



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Triumphant Through Trials (James 1:1-4)

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*Welcome to our Bible study series for 2014. Our focus is on effective living skills, thriving rather than merely surviving. Consider those that are observing your life! Your area of influence may be greater than family, friends and workplace. For some it includes the district and perhaps the entire State of Kansas. The Book of James offers extensive wisdom for living.*

### INTRODUCTION

Most scholars conclude that James, the half brother of Jesus, authored the epistle that bears his name (Mark 6:3, Matthew 13:55). James wrote to encourage Jewish believers scattered in conquered lands. Persecution by evil King Herod (around 44 AD) likely prompted this writing. We can gain wisdom from James' inspired instruction!

### PROFITING FROM TRIALS

*James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.<sup>1</sup>*

Joy is not a natural response to losing, failing, or being corrected! How have you succeeded in making a positive reaction to a rebuke, and what advice can you offer others (Acts 5:41)?

Do you reflect on or evaluate your response to challenges in your life and work? Few of us are privileged to have the services of a personal trainer or coach. Reflect on a time when you purposely and continuously sought feedback to improve your performance or interactions (Corinthians 9:27).

James introduced himself as *a servant, even a slave or bond servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ* (James 1:1). Webster defines such a condition as one who is submissive to, subject to, or obliged to a person or influence. In modern times, it is common to cite as a credential, one's service as an aid to a high level administrator, jurist, or legislator. What or who rules your passion? Some of us are highly motivated finish a campaign, a school semester, a project, or personal challenge. However, you may know of someone who is driven by an obsession, affection, or habit. Can you share insight to help others in shaking a hold or diversion that seems to be controlling?

### PROVING BY TESTING

*James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.<sup>2</sup>*

Testing is a process of establishing, proving, or verifying by trial or examination. Have you passed (or failed) a test recently? James describes more than a dozen tests in his book. The first to be introduced is the test of endurance or perseverance.

### CHARACTER THROUGH TENACITY

*James 1:4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.<sup>3</sup>*

The meaning of completeness is derived from the Greek "whole" or "all portions included".<sup>4</sup> It does not refer to sinless perfection but spiritual maturity. Age or intensity of effort does not necessarily result in maturity. Corrective action is the prescription. Trials test our faith, drive us to prayer, and bring us into closer communion with God. We develop a greater trust in Christ and a more stable, godly character. Perhaps God directed or allowed your latest trial for the purpose of moving you closer to maturity (Acts 16:25)! Can you remember a time when you passed (or failed) one of these tests of faith (Acts 5:1-2)? Sometimes a person will respond to a test by falling into temptation and suffering loss (2Samuel 11:3). God offers grace and opportunities for restoration.

### SUMMARY

1. Cooperate with God during trials. Draw closer to Him and be obedient to His direction. Stay on course. Pray that He will provide a way of escape if you cannot bear the stress (1Corinthians 10:13).
2. Tests are necessary to strengthen your character and prepare you for increasingly greater tests. Pray that a retake is offered for that one missed. Pity the person who is not tested and languishes in mediocrity (2Timothy 4:7).
3. Failure is not final! Study to be approved (2Timothy 2:15). Ask God, and others, for forgiveness and grace.

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, New American Standard. (The Lockman Foundation) 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible, New International Version. (Biblica, Inc.) 2011.

<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 2006.