance....for you do not know how long it will last...
- So Perseverance is key....

It is in the trials...those things that come upon us...uninvited and unexpected... that God uses to mold and shape our character ...

James wants us to know some things trials, Trials require Perseverance....Perserverance is just Patience stretched out to accomplish their tasks of bringing reward into our lives...!!...

- **What can we learn from these verses? there are at least four...**

1. God's goals in trials is to develop Faith, character and maturity

- Those that realize that the Lord has purpose in all He does and that those who wait patiently for his promise to happen will never be disappointed. They will grow!!!
- **You are not getting out of God's ordained trials...God will be with you ...and through perservance you will achieve God's goals**

Storms come for a season and come for a reason...outlast the season and you will grow wiser and stronger...

However ...we sometimes make two grievous yet common errors in being Patient through trials...

a. Becoming Lazy in our Patience and Faith:

*Hebrews 6:12 We do not want you to become **lazy**, but to imitate those who through **faith** and **patience** inherit what has been promised.*

- **It is interesting that we can become lazy in patience...**
- **Lazy means idle. Lethargic, languid...it is the opposite of energetic...**
- **He lost the energy to wait on God...Do you know waiting and patience takes energy...**

Think of how much energy a child must exercise to wait patiently

It takes energy to wait in line....at the store, movies, pretty much any line...

- Wait 5 minutes...seems like an eternity to us...I mean a child...
- You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.

Also...Patience is a fruit of the Spirit...If He is in us Patience will be produced. And that only comes by taking us through trials.....

*GAL 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

- Listen the application of all those fruits of the Spirit depend on Patience to operate...it is like the vitamin C of spiritual fruit
- The Lord never promised it would be easy but that it would be worth it!!
- The goal is to master the test not to just endure them...
- The goal is not to just run in the race but to win it!

b. Beware of taking detours to get around what God is allowing in your life, God always takes us the shortest way in reaching his goals for us... Beware of taking a shortcuts ...

Short cuts to mature faith..is the absolute longest way!!

Perseverance is what leads to the Harvest!

1Cor 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Romans 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

GAL 6: 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Storms come for a season and come for a reason...outlast the season and you will grow wiser (there is a lot of work to do in you) and stronger, win the prize!

2.The process of goals attainment takes time...which requires faith and patience to complete

You have a race marked out for you...it is called your Testimony!! you can't have a Testimony until you have been tested. Sometimes we have better *testimoaning* then testimonies....because we let our joy be robbed by the test

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- **Things hinder (circumstances)....Sin entangles...(our own sin)**
- **people oppose....all three slow us down...**
- **his advice.....keep running by perseverance**
- **don't give up and don't lose Heart which is Joy!**

As I have gotten older and hopefully wiser I have noticed that there are two ways we can live our lives...

Patience is the unshakeable belief that God will do everything He has promised to do even before there is visible evidence to that effect. So I can be methodical!!!!

One by a clock ...Or two by a compass... a Compass Sets direction... directing toward a destination

- With a compass one can only go in one direction at a time
- One either moves toward a destination or away from it...no matter what the rate of travel or time..a assured if we keep direction ...

or Two by A clock which Simply measures time... When one chooses to live by a clock...one gauges everything on how much time it takes...and time is ticking!

- **when life is lived by time...waiting is killer...and a long time is the worst!**
- **and everything hard...takes way too much time! time is the enemy of perseverance and maturity!**

*****Now God is a God of purposeful goals..so moving toward the goal is a priority... or going in the right direction... how quickly the goal is achieved is not the most important thing... nor is it the most important component...the destination is...so the direction is the priority! ...and regards to time...God is never late nor early nor in a hurry...**

2 Peter 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

3. The strength to keep on perservering comes from Joy...

*JAS 1:2 **Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,***

- Joy strengthens us because it is based on the fact that Jesus is with us...there is purpose to this trial...and God will work it out for good....
- The opposite of Faith is fear...and the attitude of fear is anxiety... and you know why we get anxious?... Because Fear has a way of leaving God out of the equation.... we imagine a bad ending to the trial were in... so we freeze when we feel overwhelmed... or we run...because we got to do something about this uncomfortable or devastating feeling... or we quit/give up, see this is not working...I tried and look what happened..
- you see fear takes a trial we face in reality and builds in our minds horrific fantasies, scenarios of terrible outcomes which if allowed to go unchecked...can devastate us emotionally and spiritually...
- And just as the committee in our head can hold us back...our beliefs can move us forward...

Now Joy is the attitude of faith! Joy acknowledges God in the midst...

- Joy acknowledges the reality...this sucks...and the reality..i don't need to panic, God is still in control, God has a plan...it will work out...I don't know how, but thankfully he does...which takes me back to the present...what am I supposed to be doing right now....this is an opportunity to grow in strength and character...

4.Each one of us is on the next step of our maturity development..hense the purpose of trial you are now experiencing !

James1: 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

If there is a finish ...there is a start...trials have an expiration date!!

- **James tells us it is a high compliment to go through a trial or test...it means you are being prepared for your next step of Maturity**
- **For when your perserverance... is fully developed spiritually you will be strong in character you will know by expereince how to get through trials...which makes you ready overcome anything or any obstacle by faith...**

As Paul writes while imprisoned in a Roman Jail for two years...

*PHP 1: 6 being **confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

Faith is not seeing the cup half full, or even half empty...Faith knows a full pitcher of water is on the way....

- **it is interesting that God beings this good work in us...but we try to finish it often by our own means...you cannot...**

*Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of **the Spirit**, are you now trying to finish by means of **the flesh**?*

- **that which is begun by God...has to be sustained by God and finished by God... come to the end of our human resources...to weak to carry on...we will come to the end of our resources...**
- **Then ... God's perfect spiritual power will be leaned on to take us to the next step... His grace will prove sufficient**

*2 Cor 12:7...I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more **gladly** about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

- **Apart from his grace....we are wrecked in trials.....how do we possibly handle the things life will throw at us..i will come to rely on his power!! and know his power!! and live by his power!!**
- **We like Paul become fully developed spiritually and character wise... We will be strong in character and able to handle anything well! end**
- end

Know this...

5. Each one of us is on the next step of our development of maturity

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

- James tells us it is a high compliment to go through a trial or test...it means you are being prepared for your next step of Maturity
- Any faith you and I hold onto is based on the belief that God is Good,

In any area of our lives where we doubt, fear or drag in obedience to God it is because we in our heart of hearts doubt his goodness.

Therefore... we will not wait for him....

David the Psalmist expressed this truth...That God is Good, when he wrote in a time of uncertainty, persecution, and trials:

PS 13:1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? PS 13:2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart How long will my enemy triumph over me?

- You know trouble has a strange way of making people forgetful and become irresponsible in their commitments... Separation and isolation is an enemy...
- When going through trials... Remember to keep going!
- Remember your friends, your family, God's family...but mostly remember to stay hooked to God...
- and Remember to keep going!

Patience is the road to your maturity...

God's Love and goodness overrules when sickness, unemployment, broken relationships, failure, and disappointment ---are gnawing at our lives, even then God is good. God will use everything for Good, including what the enemy intends for evil.

- It is not coincidental...that Paul's famous description of Love starts with Patience and ends with Patience... Perseveres... simply patience stretched out....

As Paul so eloquently wrote:

*PHP 3:12 **Not that I** have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

PHP 3:15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.

- **Interestingly as Paul writes this toward the end of his life...he states that he is mature...and mature people will understand what he means...**
- **But yet he is still not complete or made perfect...he is still in process...and he has learned that it will take more time and more trials to bring him to that place...of wholeness...**

Now we need to understand something here....not only about Paul but more importantly about God...

Do you realize God could never deal with us if he did not exercise great patience....

You cannot love someone without being patient with them...

Think about how patient God has been with you...

When you deliberately disobey amazing is it not....

Think about how impatient we get with God?

He is even patient with us when we are impatient with him...

Now Paul one of the pillars of the faith...tested Jesus' patience to the max... Listen

*1TI 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, **Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.** ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

- By Paul's own admission...Jesus showed mercy to him because he was the worst of all Jesus came to save...
- And Jesus exhibited His unlimited Patience in saving the sinner Paul...of whom by his own admission Paul considered himself the worst...
- Jesus did this to encourage all of us who would later believe in Jesus...in that saving sinners Jesus it takes great amounts great amounts of patience...
- And His patience and mercy paid off...Turning Paul from the worst of sinners to one who honors God and gives him Glory...amen!!
- This example we should also apply not only to ourselves but to other sinners...
- Along the journey Paul experienced a terrible problem physically...that God did not take away...

*2CO 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, **I delight (joy) in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

- **When we come to the end of our human resources...to weak to carry on...**
- **Then ... God's perfect spiritual power will be leaned on to take us to the next step...**
- **His grace will prove sufficient**
- **Apart from his grace....we are wrecked...how do we possibly handle the things life will throw at us**

In a way we have to make a pledge to follow Jesus, then make it again in a different way, and again in a different way.

Genuine spiritual perseverance is opening up in new ways and committing yourself again.

- **For you to trust him with your eternity**

- For you to trust him with your finances
- To trust him For you health, your love ones, your future, your sorrows the trial you are now experiencing
- Let's pray... Next week The Patience of God in the life of Paul...we will observe many parallels to our own lives...

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Now Perserverance is the stretching out of Patience and there is something being accomplished which will bring reward into our lives...!!!... why do we need to be Patient???

2. You are not getting out of anything...God is taking you through...it will require faith in God and the development of perseverance or patience

3. The purpose of Faith and Patience is to bring a reward...maturity and wholeness
This is most important for our mental understanding and heart faith...to realize that the Lord has purpose in all He does and that those who wait patiently for his promise to happen will never be disappointed. They will grow!!!

Romans 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

***1 Timothy 1:*¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was**

shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- **This is most important for our mental understanding and heart faith...to realize that the Lord has purpose in all He does and that those who wait patiently for his reward to happen will never be disappointed. They will grow!!!**

Storms come for a season and come for a reason...outlast the season and you will grow wiser and stronger...

4. The method of growth is through trials... the process is time...which requires faith and patience to complete

You have a race marked out for you...

*HEB 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, *who for the joy* set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

- **Things hinder**
- **Sin entangles...both slow us down...**

As I have gotten older and hopefully wiser I have noticed that there are two ways we can live our lives...

Patience is the unshakeable belief that God will do everything He has promised to do even before there is visible evidence to that effect.

One by a clock ...Or two by a compass...

You see a Compass

- **Sets direction... pointing toward a destination**
- **With a compass one can only go in one direction at a time**
- **One either moves toward a destination or away from it...no matter what the rate of travel**

A clock

- Simply measures time
- When one chooses to live by a clock...one can spend time on many activities
- With a clock doing more things faster simply gives you more time to do more things
- And much time can be spent on activities not conducive to the direction one wants to go

How do you live your life?

For God is a God of purpose and direction... and uses time to accomplish it

5. The strength to keep on keeping on comes from Joy...

JAS 1:2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

An elderly man was asked what had stolen most of his life's joy. He replied, "Things that never happened"

- Our fears are the worst liars in the world; we should never make decisions based on them.
- Fear is the enemy of Joy...you see fear takes a trial we face in reality and builds in our minds horrific fantasies, scenarios of terrible outcomes which if allowed to go unchecked...can devastate us emotionally and spiritually...
- And just as the committee in our head can hold us back...our beliefs can move us forward...
- Fear has a way of leaving God out of the equation....Joy acknowledges God in the midst...
- Joy strengthens us because it is based on the fact that Jesus is with us...there is purpose to this trial...and God will work it out for good....

You see...

Joy is the opposite of sorrow... Joy is a source word it derives from something else..Joy comes from something and if it is God then no matter...I am OK...

If Joy's base is from something else there is a great possibility to experience much sorrow.

Joy comes from the Heart felt knowledge that through this trial ...I will grow...God is here

David sang:

PS 56:3 When I am afraid,

I will trust in you.

*PS 56:4 In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I will not be afraid.*

What can mortal man do to me?

Joy is extremely necessary in our lives, because it is Joy that gives us strength to go on when fear tells us to freeze...

Again David sings:

*PS 28:7 The LORD is my **strength** and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.
My heart leaps for **joy**
and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Joy is keeping the end in sight ... from the beginning and all the way through...as Paul writes... joy is the fruit that gives us the patience to preserve until the trial is completed...As Paul writes while imprisoned in a Roman Jail...

*PHIP 1:3 I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always **pray with joy** ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being **confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

Joy is knowing that God will somehow some way work good out of everything...for those he has called...and love him...

*JN 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. **But take heart! I have overcome the world.**"*

**Take heart...means be joyful...You will have trouble
But I have overcome ...(defeated, trounced, won, conquered, beat, whapped,
The World..Let that be your strength to go on**

the foundation of Hope rests on the truth of God's Word...

Joy is not seeing the cup half full, Joy knows the cup is three quarters filled and a full pitcher is on the way....

That why a Testimony is called that ...you can't have a Testimony until you have been tested. Sometimes we have better *testimoaning* then testimonies....because we let our joy be robbed by the test

The greats of scripture knew this...

The Psalmist David writes:

*PS 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.
My heart leaps for **joy** (**Heart leaps because the Lord is his strength and shield**)
and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Isaiah writes:

*ISA 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens; (Joy is his response)
rejoice, O earth;
burst into song, O mountains!
For the LORD comforts his people
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. (future assurance)*

**How big is the fruit of Joy in your Life....
And I will tell you how your strength is holding out!!**

**Are you enjoying the life God has given you
Or are you enduring it... our Fruit of Joy is it a grape or Watermelon?**

6. Each one of us is on the next step of our development of maturity

James tells us it is a high compliment to go through a trial or test...it means you are being prepared for your next step of Maturity

**Any faith you and I hold onto is based on the belief that God is Good,
In any area of our lives where we doubt, fear or drag in obedience to God it is because we in our heart of hearts doubt his goodness.**

Therefore... we will not wait for him....

David the Psalmist expressed this truth...That God is Good, when he wrote in a time of uncertainty, persecution, and trials:

PS 13:1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

PS 13:2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts

and every day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

You know trouble has a strange way of making people forgetful and become irresponsible in their commitments...

Separation and isolation is and enemy...

When going through trials...remember you friends, your family, God's family...but mostly remember to stay hooked to God...

PS 13:3 Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;

PS 13:4 my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"

and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

*PS 13:5 But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.*

*PS 13:6 I will sing to the LORD,
for he has been good to me.*

- Pray like David...not just a prayer to get through....or to help you get out...
- But Relinquishing prayer...Relinquishing the control of the situation to God...
- Relinquishing our will to the will of god
- The Prayer of Relinquishment is a bona fide Letting Go...it is a release with hope...buoyed by a confident trust in the character purpose and outcome of God in any situation I find myself in...

David realized even though he was experiencing tremendous trials ...that his life was not in the hands of enemies or events but his life was in the hands of God.

God's goodness and love toward David overruled every circumstance, so the exercise of Patience was a worthwhile venture.

Just as it was true for David it is true for us....

Patience is the road to your maturity...

God's Love and goodness overrules when sickness, unemployment, broken relationships, failure, and disappointment ---are gnawing at our lives, even then God is good. God will use everything for Good, including what the enemy intends for evil.

- It is not coincidental...that Paul's famous description of Loves starts with Patience and ends with Patience... Perseveres... simply patience stretched out....

As Paul so eloquently wrote:

PHP 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

PHP 3:15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.

- Interestingly as Paul writes this toward the end of his life...he states that he is mature...and mature people will understand what he means...
- But yet he is still not complete or made perfect...he is still in process...and he has learned that it will take more time and more trials to bring him to that place...of wholeness...

Now we need to understand something here....not only about Paul but more importantly about God...

Do you realize God could never deal with us if he did not exercise great patience....

You cannot love someone without being patient with them...

**Think about how patient God has been with you...
When you deliberately disobey amazing is it not....
Think about how impatient we get with God?**

He is even patient with us when we are impatient with him...

Now Paul one of the pillars of the faith...tested Jesus' patience to the max... Listen

*1TI 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, **Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.** ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

- **By Paul's own admission...Jesus showed mercy to him because he was the worst of all Jesus came to save...**
- **And Jesus exhibited His unlimited Patience in saving the sinner Paul...of whom by his own admission Paul considered himself the worst...**
- **Jesus did this to encourage all of us who would later believe in Jesus...in that saving sinners Jesus it takes great amounts great amounts of patience...**
- **And His patience and mercy paid off...Turning Paul from the worst of sinners to one who honors God and gives him Glory...amen!!**
- **This example we should also apply not only to ourselves but to other sinners...**
- **Along the journey Paul experienced a terrible problem physically...that God did not take away...**

*2CO 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I **delight (joy)** in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- **When we come to the end of our human resources...to weak to carry on...**
- **Then ... God's perfect spiritual power will be leaned on to take us to the next step...**
- **His grace will prove sufficient**
- **Apart from his grace....we are wrecked...how do we possibly handle the things life will throw at us**

In a way we have to make a pledge to follow Jesus, then make it again in a different way, and again in a different way.

Genuine spiritual perseverance is opening up in new ways and committing yourself again.

- **For you to trust him with your eternity**
- **For you to trust him with your finances**
- **To trust him For you health, your love ones, your future, your sorrows the trial you are now experiencing**

- **Let's pray... Next week The Patience of God in the life of Paul...we will observe many parallels to our own lives...**

James 1:5 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. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

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There are a lot of metaphors in this book that you would expect from somebody who was raised in a rural environment. Now Jesus' family was from Nazareth, a small town in the hills of Galilee, northern Israel. James was raised in a small rural town and not a big city. James uses so many metaphors from nature, the sea, the flower, the grass, the sun, the moon, storms and boats. He uses a lot of metaphorical language to illustrate his spiritual truth. Which is something else you would expect from someone raised in that environment. He probably wrote this book around 50A.D. One of the first New Testament books written. But what is interesting to me about all of this is the way he introduces himself in verse one: This letter is from James, a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now really, if you were the half brother of Jesus would you have put in parenthesis and by the way I'm connected to the family or I'm the half brother of Jesus! That in itself is a clue is it not, to the character of this man. He doesn't introduce himself in this way but as a slave to God.

I'd read something that was really interesting to me. It said that the word slave in our culture does not have a good connotation. Obviously no one would want to describe themselves in that way but so often Paul and other writers refer to themselves as the slave of Christ. In that day they were illustrating a point that He owned them. They belonged to Him. It wasn't necessarily in the way that we think of suffering and being the slave of someone against your will. But that He owned them. He is saying I am God's. I am a part of His household. It was a way of speaking in a very not self-depreciating way but a very humble way. I am no better than a slave in the house of God. You may see this term several times in the New Testament and it had a little bit of a different connotation back then as it does now.

He says that this is written to Jewish Christians scattered among the nations. I'm reading from the New International Version or the New King James version or something it will say to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. James was writing this letter to Jewish Christians who had

scattered out of Jerusalem away from the center of persecution at that time. Because of the persecution of Christians you see a lot of talk in James about endurance, patience, wisdom and all of these things. He encourages them to persevere because of the great, great persecution they were in. You see this in many books such as Hebrews where they are written to people who have scattered because of persecution. That's why you see so many verses such as don't quit and keep on. We can only imagine what their lives were like; loss of family, loss of jobs, loss of income, physical illness, physical persecution and all of that. It is difficult for us to relate to but that is whom he was writing to. He is explaining to them what it really means to follow Christ.

Now the theme of this book is simply this, genuine faith will result or manifest itself in righteous living. If you're truly a follower of Christ, true faith will show itself in righteous living.

Now this is the one reason why of course that this book is so timely. We live in a day and time where people say they believe one thing but act another way. If most Christians put their lives in a chart showing what they value or what they say they believe and compare it to here's what I've done. Well, do we not know how that would look? It would often not be related whatsoever because we know we live in a time where most statistics of the world whether it's from divorce or child abuse to alcoholism would look the same as the church, meaning in Christian's lives. That's why this is so challenging and he's saying that genuine faith will show itself in righteous living.

We could almost look at his little segments in this book as sermons. They are all making the same point. He addresses different subjects but he is making the same point. He talks about the tongue. I am going to try to put that lesson off as long as possible!

Today we are going to talk about trials. He talks about having wisdom, how you're going to get through trials, tribulations and temptations through godly wisdom. Oh, he talks a lot about the tongue, rumors and gossip. He talks about developing patience, endurance and humility. He has some strong words about favoritism and prejudice that are really, really very potent.

His famous statement in the book of James is faith without works is dead. What he is saying is that if your faith is real it will show itself through your works.

As to the reason for the dispersion, two catalysts are distinctly possible: (1) the persecution of the church by Saul in 34 CE ([Acts 7–8](#)), and (2) Herod's persecution in 44 CE ([Acts 12](#)). The Jewish Christian communities may have been established due to the first persecution, and their numbers strengthened due to the second. Although Saul's persecution spread far beyond the reaches of the holy city, Agrippa's seems to have been more localized. If so, then there is no compelling reason to argue for a non-Palestinian audience for James.

2. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE READERS

There are four circumstances hinted at in the letter which are particularly noteworthy.

a. **Jewish Background.** Not only do they meet in a synagogue (2:2), but the only credal statement in the epistle relates to monotheism (2:19), and the circumcision controversy so prominent in Paul's letters to largely Gentile audiences is wholly absent. Further, "the Palestinian background of either the author or the readers or both is seen in the references to the autumn and spring rains in [Jas. 5:7](#), a weather phenomenon limited to the eastern Mediterranean coastal plain and lowlands."^{6a}

b. **Poverty.** That James' audience is made up largely of poor folks is obvious from his warnings in 2:1-13 (especially v. 5) and *passim*. They are either poor "dirt farmers," tenants who worked the land of the rich (5:1-6), or merchants (4:13-17). Davids points out that

In pre-70 Palestine, then, and to a large extent in post-70 as well, one finds a cultural situation in which the majority of the population consists of peasants subsisting on a small plot of land. The size of their plots and conditions favoring a growing population forced all males but the eldest son into trade (if they were lucky) or unskilled labor.^{6b}

What may also be significant is that although occasionally the rich are addressed in this letter, they are never called "brothers." It would seem, then, that the wealthy are on the fringes of James' audience, serving primarily as a foil for his ethical instructions.

c. **Immaturity.** The audience apparently lacked maturity in the faith, as is evidenced by James' intimation of (1) their failure to "practice what they preach" (1:22-27; 2:8-11); (2) their partiality toward the rich and unwillingness to help the poor believers (2:1-26); (3) their inconsistent speech patterns (3:1-12); and (4) their tendency toward confidence in self rather than confidence in God (4:13-17).

d. **Oppression.** James' audience was also an oppressed group. Indeed, it was more than likely because of their poverty, combined with their Christian conviction, that they were oppressed. As Davids declares,

One can picture what this situation did to the church in Palestine. On the one hand, the church naturally felt resentment against the rich. They had "robbed" many of the members of their lands; they probably showed discrimination against Christians in hiring their labor; and they (at least the high-priestly clans) were the instigators of attempts to suppress the church (which was probably viewed as a revolutionary movement). On the other hand, if a wealthy person entered the church or was a member, there would be every reason to court him. His money was seen as a means of survival. Certainly one should not offend *him*.^{6c}

Further, their inappropriate response to the oppression, rather than the oppression itself, is what James condemns, pointing out that they should seek in such circumstances the wisdom and gifts of God. In this James affirms a principle seen elsewhere in scripture: what makes a man of God is not a natural response to a favorable condition, but a proper response to any condition. It is not the circumstances but the response to the circumstances which produces character.

D. The Occasion

In light of our reconstruction/hypothesis as to authorship, date, and audience, the occasion for this letter can be seen.

1. The persecutions by Saul (34 CE) and especially by Agrippa (44 CE) separated James from his audience via the diaspora. The subsequent diaspora raised the need for correspondence; the reason for the diaspora shaped its contents. The trials these believers were facing would need to be addressed.

2. Simultaneous with Agrippa's persecution was the prophesied worldwide famine, which seemed particularly acute in Judea ([Acts 11:27-30](#)). The resultant (deepened) poverty was doubly bad for Christians living in Palestine, for the wealthy landowners and religious aristocracy would certainly side with Agrippa's attitude toward Christians. These Jewish Christians' inadequate response to the rich would call for instruction/correction from their spiritual leader.

3. The believers' inadequate response to other believers who were particularly hard hit by the famine was fueled by their misappropriation of the Pauline slogan, "a man is justified by faith alone." "Under financial pressure people tend to hold orthodox belief, but also to grasp tightly to whatever money they have."^{6d} Rather than seeking to understand what Paul meant, these believers used the slogan as an excuse for not practicing their faith. Rather than understanding the slogan himself, though, James simply sought to show how their application of it made them no better off than demons!

4. The general immaturity of these believers, as evidenced already in their inappropriate responses to trials, the rich and the poor, would help James to fill out the letter with other paraenetic advice. Many pockets of immaturity would have surfaced because of the persecution and famine, though certainly some had already been evident beforehand. Agrippa's persecution, coupled with the famine, however, would be the final catalyst which prompted the leader of the Jerusalem church to write to his scattered flock.

E. Theme

James emphasizes a faith which is productive in the midst of trials. Put succinctly, the theme of James is "a belief that behaves."

II. Argument

James opens his letter with a greeting to Jewish Christians who had left Palestine and had scattered (1:1) because of Saul's and Agrippa's persecutions.

After this very brief greeting, James is no longer concerned with niceties: the rest of the letter is body—i.e., no thanksgiving for the saints, no final greeting, no benediction. The body has three main parts: enduring trials (1:2-18), applying the Word (1:19-3:18), and witnessing to divine providence before the world (4:1-5:20). Each section begins with a summary, followed by specific details which, to some degree, retrace the summary points in *chiastic* fashion. But the chiastic pattern is not perfect, for like any good preacher James is more concerned to get his message across and he will not allow an artificial structure to get in the way. In some ways, the argument could be traced via expanding concentric circles (many, for example, see 1:19 as the key to the outline), but this produces less satisfactory results than the approach we have taken.

In the first main section, James speaks about enduring trials (1:2-18). He begins with a summary statement (1:2-8) in which the main theme is on the testing of one's faith. The key is that to endure trials one must look upward, not outward. In this statement James touches on four points: (1) trust in God's sovereignty in the midst of trials (1:2); (2) trials produce perseverance and perseverance produces maturity (1:3-4); (3) God gives wisdom and all good things to the one who believes (1:5); and (4) genuine faith must remove doubt (1:6).

James then develops these points in chiastic order. First, the one who doubts is unstable and will receive nothing from the Lord (1:7-8). Second, since God is the giver of all good things, if he has not given the believer wealth, he has given him something else: character (1:9-11). Third, the one who perseveres in his faith (in spite of the circumstances) will be blessed and rewarded with the crown of life (1:12). Finally, the believer ought never to blame God for his temptations or trials (1:13-15), but instead should thank him for his goodness and sovereign care (1:16-18).

The second major section deals with faith as it works out within the community. The mishandling of trials by believers not only does nothing for their faith in God; it also negatively affects the Christian community. (Indeed, it is quite probable that if James' audience had been heeding the instructions in 1:2-18 the rest of the letter would never have to have been written.) James begins with a summary statement in which he articulates four elements of the obedience of faith: (1) obedient faith is not quick-tempered (1:19-21); (2) obedient faith is not passive (1:22-25); (3) obedient faith involves a tight rein on the tongue (1:26); and (4) obedient faith is impartial in that it even helps widows and orphans—that is, those who cannot repay (1:27).

James then develops these themes in (roughly) chiastic order. First, he addresses the sin of partiality: rather than helping the downtrodden, his audience has been catering to the rich (2:1-13). James paints a hypothetical situation of two men entering the church, one poor and one rich, in which the church shows partiality (2:2-4). The audience is then rebuked both for partiality and for its naiveté about the wealthy (2:5-7). Then James gives a biblical argument for showing no partiality (2:8-11), and finishes this section with a restatement of the biblical principle: it is impossible to compartmentalize God's requirements; therefore, "speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom" (2:12, NIV).

Second, James now turns to the issue of passivity vs. obedient faith (2:14-26). In its context, James has just warned against partiality toward the wealthy. The temptation to appease the rich (perhaps both rich merchants and the wealthy high-priestly families)^{2a} was all the greater because James' audience was apparently on the financial fringes of society. In light of this, it would be quite convenient to adopt Paul's slogan of *sola fide* without embracing its true content—as an excuse for not helping the poorer members of the believing community.^{2b} Consequently, one might loosely say that chapter 2 can be broken down in two parts: Christians' attitudes toward the rich non-Christian and Christians' attitudes toward the poor Christian.^{2c}

[James 2:14-26](#) can be broken down into three sections: one illustration (vv. 14-17), and two arguments: one rational (vv. 18-20), the other biblical (vv. 21-26).

(i) *Illustration: A Poor Christian* (2:14-17). James first argues that one who lives by the slogan of *sola fide*, if he does not care for the misfortunate within the believing community, cannot be saved. He does not yet explain what he means by faith, which awaits the next section. It seems that he never explains what he means by "save." In light of the well-worn Jewish idea of salvation as having especially an eschatological focus, it is best to interpret this in the same manner: James is saying that one whose faith has no works is one whose faith is not sufficient to save him from hell.

(ii) *Rational Argument: Demons' Faith* (2:18-20). Although there are numerous problems with the content of what the supposed objector says, it seems best to see him as arguing that one can be saved either by faith or by works. James rebuffs this view (v. 18b) by saying that it is impossible to divorce the two.^{2d} He then argues that demons divorce the two in that they only do one—believe. Yet, they have hell as their eternal home. Here he defines what "unsaving" faith is (implicitly, at least): a faith which cannot save is one which is doctrinally correct (demons' belief), but one in which there is no personal relationship, nor any works. What then is saving faith? James answers this in the final section.

Now there are a lot of people who think it says something different than we're saved by faith. I remember our preacher mentioned that he was going to preach the book of James and this woman came up to him after and said "Oh, preacher I wouldn't do that if I were you." It doesn't say that if you read it in the correct light. He is simply saying faith without works –

how do you even know it is faith? It's going to show itself as being real through your works and righteous acts. In fact Martin Luther called this book an epistle of straw. He didn't think it should be in the New Testament canon because there was so much emphasis on works. But here again take the context of time- what was Martin Luther's message- justification through faith. His whole focus of life in the reformation was against the Catholic Church which he felt and which obviously had done this had made works the way of salvation. His point was "sola scriptura" by grace you are saved through faith. Scripture is the only thing that we need and faith is the only thing we need for salvation. So you could understand how he might not quite understand the message of James as well as someone else. I think he eventually changed his attitude but that was his mission. A lot of people have felt that way. But honest and truly, if you look at the book in it's context, understand what it is saying and you do not emphasize one part over another you find that James has a very pointed message here to those of us who are believers. That we can all go around talking about how much we love Jesus. That is fine on Sunday but does it not come down to Monday morning when you walk in that office? Yes it does. Or when you walk into a difficult situation or you go through a trial. That's when you find out what your faith is really made of. True faith will result in outward behavior consistent with scripture.

The theme of James is that genuine faith will always show itself through righteous living. Two passages that we'll probably talk about next week are that your speech and your actions reflect your faith and that's what he talks about- being a doer of the word. That is something we'll hear over and over- being a doer of the word and not just a hearer and then of course faith without works is dead.

Let me start with [James 1:2](#) and 4. Dear brothers and sisters whenever trouble comes your way let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow. For when your endurance or your patience is fully developed you will be strong in character and ready for anything. And in verse five –If you need wisdom –if you want to know what God wants you to do-ask Him and He will gladly tell you. We'll go onto that in a minute.

Now it's interesting if you just kind of stand back and look at the book. You see a couple of verses on trials and then he talks about wisdom which tells you how you're going to get through those trials-with God's wisdom. Then he spends a lot of time on temptation and this is classic- classic passage on temptation. It's throughout the bible this whole pattern of temptation. That's what we'll talk about next week-what it is. It does not come from God. We are tempted by the evil one. He talks about withstanding temptation and about getting rid of the filth and bad attitudes in your life so that you can have a life of true wisdom and true godliness.

To start off with let's look at joy in trials. This is a verse that I'm sure many of us have heard quoted many times- Whenever trials come your way my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials and temptations. Now you know what I'm going to say. Joy? Now really. It's joy when it's over with right? Yes and sometimes it's joy when it's somebody else and it's not you. That might be joyful. But I find it interesting that the first thing he addresses to these persecuted believers is don't be surprised when you find yourself in trials. Suffering is the common thread that unites all of humanity. That's why these verses that were written so long ago can still have meaning for us as it did for the original hearers. We all go through trials. That's just a part of the fallen world we live in. We've talked about some of the trials that they were suffering. It's interesting this word in the Greek is used many times in the gospels when it says that people were very sick and had various illnesses. That was used for trials and they would come to Jesus to be healed. Going through discouragement can also be translated as a trial. The word translated in each particular passage is sometimes different. The context influences exactly how it is translated. So there's a common theme through the bible that we are all going to suffer trials.

Now what is the joy about it? I for one am not good at suffering. Are you? That is not my best thing. Other things I can do but suffering? I am not good at that. I'm a wimp. But he tells us here we are to be joyful about it, why? Well let's read the rest of the verse- because knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience or endurance. Now here's the joy. When you know that the trial-this difficulty- that you are going through is not for nothing. That if you are following Christ and you really want to follow Him this trial and this tribulation is going to count for something. It's as if God is giving you an opportunity to exercise your spiritual muscles. If you don't go through trials you don't know how to have faith do you? That's when you learn to pray. That's when you learn to trust God. He says it right here-the testing of your faith produces endurance, produces patience. It teaches us that God is faithful. It's one thing to know it off the top of our head and it's another thing to experience it. Would you not agree? Yes that is a completely different thing. As you go through a trial you find God's provision and His comfort and His presence with you makes you stronger as a believer. It exercises your spiritual muscle and after you go through that you find you are stronger. You find that when you meet people and hear what they are going through you can minister to them. You know exactly what they are going through. It gives you an opportunity to reach out to the body of Christ-to other people- to encourage them. But you know, no matter how much we know something it's not the same as experiencing it. I think of Ruth Ann over here who went through breast cancer in 2001. I've had several friends who have gone through that and have prayed with them and all that. It is one thing for me to know how hard that must be. It's something else for Ruth Ann to know. She's experienced it. Through that trial and experience God has developed her spiritual muscle and that of her family. She's able to minister and be stronger as a woman of God. That's just the way God arranged things to be. Trials are the method God uses to provide His provision and His care. Let me tell you something I'm

convinced of too. Sometimes it amazes me. There are Christians and people who claim to be Christians who at the first time there are problems or trials they will be whining and crying. They can't bear it. Why would God let this happen? I have a friend that did that. Her father got sick with cancer-my father hadn't died too much further before that –and all she could say was this doesn't happen to us, God wouldn't do this. This must be a mistake. It was all I could do to say what makes you think you're going to escape it and the rest of us have to go through it. Come on! Snap out of it! That's what I wanted to do. On the other hand you have people like Ruth Ann and Dawn who are good examples. They have gone through very difficult circumstances and yet somehow even though they get discouraged and they get weary and sometimes they get angry and question God, their spirit will not let them quit. We had dinner last night with a young man who has gone through extremely difficult circumstances in his marriage with five children. If ever there was a person who could've said I quit, I give up. God has failed me. Nothing has happened in my life as it should. But he sat there and told us however though everything in his life is a mess there's something in him. He wants to obey God. He wants to be a godly man. He wants his children to know Christ. I just marvel at that. To me that is proof that someone is truly born again. Something in them will not let go and they will keep hanging on when they're in a trial. If they will, it will produce great patience and endurance. So if you are in a trial right now and I'm sure every person in this room is in some kind of trial, please listen to the word of God. If you will not let yourself become angry or resentful or self-centered and you let God use that in your life you will bring forth great fruit, the fruit of righteousness. It will help you learn to trust God. It will produce endurance, patience and all those good qualities that we want. Let me tell you that we are not different as Christians as anybody else if you read about the great Christian women and men in history, the missionaries who endured unbelievable sufferings for the sake of the gospel. They were giants in faith because they allowed their suffering to produce this fruit-patience and endurance. God blessed them greatly for it. Trials create maturity and endurance. David said in [Psalm 119:11](#), It is good for me that I have been afflicted. I have learned your word. Now isn't that true. When I have a problem or something is really bothering me, that's when I'm suddenly able to find all kinds of time for reading the bible. Are you like that? And prayer, oh yes, I have time for it then. On days that everything is OK I just can't squeeze it in. There's something about trials that drive us to the Lord. We're all like that. It's for our good and that is the joy in it. In [Romans 8:28](#) it says that God will work it for our spiritual good if we will let Him do so and not become angry, resentful or bitter but let Him work in our life that way.

Now James goes on and says in verse 5 that if you need wisdom, if you want to know what God wants you to do, ask Him and He will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking but when you ask Him be sure that you really expect Him to answer for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do. Now here is what he is saying if you are going through a trial.

How are you going to get through it, through wisdom. Godly wisdom will enable you to make the right choices to develop the skill in navigating through this trial by making wise choices and doing what you feel God wants you to do and learn through this trial. I've always loved this part of the verse that says He will not resent your asking. In the NKJV it says God gives liberally and without reproach when you need wisdom. I love that. He doesn't say, "Well look who's here."

No, He doesn't say that like an earthly parent might. No. I love it that He gives liberally. He just throws it out there and keeps throwing it out there on you and without reproach. He doesn't say- well if you asked last time.... without reproach. When you want it He will give it to you. And yet James said but you have to ask in faith. You can't ask and believe what this means is Lord, you tell me what you think I should do and then I'll just kind of see. I'm not sure you know. I'll just kind of decide then what I'm going to do. No, that's a double minded person. It literally means a person with two minds. You have to ask in faith. You have to really want it.