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In the last lesson, we were introduced to the book of James. These five chapters are filled with much practical instruction as James paints a portrait of a mature believer. Because of this wise instruction, it is sometimes likened to the book of Proverbs in the OT.

The word of God is a mirror to the soul. In it, we learn to see God, the world, and ourselves as we really are. As we examine our own hearts and actions, we can see areas of needed change and spiritual growth.

Interestingly, in this book that calls us to spiritual maturity, the first section deals with trials in our lives. It is certain that we will all undergo trials and tribulations in our lives. It is not "if", but "when". (*"In this world you will have tribulations..." John 16:33*).

People that expect an easy carefree life are in for a rude awakening. There are different trials that everyone will face at some times - including sickness, loss of loved ones, and other tragedies or disappointments. Some trials are comparably large and others small.

Christians face particular trials - for example, various levels of persecution, or grieving due to our sin, sins of others, and the effects of sin in the world. But, Scripture reminds us that *"God is our refuge"* (*Psalms 46:10*).

God is 'our shelter in the time of storm', but that does not mean we are sheltered from receiving trials. God wants to use the trials in order to make us better, as these verses tell us.

*James 1:2* says, "count it all joy when you face various trials". This word "count" is an accounting term one would use to evaluate the assets and balance the books. When we face trials, it is important to evaluate them in the light of what God is doing for us, what He is doing in us, and what He is doing through us.

So, the believer can still have joy in the midst of trials, living for the things that matter most. Christ - the greatest example of this - endured the cross of Calvary because of *"the joy that was set before Him"* (*Hebrews 12:2*). He took great joy in accomplishing the Father's will, redeeming lost sinners, and one day sharing His glory with His bride, the church.

Through trials, we learn to value character more than comfort. We gain maturity when we live with eternal values in view rather than just the present. We learn to see trials through the eyes of faith, and that we can choose to have a joyful attitude.

Verse 3 says we can do this *"knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."*

Patience and perseverance have similarities and often go together. Patience enables us to endure. It is a fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*). Perseverance enables us to have the determination to go forward - to "press on" as Paul writes in *Philippians 3:14*.

*Romans 5:3-4* says that *"we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope."*

Faith is always tested. Abraham is a classic biblical example of a man of faith. He obeyed God and set out from his home in faith at age 75. God would provide a series of tests in his life, sometime he responded very well, and other times not so well. But he passed his greatest test nearly 50 years after leaving home in obeying God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac (*Genesis 22*). Of course God intervened and provided a ram for the sacrifice instead, but Abraham's willingness to obey demonstrated his great faith in God. (This story also pictures God's sacrifice of His Son.)

We must always remember that God tests us to bring out our best (unlike Satan, who tempts us to bring out our worst). Testing works for our good, not against us (*see Romans 8:28, 1 Peter 1:7*).

God tests us as He wants us to grow up (spiritually), not just grow old. The book of James begins by teaching us that God tests us in trials. A joyful attitude, an understanding mind, and a surrendered will are signs that we are growing up.

## James 1

### Greeting to the Twelve Tribes

<sup>1</sup> James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered among the nations: Greetings.

### Profiting from Trials

<sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you face various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> And let perseverance have *its* perfect result, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, without doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That man should not expect that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> *for he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

### The Perspective of Rich and Poor

<sup>9</sup> The brother of humble circumstances should glory in his high position, <sup>10</sup> but the one who is rich should glory in being humbled, because he shall pass away like a wildflower. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its flower falls, and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man also will fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

### Loving God Under Trials

<sup>12</sup> Blessed *is* the man who perseveres despite temptation; because when he has been stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him. <sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.

<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own evil desires and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup> Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. <sup>18</sup> Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be, as it were, the firstfruits among His creatures.

### Qualities Needed in Trials

<sup>19</sup> So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

### Doers—Not Hearers Only

<sup>21</sup> Therefore put aside all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and in humility receive the word planted in you, which is able to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only as those who deceive themselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his face in a mirror, <sup>24</sup> and after seeing himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives liberty, and continues *to do this*, and is not a forgetful hearer but an effective doer - this one will be blessed in what he does.

<sup>26</sup> If anyone among you thinks he is religious [*i.e. if anyone thinks that his outward behavior demonstrates worship of God*], and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* worthless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

### Memory Verse for the Week

<sup>1</sup> Timothy 4:7-8 - *Exercise and discipline yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life that is to come.*