

Wisdom Through Trials

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- [0:00] Thanks, Ben. What a perfect segue that song into what we're going to talk about. My worth is not in what I own.
- ! Has anyone ever, while I set up here, has anyone ever thought of or dreamed of, we don't need a show of hands, of winning the lottery, right?
- Yeah, we get some chatter, right? Especially some of these recent ones. I don't remember knowing about the lottery when I was a kid, but \$900 and, I don't know, \$70, \$80 billion, I think, was some of the recent jackpots.
- A million, \$900 million. I can't even, I can't even, I have a hard time even processing that amount of money, what that is. Like, to me, my mortgage payment is a lot of money. Like, that's big to me. \$900 million. What would you do with it?
- Yeah. What do the statistics say about people who win the lottery? Like, you see, they blow it. Like, you see what they do with it, you see where it happens. So, is that money, is it, is it good? Is it good getting all that money? Is it valuable?
- [1:10] Depends on what you do with it. Would it be a temptation to do the wrong thing? You know how many jet skis I'd own? My heart's not always right.
- It could be a trial in and of itself, just having that kind of money. All right, this morning, some of the men, you're going to be familiar with this. My computer's struggling. It needs a little life here.
- Some of the men, you're going to be familiar with this. We're going to be in the second set of verses in James chapter 1. This was several months ago we did this. For those who were there, you'll be familiar. For the men who weren't there, your attendance will be counted now.
- That's okay. And for those who haven't heard it, church family, this is James chapter 1, 5 through 12. I taught on this a year ago, nine months to a year ago, maybe.
- I don't remember. We went through those first couple verses in James, and we kind of highlighted his character, who he was, why the book of James was written. I'll briefly move through that, so hopefully we can pick up in verse 5 where we started from there.
- [2:15] James is largely considered the New Testament book of wisdom, kind of like a New Testament Proverbs. Many people go here for that very reason.
- Many organize James into a system of tests, a test of true faith. This first section, often many people consider your test in trials, your test in faithfulness in those trials.
- Let me get there. I'll read through it. I'm going to start in verse 1 and go all the way through 12, so we'll back up just a little bit.
- James chapter 1, verse 1. James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings. Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
- And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

[3 : 25] But he must ask in faith without any doubting. For the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position, and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation. Because like flowering grass, he will pass away.

For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass, and its flowers fall off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed. So too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial. For once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Starting back in the first couple of verses, in order to start in verse 5, we're going to go back briefly to those first few.

And before that, we've got to go back to AD 44, which was approximately when most believed this book was written. Potentially, this is the first letter of the New Testament. So it is often argued of who copied who, James or Paul, because you see a lot of similarities in some of their earlier letters, some of the language use.

[4 : 40] I think it was common fellowship and a common understanding of who Jesus was. He was not a believer until after Jesus' death and resurrection. He was regarded as a just and devout man.

It was said by some non-biblical sources, he was said to have knees like a camel because of his constant reliance on the Lord in prayer. He was always on his knees before God, trusting in Jesus for everything he had.

He was writing to the diaspora, or your Bible may say diaspora or those in the dispersion. It means the same thing. These were scattered Jewish believers. They were scattered due to persecution.

This was persecution from Rome, also persecution from their own countrymen, from Jewish believers there living in the area, living in Rome. James was said to have been martyred in around AD 62.

By some accounts, Eusebius says he was thrown from the roof of a building after he didn't recant Christ. So they said, hey, go up to the top of this building, recant Christ, and we'll leave you alone and won't bother you anymore.

[5 : 38] James, in his infinite wisdom, by this account, was led to the top of the building and preached Christ to the crowd below him. He was thrown from the roof. Roof or balcony, the language, they don't know exactly.

Thrown from the roof. When he immediately didn't die, they stoned him to death. While they were doing that, he was praying for the men who did that. Keep that in the back of your mind as we continue to move through James.

Who's telling us this stuff? Remember, when we think our lives are tough, our lives are hard, bad deal at work, bad deal at home, just remember where this all started. So in verse 2, he tells us to consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials.

This verse tells us what trials he's referring to, and this kind of sets the framework for this section. And don't gloss over the word when before I move on. When you encounter various trials.

Some of you may be thinking of 1 Peter 4.12. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fire ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

[6 : 44] This morning when I was preparing for this, I cleaned it up last night, got Jessica up early out of bed, got her some coffee, and I read this aloud to her. Before that happened, I turned my computer on to get it going, and I got this gray-blue screen of death, and it wouldn't turn on.

I was like, what's happening right now? This is all done. It was saved. I'm like, what is going on? Several minutes later, it figured out itself. It came to pass. I read it, read it to Jessica, cleaned up some few things, made some breakfast.

30 minutes before we left, which is probably my fault, I go to print it out. There's no ink in the printer. That is why I'm somewhere between digital and somewhere between paper today. But don't be surprised.

Don't be surprised, church family. Although this is minor in the world, this is nothing, right? We can work through this. I did, however, load it on my phone, load it on an iPad, so I have several backups.

But we shouldn't be surprised by these things that come at us. Even the simple things throughout the day that come on us to test us. The key here, what are you doing? How are you reacting to that? Are you frustrated? Are you angry? Are you mad?

[7 : 48] Are you blaming someone else? Think about that as we move through this. The word encounter here, it says, Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials. It's the same one used in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

For note takers, it's Luke 10, 30 and 39. We won't read through the whole thing today, but if you go back and read it, it's just a great segue into this whole process.

So in this parable, the same word is rendered, fell among or fell into, when it's saying the man fell among robbers or fell into robbers. It indicates that the man had nothing to do with the circumstances of the parable.

There was something that came upon him. He was moving from city to city, walking along, having a great day, and he got mugged, right? And he got robbed. He wasn't being punished for some sin that he did. He wasn't being punished for crime.

If you do 81 down the highway, you're going to get got, right? Not just 11 over that get you for reckless driving. I'm not a huge fan. However, I'm breaking the law.

[8 : 50] Therefore, it is right that I should get a ticket for that. That's not what's happening here. This is a test or a trial that's being brought on to him. These tests or trials are often things out of our control, much like the Good Samaritan are an opportunity to act in the right way.

And moving into verse 3 and 4 as we close out the recap here, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

We are lacking in nothing because we are able to confidently endure trials with patient endurance. We should count it as joy, how he starts out, because God counts us worthy for testing.

He counts us worthy for this and provides this for our growth, provides this for our endurance and learning. And we know, because of that, our faith is good in Christ. Moving into our section for today, I love how James starts out verse 5.

We got that recap from the first few verses here. He starts out with the word but, or some translations may say and. Because if you just stopped at verse 4, hopefully you don't when you're reading, you just stop at verse 4, it kind of leaves us hanging.

[9 : 59] You're like, wait a minute, I'm supposed to go through these trials, and I'm supposed to be happy about it. You know, the Bad Country song, my girlfriend left me, the dog died, the truck broke down, everything's happening. I'm supposed to be happy about this? I'm supposed to be joyful?

I'm supposed to have joy in this? I don't understand. Well, that's where I left everybody hanging the first time. But now we're going to kind of clean that up a little bit. The point is here, with but or and, is there's more.

Don't worry, he doesn't leave us hanging, and he moves into why this is the case. After challenging us to be joyful in these trials, he knows his readers may have some trepidation over counting it as all joy, and knows his intended audience may wonder how to go about this, or may see some challenge in this.

Almost as if some of them may see, maybe in a facetious way, almost have to look at it and say, just go be happy in your persecution. Don't worry about it. You're fine. You should just be happy. Be happy in your bad circumstances.

And that's not it. And before I move on further, I caution everyone this first one. Remember, this is not some kind of stoic, emotionless resistance to trials, to challenges in life.

[11:05] There are hard things that come upon people with family. I mean, just look at Suzanne right now with her sickness and other things. These things are challenging and difficult, and there is sorrow, and there is sadness, and there are things we must work through and pray and ask God to heal us in.

That is absolutely the case. So please don't see this as discounting that at all. But the intent here that James isn't just sending them away to be some stoic, you know, stand firm kind of look of, I'm just going to be happy no matter what, and that's just the way it is.

Be careful about that, right? That could lead to bitterness and anger. Remember, the point is here is that we're relying on God for his good wisdom and his mercy. That's the point here, and that's kind of where we're going.

James knows his intended audience, and they may wonder how to go about this, and that they were all fleeing persecution from Jews and Rome alike, and then remember James' own manner of death.

Nowadays, we just want answers to all this, right? We just want to fix it. We want to get it out. We want to get it done. We don't want to go through the trial. We don't want necessarily to... Are we immediately thinking when the thing happens upon us, what can I learn from this?

[12:15] What can I learn from this tough thing? My car broke down the side of the highway. I'm late for work. I'm already close to getting fired. What can I learn from this situation? I'm not thinking that. I'm thinking how to fix the thing or the jigger under the hood so I don't get to work and not get fired.

It's not a popular teaching to instruct others to be joyful in their trials, even more so expecting trials, expecting them to come upon us. That's one of the only things we're guaranteed as a Christian, right? Our salvation and persecution.

And when bad things do happen to us, what does society tell us? How do they tell us to react to this? What do they tell us to do about this? You need to get out of your situation.

You're doing something wrong. You didn't manage your life right. Let me show you my tax strategy. Let me show you how to do this thing. Let me show you that. Fix your problem. Here's five steps on how to do it. I love the step books.

Just follow this guide. Do this routine every morning and you won't have any issues. Take this pill. You'll feel better. The self-help section at Barnes & Noble is massive.

[13:16] And I don't know if we used to be kind of Barnes & Noble's nerd. It's like one of the only things they had in Alaska when we were growing up that was kind of cool and out of the cold. And I remember vividly being younger. The self-help section was like a small row.

And you had the feel-good books. And then you had the small. The end cap was usually like the Christian self-help section. Now it's massive. The self-help section is massive.

And the Christian self-help section has grown equally and along with that. Remember Jeff's teaching?

My notes here say a few weeks ago on Genesis 15.6. This was not a few weeks ago. If you can remember back to when Jeff was in Genesis 15. The idea of taking things in our own hands and helping God out.

Go look back at Jeff's sermon. He talks a little bit. God doesn't need our help. What's even more sad is that there's much Christian teaching on these things.

[14:11] On how to get out of your circumstances. On how to just get through it. Get by. Gotta get by. We gotta fix it. Oh and then go to church and read the Bible while you're at it. Specifically teaching on getting out of these and how to control your life.

Now I'm not advocating you should have a schedule. I get up in the morning. Brush your teeth. Please go to work on time. That is being a good responsible. Frankly as being a good responsible Christian. We should be showing the world what these things look like.

We should be showing the world the light of Christ in our lives. But we can't fix some of these things that befall us. We can't control the things that happen to us all the time. And that's the point. James already told us how we should view these situations.

And that we should consider them as good. And then the next few verses he shows us the way through these situations. So he doesn't leave us hanging. I camped down a little bit. But I wanted to kind of lay the foundation for that.

So starting in verse 5. But if any of you lacks wisdom. Now why would he say that? Why do you say if any of you lacks wisdom? Almost rhetorical in a way. The primary Jewish audience would be alerted to that word.

[15:14] Wisdom. And understand the value of it. They would be familiar with much of the instruction on wisdom from the Old Testament. Remember the New Testament wasn't here yet. This is potentially the first letter of the New Testament that they may have even read or heard of.

Probably heard. They probably didn't read it. They were probably hearing this taught to them. And that was all they had at the time. Potentially until this letter began to circulate things like Job 28, 12 through 13.

That would come to mind when they were thinking of this. That would be familiar to them. And it says, But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mankind does not know its value.

Nor is it found in the land of the living. Wisdom doesn't come from the self-help section. I'll just lay that out there. I'll make that simple. His audience knew that there is no wisdom apart from God.

In the midst of struggles, oftentimes we're trying to work through the problems, not relying on God's wisdom to get us through. So, if any, applies to us here. It's kind of rhetorical.

[16:15] If any applies to everybody. If any of you lacks wisdom. Lacks or to be wanting, depending on your translation. Just in day-to-day life, I'm lacking wisdom.

Let alone in the midst of time of hardship. Who here thinks perfectly rational in times of suffering and pain? Right? You get the phone call. The thing happens. The car breaks down. My favorite analogy.

A car breaks down the side of the road. I get out. Sometimes I'm angry. I'm not going to work. I think I remember we had some real close friends of ours that they got a cancer diagnosis.

The day they got a cancer diagnosis, I got a blown out tire on the way to work. All my tires were so bad because I neglected it so long. I needed all four tires. So, I couldn't get to work. We were trying to go help our friends out.

And everything kind of just fell on us all at one time. I wasn't thinking clearly. I was angry. I was frustrated. Why is this happening to me? Why is this happening right now? This kind of rhetorical question, in a way, is because we're all lacking wisdom.

[17:18] And that's James' point with all of this. He's clearing the air that this isn't just you or you or you. Well, you're pretty good. It's not you. You need this. He's not doing that.

He's rhetorically telling them, hey, you all need this. But what is wisdom in this context? Simply put, staying in Job, Job 28, 28, a popular one.

You may have this memorized. And to mankind, he said, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. And to turn away from evil is understanding.

Same back in Jeff's sermon in chapter 15, because this followed that, so I still had it fresh in my mind. Remember, this fear is a holy reverence of the Lord. Hebrews 10, 31 tells us, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

That's kind of the contrast. Jeff made the display of being fearfully smited all the time. And that's not the fear necessarily. It's a holy reverence. We are in holy awe of the creator of the universe, who by his word made everything, made us, ordained trials, ordained these things to come to pass.

[18:28] We are to be in awe of that power and that awesomeness. That is the fear of the Lord here. Being in complete awe of God's awesome might and power and control. And Proverbs 9, 10, this one is, everyone should know this.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. And that's kind of where we move in here. Don't we want understanding? What do I do?

Isn't that the ultimate question we all want? What do I do? What do I do now? This is happening. The dog died. The truck broke. You know, whatever's going on. What do I do? What am I supposed to do right now? I don't understand.

Moving into the rest of the verse, Let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

This is how we start to see the how part and how to get through trials. Yes, we're to ask God for wisdom, and we'll get into that here as we continue. But what's interesting here is what is not being asked here?

[19:29] What does James not mention here? James has not said in any part of this that we should ask for the removal of the affliction, but the wisdom to endure it.

This test of endurance in this first section is coming out here. How contrary is that to what we're told from the world? He doesn't say to fix it. He doesn't say to run from it or try to get out of it.

This does not stop us from asking God for removal of the affliction. Much like Suzanne today, First thing I'm going to do is pray that God will take that away. If it is God's sovereignty, if it is in his will, I want him to take that away from Suzanne.

What a frustrating thing. What a terrible thing. And Jeff's sitting there with her. I want God to take that away. Of course, that's a desire in my heart for that to go. However, in God's ultimate sovereignty, I'm going to trust that he will lead us through this.

He'll lead the church. He'll lead Jeff and Suzanne through this. And in our own trials, he will lead me through this. And I need to trust. If he doesn't take that away, that's not an excuse for me to sin. That is not an excuse for me to go down a rabbit hole and control it myself and go fix it immediately.

[20:38] I think I had mentioned a good segue. I think I did the Nehemiah. I had some weird health stuff come up a while ago. My first reaction was to get online and fix it. What do I need to do differently?

Maybe I can take a vitamin. Maybe there's some kind of I'm not exercising right or something to do. First place my mind went was to see what I can do. I could do nothing if quickly get to the end of that.

There was nothing I could do. That does not stop me from praying for God to remove this. We must rest in his sovereignty in the storms and pray for the wisdom to do the right thing, even if it's nothing sometimes.

That's the hardest part. I'm not being told anything. There's no clear way through this. I don't know how to fix it. The five steps aren't working. I need to trust that God will have this handled.

I will trust that God will bring the right things to me. It's not easy to rest. Matthew Henry says this about it. We should not pray so much for the removal of an affliction as wisdom to make right use of it.

[21 : 42] Boy, that flips it on its head, doesn't it? I don't want it removed. Wait, now you're telling me I've got to make good use of this bad thing. How many doors does that open up?

That flips a switch. When I read that, I remember going back through this. I remember that throwing a little switch in my head. That opens up an entirely new different approach to the challenging things that we face.

A whole new, it segues into a whole new area of thought for me. So pause on it for a second. What does that do? So now, instead of being self-consumed about the trial, my condition, my pain, my situation, well, you don't understand.

You don't understand what it's doing to me. Instead of that aspect, during these times of trouble and hardship, we now consider how this tough situation can be used for God's glory. What if the first thing that happened was when the tire blew, we get the sad news on the phone, I've got to go pick up kids, I've immediately got to get there, I've got to get this problem solved.

What if my mind was thinking, how can this be used for God's glory? And ultimately now, we can see, and this just thought came to me, he's using this situation for his glory because now I've got to use it as an example of how God is good.

[22 : 53] Tire was good. It got fixed. Everything worked out perfectly. Timing was great. It was a blip on the radar. It was nothing. God worked it out so perfectly. But I didn't know that in the moment.

I just wanted it over, right? I wanted to control it. In these tough times, we must think and drive in our minds how we work through that. We must make it a choice in our minds to think that way.

Making right use of the situation that God has given us and trusting in the outcome that he has ordained. I know I'm being bold here when I'm saying this. It is not something that's just black and white.

We can flip the switch. There are some hard situations that I know many here have faced, we have faced. Hopefully this does not diminish those situations, but it's an encouragement that there is a way through.

You're not stuck. You're not there forever. It doesn't define you. This situation does not define you. God working and living in your life, the Holy Spirit in your life is what defines you. But hopefully this is an encouragement that there's a way through this.

[23 : 50] Remember God's grace is sufficient. According to what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12, 9, Remember, And he has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you. My power is perfected in weakness.

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness so the power of Christ may dwell in me. Reaching back into the first four verses, we must change our thinking.

The word consider, remember the word consider, account, how we pause on that, that is an imperative. It has the sense of making it so or making it a reality in our mind.

It's not a passive thought. This is an active command. You must do something with this. Effort is required on our part, is the point. This may be a constant day-to-day, minute-by-minute determination in our minds that God is in control.

It may be every minute of the day. I don't know about you, but I have had those days where it is a constant battle in my mind over and over and over. I can't control this. God has this in control.

[24:52] I'm trusting this will work out. I'm trusting this will work out. Bad thoughts enter. Nope, God is in control. Bad thoughts enter. Nope, God is in control. Hopefully, as I learn to rest in God, this gets farther and farther. These moments get farther and farther apart.

But I tell you what, at sometimes, and many of you may know this, it's minute-by-minute, second-by-second. We must fight and we must think in our mind. This isn't sitting around going, man, why is God not fixing my problems?

You know, this is, I want this over right now. What's going on? No, God is in control. I'm trusting that God is in control. I know He has a plan for this. I don't like it. I don't understand what's going on right now, but I know He's in control.

Next minute. Yep, God is still in control. Do it again. Do it again. Maybe our circumstances could somehow benefit those around us and bring praise to God.

When we trust in Him and view our situation differently and consider how we honor God amidst the storm, it provides a whole new perspective on trials. So we're making it so in our mind.

[25:51] We are actively remembering that God has ordained this for His good purpose, for His good plan. Now, what if we just take it a step further, much like Matthew Henry said, what about making right use of this?

You know, how can I use this to glorify God? You know what? Maybe it's as simple as people see me not suffering. Maybe it's as simple as people see me not moping about in my hard time.

They don't see my gloomy face because I have something sad going on. What if just my countenance and my way of carrying through this tough time is a ministry for those around us?

So instead of viewing them from the worldly perspective of cause and effect of why this happened, why didn't it happen, or fault and blame, it was His fault, my fault, your fault, and that's why it happened, this is an opportunity to glorify God and it removes the entire self-help section from Barnes & Noble.

It gets rid of it. I have nothing against Barnes & Noble. That's not the point. Although I will certainly ask God, like I've said before, if He'll remove this pain from me, I would also hope to remember in these moments as I go minute by minute to remember James' teaching here and ask God to give me the wisdom to be steady and to use it, to endure it and to use the situation.

[27:09] We are commanded to ask God for wisdom here. This is a command. We should be asking, knowing He gives to all without reservation. James does not add a qualifier here.

There's no addition to that. Okay, so I need to ask God for wisdom. I need to trust in His good power to get me through this. There's no quid pro quo. There's no this for that. If any lacks wisdom, they should be asking the Lord for it.

There may be some who are wiser than others and faith may come easier for others in some areas than others. Some people, health may be a very difficult thing for them to rest in God's faith.

Maybe finances is another thing. Some people are like, yeah, God will provide. I think I've used this before. We have friends we know. Man, they have missionaries' hearts. They sold everything and moved to Belize. Just whatever.

God will work it out. He'll figure the money out. My goodness. That would be hard for me. I couldn't do that. That would be extremely difficult for me. That's just one example. Faith is easier in some areas than others.

[28:07] Hopefully we all get to the point where we trust in God for everything all the time. But James knows his audience. He's writing knowing many struggle with this.

And I doubt really much has changed in a few thousand years. Scripture is timeless. More Matthew Henry. This is one of my favorite quotes in regards to trials and in particular in reference to James.

Matthew Henry says, Let the foolish become beggars at the throne of grace, and they are in a fair way to be wise. Let the foolish become beggars at the throne of grace, and they are in a fair way to be wise.

We don't have to be the wisest, the smartest, the best at everything we do. That's why we have the Lord. Ending this verse, because this is just the first one, and we have several more to go.

What does James say as a response to this asking? What do you say at the end of that verse? And it will be given to him. It will be given to him. No qualifier. We don't need to do anything for God's gift of wisdom, and that's really kind of the meat of this section here.

[29:21] We don't need to do anything for it. We need to ask with a steady heart and wait patiently on the Lord. Moving into verse 6, he does say, He must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

James uses many references to nature. I think he has more references to nature in his letter than any other writer of the New Testament. You'll see it several times actually here through just these verses.

But his illustration is so perfect, how it illustrates the valleys of doubt and the peaks of faithfulness. Has anyone ever sat on a pier near the ocean, have you watched how, when the tide rolls in or the waves, even in the river here, how deep some of those waves get, just the peak and the trough?

I know being a pilot, sometimes we'll go land on ships, right? We'll land helicopters on ships. And we have to know what the wave height is and the swell width.

I don't remember. There's a name for it. Never said I was great at this, but there's a name for it. But how much distance it is between the waves and how high they are. Because that judges how much the ship will move over the waves and how scary it's going to be when you try to land on the deck.

[30:37] And you watch some of those as they go. Some of these times, they're massive. You see this huge, and they're so sharp. And this so perfectly illustrates that peak of faithfulness.

Like, man, life is great. Life is going good. Things are great. I feel good. Marriage is going good right now. Work's treating me well. Finances are good. Life is good. And then, wha, instantly down to that trough.

Immediately down to the bottom. The difference of hope and despair. How often do we experience this? Now, how much disruption is required to knock us off those wavetops?

How much does it take to knock us off and put us in that valley of despair? When we should be resting in God's control, resting in His wisdom, and we want to go ask the Lord for the wisdom to get through this trial, but, oh, I trust in you, God.

Oh, well, I don't think I do. Oh, I trust in you, God. Oh, I don't think I do. And we're just riding this thing, and maybe we're not consciously thinking, I don't trust in God, but we switch between trusting in God and fixing the problem, and trusting in God and fixing the problem, and trusting in God and fixing the problem.

[31:42] And that's not to say, if your car's broke, yes, please go fix your car. Change the tire in your car. That needs to happen. Why is it so much harder for us to exercise faith in those times when you're in that mode?

It's a struggle. It's a fight oftentimes. And I can think specifically, and I'm sure many of you can, have times in our life where I know God's in control. I know He has this under, I know He can do this.

I know He'll get me through, my family through this hard time. Why is this so hard for me? Reading and studying through this, back when I was going through this, the thought of Peter kept coming to mind through this, thought of water and sea and wind and storms and waves.

The thought of Peter walking on the water kept coming to mind. I kept thinking about it. Let's read that real quick. Matthew 14, 28 through 31. Matthew 14, 28 through 31.

Backing up. Does everyone know where we're at? They're in the boat. There's a storm. They fear they're going to sink.

[33:10] And then they see somebody walking out in the water. Peter said to Him, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. And He said, come.

And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.

Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him and said to him, You of little faith, why did you doubt? Peter's stable.

He's on good footing, so to speak, in the boat. He's on the peak of the wave, feeling relatively secure. And in faith, he does step out. He steps out to Jesus. Incredibly, he begins to walk toward Him.

And then the waves and the wind hit him. The storms of life. Now let's flip it. Marriage isn't so good. Kids, not so good. Work, not so good. And what happens? He begins to get swallowed up by the waves of the sea.

[34:16] Peter cries out and the Lord immediately reaches out to grab hold of him. Immediately. And what does Jesus respond with? You of little faith, why did you doubt?

And that's James' point here. When we're asking, we must ask in faith. We must come to the Lord with pure and reverent hearts, knowing, Lord, we trust in you. We trust in you in this situation.

Give our hearts rest. Give us the wisdom to move through this situation. The inverse of that is an unsteady, untrusting heart. For the one who consistently exhibits this behavior, because James is anticipating this question in verse 7 and 8, this is not Peter.

Peter was not who I believe James is referring to here. James sends a stern warning to them, for that person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.

It's James chapter 1, 7 and 8. Being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. You see the same language, the play on words that James uses. He is unstable in all his ways. Some commentators have related verse 8 in this one and verse 8 in chapter 4 that maybe he's relating to unbelievers.

[35:29] I don't know. It doesn't specifically say, I'm not sure if that's the case. However, it does refer to someone who is consistently divided between the world's ways and God's ways.

So it does clearly highlight there's two ways to go about this, either through God's way to do this thing or the world's way to do this thing. It is somebody who is split between these two ways.

They're unstable, they're unsteady, and then they're asking God to fix the problem. Someone who's thinking is not consistently focused on the Lord whose faith is constantly wavering and who may never fully trust in the Lord enough to rest in his control.

This could certainly be indicative of an unbeliever. It's not specific to say, but I will say it's much like has anyone ever tried to get on a paddleboard or a boat or a canoe near a dock?

There's plenty of YouTube videos. Thank you, Alonza. There's plenty of videos out there. You see the people step out on the boat and it either moves away and then they get it closer and then it moves away and their legs get farther and farther and farther apart and they can't do it.

[36 : 36] They can't do it and eventually they fall. Well, that's kind of the, in modern context, that's kind of the thought here. You can't, you can't have it each way. Get on the boat or stay on the dock.

It's not going to work because when those waves come, ever tried to do it when the boat goes, when a boat speedboat goes by, it gets worse, doesn't it? Or trying to load your boat with someone on the dock and it gets even worse.

And the reason I, I think maybe this is not entirely pointed to an unbeliever because I've had seasons in my life where I was even not going through trials and trusting the Lord and the last thing I was doing was seeking heavenly wisdom.

I'm sad to admit hopefully these days get fewer and farther between but there's days if you caught me at the right time, maybe you wouldn't even know that I was a Christian. Maybe shocked to find that I was.

Hopefully this is diminished in our lives as we are sanctified and we go through these, we go through this testing and we make use of these trials in our own lives and maybe in those around us. Maybe, hopefully we're given opportunities to prove our faith and endure the testing that we have been put into.

[37 : 50] These moments become, hopefully these moments of faithlessness become much fewer and much farther between. As the swells get less and they get farther apart, the ship is more steady.

Make sense? If you're ever trying to land a helicopter on a boat, you want the swells farther apart. You want the swells to be lower and less because the ship is much steady. It doesn't rapidly move from one side to the next or rapidly shift back to the world's ways or rapidly shift over to God.

The ship is steady. The light swells gently rock the ship and keep it going on the course that it should be going. Moving along into verse 9.

Initially, this transition kind of threw me off a little bit. It seems like, if you're reading through it, it seems almost like a switch, like it doesn't quite relate. When he says, he switches, but the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation because like the flower and grass, he will pass away for the sun rises with the scorching wind and withers the grass and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed.

So too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. It seems like a switch. It almost seems like he's trying to say something else and it doesn't belong. But remember, he's talking about the same thing all the way through verse 12.

[39 : 10] He's still talking about these tests all the way through verse 12 and our patient endurance to them. Just the simple comparison between rich and the poor, one could easily be distracted by the life comparisons between the two.

Well, he's talking about those with money and those without. Fortunately, as James always does, you move through James. He always gives you, he drops the piece of information and then he breaks it down shortly thereafter, which is what he's going to do here.

And he helps to clue us in again with some of his references to nature. Again, he's back into nature. He gives reference to the grass and flowers of the field. When the hot sun and scorching wind come out, everything dies off.

Our position, our possessions, our very lives. Everything on this earth is temporary. We must not get distracted by earthly possessions and status.

because when the storms come, we all require the same faith to get through hard times. My hard time may look different than your hard time, but we all require the same faith.

[40 : 16] That's really where James is going here. Your position doesn't matter. You still require the same thing that I do and that is a faithful reliance on God to get through whatever that thing is. And he goes in to talk those of humble circumstances, the poor in this case.

James is very sensitive to the poor. That's one of his things he's passionate about. You'll see it all through this letter. He constantly brings it up. That's where his heart is at.

The poor should rejoice when they are brought up and praise God for the blessings they receive. Conversely, the rich should glory in being brought low or humiliation as James puts it.

Humiliation could also be translated humble state or low position. Although seemingly a strange command to rejoice in that, kind of goes, you see his play goes back into the second verse.

We should be joyful amongst our trials. He's kind of using the same back and forth here. But when considered in the context of trials and reliance on the Lord, you can see what a gift that is.

[41 : 33] What a gift being humbled is. What a gift moving to that low position is. That person is being given an opportunity to trust in the Lord and not rely on their earthly positions to get them out of a trial.

I thought, several commentators made mention of this, so I thought it were worthy of bringing up. Think back to winning the \$900 million Powerball draw.

I don't know much about it. Lottery draw. I don't know what it is. I win two left-handed children. I don't win the lottery, so I don't know how that works. But you get \$900 million.

That, in and of itself, is probably going to be a trial for you. You think it's good. Think, oh man, I'll pay off my house. I'll buy 10 more houses. I'll buy all this stuff. That is probably going to be a trial.

Our very wealth and possessions in and of themselves may be a trial. Having wealth and possessions and the ability to enjoy it is a gift from God.

[42 : 33] As it said here in Ecclesiastes 5.19, Furthermore, as for every person to whom God has given riches and wealth, he has also given him the opportunity to enjoy them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor.

This is the gift of God. It is a gift to have wealth and to enjoy it. So we know that wealth, massive wealth, that could absolutely be a trial because we know having this and the ability to enjoy and rest in our circumstances, that is a gift from the Lord.

We know from teachings throughout Scripture that wealth can be a trap and very dangerous. The test is that we have the ability to fix our earthly problems to worldly means.

So now, we have the means to fix this problem. So simply put, when my tire breaks or my car breaks, it's an easy one for me, we'll keep going back to it, how much easier is it to just throw money at the problem or buy a new car?

Just take a loan out and get a new car. It's just money, right? Just a couple hundred bucks, throw it on the tire, easy day. I don't have to, I don't have to trust in God at all. All I got to do is just go fix the problem.

[43 : 42] My resources, my position in society allow me to do that. How about if you have nothing? No money to fix the car. No way to get to work.

You have no one to call. Is it not easier to rely on the Lord in this situation? Because you have to. And that's James' point here. This is why it is all the more important that we make our reliance on the Lord a constant throughout our minds.

We don't let go of it because, church family, we live in a privileged country. We live in an amazing place. This country is awesome. The spectrum of living standards in our country, although maybe there is disparity between that spectrum, we have it well.

The lowest on the end have it well compared to some other countries. We have it good in regards to resting in God's good provision. We should be cautious about this. We should be cautious about this in our lives because we are so privileged to live in this country.

We can, we could easily get into this trap. I'll fix the problem. That's not a thing. And we immediately forget, oh, wait a second. Yeah, I am going to go fix the tire. I'm going to go fix the tire.

[44 : 50] I'm going to fix the car. Can I use this? Is there something in this situation that I can do to glorify God? How do I do this? Flip that switch in our minds. Regardless of our position, we all must be cautious of this, right?

Living in the country that we do. Comparatively, our positions in this world are pretty good in relation to those in other countries, regardless of your status here. Whether wealthy in this world, somewhere in the middle, or just getting by, we must come to the Lord in faith as we seek His wisdom to guide us through.

So verse 12 closes out this first section on trials. James ends it right here. He kind of ends it as he tells us the point of it all, the point of enduring through this.

What's the point of this? Why do we endure through this? Why am I joyful? Why do I need wisdom to endure through this? Enduring or persevering through these storms is an opportunity to prove that our faith is true.

Several commentators break up James into, I mentioned it previously, into tests or proofs of faith. So each chunk is like a proof of faith. The next one, for example, is the test of blame.

[46 : 05] He moves in after verse 12. When these trials do come up or these tests do come up, are you blaming your temptation? Are you blaming God? Are you blaming other people? Well, they did the thing so that's why I'm doing the thing.

Are you blaming other people? You can see how they go through these tests. But the point of all these tests is to pass the test. Right? And the point of passing the test is to know that our faith is true.

To know that we trust in God. To know our faith is secure. In this test of perseverance, how we go through it matters. It matters how we go through these things.

The world is watching, especially our families, our kids, and very importantly, the unbelieving world. They are watching, church family, how we go through.

They are watching how we deal with this. Hopefully in your lives you've had the circumstances of, man, I was really weird how you reacted to that. I would have been furious.

[47 : 02] I would have thrown an absolute fit or done this thing or done that. Hopefully you've had that. I've had that opportunity by the grace of God. Fortunately, a few times people come like, man, you reacted very calmly in that matter.

That was interesting. That's not an okay place to be. What an opportunity for ministry that just opened up right there. Well, friend, let me tell you. Let me tell you why that's the case. Backing up to verse 2.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials. Because we are being given a test to show who we rely on and in whom we put our trust.

The Young's Literal Translation renders verse 12 this way. Young's Literal Translation is kind of like a parsing of the Greek in a very literal form.

They don't switch any words around. So you can kind of see the priority of words in a sentence so you know because in the Greek you can get with Mark. He'll tell you about it later. But you know in the Greek they put words to where the priority is most important.

[48 : 08] Happy the man who doth endure temptation because becoming approved he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord did promise to those who love him.

Whereas in mine in the NASB it says for once he has been approved he will receive the crown of life becoming approved it's a process. When you become approved you shall receive that crown of life which the Lord did promise to those who love him.

So we know it's coming and this trial that we're in it is an opportunity for us to prove you know what my faith in the Lord is secure. I don't know why this is happening.

I don't know why whatever's going on is going on. Why do I have this health problem? Why is this happening? But God I trust in you and I rest in that and that right there is a powerful powerful powerful thing church family.

This test we can be assured of our crown of life which is the gift of salvation and that's really what we aim to get out of this. Not that we are trying to achieve that but it lets us know that our salvation is secure.

[49 : 20] These tests prove the genuineness of our faith so that we know how our salvation we know that our salvation is secure. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 7-8 I have fought the good fight I have finished the course I have kept the faith in the future there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all have loved his appearing.

Paul is encouraging Timothy here to endure he's encouraging Timothy to endure the challenge he's had in his pastoral ministry there he's encouraging him to run the race well I have kept the faith he fought the good fight and finished the race and not just finished finished in a manner that will grant him the crown of righteousness because he knows his salvation is secure he didn't just endure he endured well and this is a process as we know by the order of those words we know that what the Young's Little Translation says they're becoming approved that means it's not instant it is a we know this is a process we know hopefully the next time something springs up at us you know what maybe we did get through it but we got through it just barely without grumbling well great that's a start the next time we got through it and you know what this is a little frustrating but maybe you know what I see God's got a plan for this

I don't know why but I'm going to rest in this I'm going to rest in this I'm going to tell myself all day long God's got a plan for this and that takes me a while and then maybe finally we get to a point where you know what I'm going to chuckle at this this is good because I'm happy it is not a laugh of disdain but a laugh of joy you know what this is good we're just going to handle this God's going to prove this working out well this will be fine the septic system breaking one hour before your daughter's dance recital you know what there is nothing we can do about that I'm going to trust that God's going to work through this the right truck's going to show up at the right time we're going to fix this and we're going to get to the recital hopefully clean and in the right clothes God's going to do this hopefully we see that process analyze our lives church family where are you at in that process where are you at in that the last time something happened to you I pray that nothing happens to you today but the last time something happens to you where were you at think about that the next time something springs up in your life where am I at in that process have I been here for a long time have I been like the grumbling cranky upset process where are you at think about that carry that with you and think where am I at in this process am I resting in God's am I praying to ask for God for his wisdom on how to get through this did I even ask

God to do this did I stop and pray before I fix the tire or did I just fix the tire as we move to a close what do we do with all this kind of where's the so what as we kind of tie this all together we must remember that this test of endurance will end one way or another God will see us through but what did we do with it did we waste it or did we glorify God through it and grow our faith as we leaned on his wisdom on how to navigate through I was supposed to read you a thesis statement when this started I didn't I didn't have it on my computer but I'll close with that now to sum this all up we need wisdom to persevere through life's trials and sufferings regardless of our position in this world we should ask of God for the wisdom to endure with steady faithful hearts trusting in him and knowing our reward in heaven is great pray with me church family dear Lord thank you for this time to meet together thank you for this time to be together and to learn and grow as a church thank you for this meeting place thank you for the amazing hearts in this church pray God for Suzanne as she battles this sickness

Lord that you would heal her if it's your will God give Jeff the patience give him the wisdom and strengthen him as he moves through this we pray God that you make right use of this that you make right use of this and you are glorified in these circumstances and pray in this church family in our lives as we go out this week as we begin this new week that you help us to see these circumstances differently how do we glorify you God we pray you just weigh heavily on our hearts that we are here to serve you we pray that you we pray these things in Jesus name amen