

The Caution Regarding Trials

James 1:1-4
8/22/1999

James, the first chapter. We will read together verses 1 through 4. James, Chapter One, verses 1 through 4.

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

Now in our study of the book of James together, we have been considering together the need to demonstrate genuine faith. Many people claim to have saving faith, but the real proof of the possession of saving faith is the way in which we conduct ourselves in relationship to various aspects of life.

We are currently examining the need to demonstrate the possession of genuine faith by the way in which we respond to trials, because the way in which we respond to trials makes it clear as to whether we are true Christians or no Christians at all. Now to better make that assessment, we have considered our attitude towards trials in verse 2, and we have seen that our attitude should be one of joy. “Count it all joy when you fall into various temptations.”

Now the reason why our attitude can be and should be one of joy in the midst of trials is because of the *benefits* that flow *out* of those trials. While the trial itself is never a source of joy, *knowing* that it produces marvelous benefits that are all for our good and for God’s glory, it is that *knowledge* that produces joy. For he says in verse 2, “My brethren, count it joy”—and the basis for counting it joy, verse 3, is “knowing *this*...” And so when we *know* certain things, we are able to count it all joy.

So when we realize the trials produce maturity of character—in this case, James mentions patience—when we realize that trials prevent us from falling into sin; when we realize that trials equip us for ministry to other people; when we realize that trials give us opportunity for evangelism; when we realize that trials bring glory to God; when we realize that trials correct us from continuing in a path of sin—then we can rejoice in these benefits that flow out of trials and *have* joy with reference *to* them. And while we may not see the benefits at the time that we are going through the trial, they *will* occur *if* we respond in a proper manner *to* them.

Now recognizing that a proper response to trials is essential to deriving benefit from them, James gives us in verse 4 a caution. And the caution is this: “But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” And so we have seen in verse 2 our attitude towards trials—that it should be one of joy. We have seen in verse 3 the *benefits* that flow *out* of trials—maturity of character. And now in verse 4, we have a caution regarding trials.

Going through trials is never a pleasant or an easy matter. The spiritual, the emotional, and sometimes even the physical pain that we go through can stress us at times to the very limits of our endurance. But if godly and blessed fruits flow *out* of that painful experience, then we can thank God for it and we can have joy in the midst of it. Even very difficult circumstances can be endured with contentment and with joy if we know that they are necessary for the accomplishment of a worthy goal.

But, we have to keep that goal in sight if we are to persevere in the difficulty and *not* give up and quit in the midst of it. Because, you see, trials are often very long in duration. And often they are very discouraging in their difficulty. And what is especially sad is that we would go through trials and difficulties and fail to achieve *anything* as a result of them, because we do not persevere in a proper response to them until the end. It would be kind of like an Olympic athlete, enduring three years of the most stressful and difficult training regimen, only to give up two months before the Olympic games and never compete, and never win a medal. All those years of stress and difficulty in training would be wasted, because the whole purpose of them was not achieved—because the athlete did not persevere to the proper conclusion.

And so likewise for us, to go through a trial and to have nothing to show for it at the end when it was over, because we did not persevere in a proper *response* to that trial, would be sad indeed. What we endured in going through it would be completely wasted. And it is precisely this failure to benefit from a trial or to fail to gain all that God *intends* for us in a trial, that James warns us about in verse 4 when he says, “But”—here’s the caution—“let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.”

1A And so in the first place then this evening, let’s consider together the *need* to persevere in a proper response to trials—the *need* to persevere in a proper response to trials.

Now oftentimes when trials come, we initially, in the beginning, have a good response to them. We turn to the Lord, we trust in the Lord, we rest in His promises, we look for God’s purposes in the trial. But as the trial wears on and time passes, oftentimes we lose heart and we grow discouraged with reference to our trials. And we fail to endure in a biblical and godly response *to* them. Sinful attitudes, anger, bitterness, a desire to lash out at the perceived source of our problem—all begin to rise up. And instead of the trial being a means of *sanctification* and growth, it is, by our failure to persevere in a proper response to it, ultimately turned into an occasion for sin and for backsliding.

Now why is it that we are in danger of not persevering in a proper response to trials—why does this occur? I would offer to you two reasons. First of all, we do not persevere in a proper response to trials at times because we are simply unsaved people. Sometimes it is because we are unsaved people. Now look with me if you will, please, at the Gospel of Luke, chapter 8. In Luke chapter 8, Jesus is giving out His famous parable of the four soils. And we’ll begin reading together in verse 4, and read down through verse 15. Luke, chapter 8, verses 4 through 15.

“And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spoke by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold.

“And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; but these have no root, which for a while believe,”—now notice—“and in time of temptation fall away.”

And the word here for “temptation” is the exact same Greek word as in James, chapter 1 and verse 2, when it says, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into divers temptations.” What he’s talking about here is, *during a time of trial*, these people fall away. They appear to embrace Christ, they appear to grow in Christ, and yet when a trial came, what happened to them? Well, it says specifically that they “fell away.”

Verse 14: “That which fell among thorns are they, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” These people have the opposite problem, and that is that their prosperity destroys them. So adversity destroys the rocky-ground hearer, prosperity destroys the thorny-ground hearer.

Now notice if you will, verse 15: “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word”—persevere. And of course, the Bible says “keep it, and bring forth fruit,” with what? Patience.

And this is what James is talking about when he says, “Let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” And so the difference between those who fall away in a time of trial and those who have an honest and good heart and bring forth fruit with patience, is that one is saved and the other is not. You see, when adversity comes to the Christian, he in an honest and good heart with patience brings forth fruit. And when prosperity comes to the Christian, he with an honest and good heart, with patience, brings forth fruit.

So whatever his condition, be it very bad or be it very good, he continues to bear fruit and to persevere. And neither of those draw him away. But with reference to those who are *not* saved, when a trial comes along, they fall away.

And so if someone is consistently responding in an unbiblical fashion to trials, then it strongly indicates that they are not saved. When someone responds with anger and with bitterness and with discontentment and with constant unhappiness in times of trial, then it is a strong indication that they are unconverted. When trials are a provocation for falling away from the Lord rather than a provocation to draw *near* to the Lord and patiently persevere and *grow* through them with a good attitude, then the problem is frequently a lack of salvation.

Notice if you will, James chapter 1, and verse 12. In James chapter 1 and verse 12, it says, “Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation”—and it’s once again our exact same Greek word—“for when *he* is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him.”

Now notice, it is those who *endure* trials that receive the crown of life, not those who fail in the midst of them. It is those who *endure* trials that are declared to be those who love the Lord. And this word “endure” carries the idea of perseverance—“They persevere in trials,” it could be translated. Blessed is the man that *perseveres* in the face of temptation in a good and godly attitude. When *he* is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.”

And so it is a mark of salvation that one *perseveres* in the midst of trials. It is a mark of *lack* of conversion when one falls away in the midst of trials. And so those who continue on, who do not give up, who do not quit, who do not turn away from the Lord but maintain a good attitude of joy and patience and faith and grow in the midst of their trials, it is those who are declared to be people who receive the crown of life. It is those who are declared to be the people who love God. So the first reason why people do not respond well to trials is—sometimes, it's because they're simply unconverted.

Secondly, some people do not respond well to trials, and they do not allow patience to have her perfect work—and we'll talk about the meaning of that after a while—is because they lack knowledge and faith. Sometimes it is because they lack *knowledge* and *faith*.

Now as we saw in our previous studies, an attitude of joy in the midst of trials is based on, number one, *knowing* about God's purposes in them, and number two, *exercising faith* regarding those purposes. And if we are *ignorant* of God's purposes; or, on the other hand, if we do not exercise *faith* regarding those purposes, then we can easily fail to persevere in a proper response to trials. Now, I want to set before you two illustrations—one of each of these dynamics at work.

First of all, there are people who fail because they lack *knowledge*. Now, the illustration is that of the disciples of Christ—saved men—but men who did not fare well when going through the trial of seeing Christ taken and crucified. They had *no* joy in the midst of that trial, but rather, they were filled with despair and hopelessness because they had forgotten the teaching they had received on God's purposes for Christ's crucifixion, or else they had never comprehended them in the first place.

Let's take a very brief survey through the book of Luke in order to illustrate this truth. We'll start out at Luke, chapter 9. In Luke, chapter 9, verses 43 through 45, Jesus says to the disciples: "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered everyone at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying."

So they had received instruction, but it didn't connect, it didn't register. Notice if you will, Luke, chapter 18. Luke, chapter 18, verses 31 through 34. Luke 18:31, it says: "Then he," that is, Jesus, "took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge him, and put him death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they things which were spoken."

And so while they were plainly told in the clearest possible terms the purposes of God in this upcoming trial, they did not connect with it, they did not comprehend it. They had received instruction regarding God's purposes, but failed to grasp it or even to remember it.

We read in John, chapter 20, verses one through nine, that even after the death of Christ, it *still* did not connect with them. John, chapter 20, verses 1 through 9, it says:

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.” And she runs and comes to Simon Peter, “to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him.

“Peter therefore when forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, looked in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeing the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw and believed.” But notice verse 9: “For as *yet* they *knew not* the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”

And so even after the resurrection, they run in there, and they see that he’s gone, and they believe, Well, yeah, okay, he’s gone. But still they did not connect. They did not understand. They did not *know*—there was a lack of knowledge. Now it’s not because they hadn’t been told. But for some reason, they were not able to comprehend this.

Now turn back, if you will, to Luke 24, verses 1 through 8. In Luke 24, verses 1 through 8, a further record here, it says:

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

“And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said to them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spoke unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words...” But up to this point in time, they *hadn’t* remembered them, and as a result, the crucifixion was for them a *devastating* trial.”

But notice, verse 9 through 11: “And returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” So they are still in a state of despair. They’re still in a state of unbelief.

Now notice if you will in this same chapter, verses 17 through 27. The two disciples are on the road to Emmaus, and in verse 17, it says, “And Jesus said to them, What manner of communications are these that you have one to another, as you walk, and are sad?” And of course, they didn’t recognize who He was. “And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas,

answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said to him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.”

And so these people are in a state of *sadness*, they’re in a state of *disillusionment*. Keep reading, verse 22, “Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.”

So here they are. They’re in the state of perplexity, they’re in a state of despair, they’re in a state of sadness, they’re in a state of disillusionment. Now notice verse 25 through 27. But Jesus said to them, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe”—notice—“*all* that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning *himself*.”

Now why did He expound in the Scriptures of the prophets all the things concerning Himself? The reason why is because their problem was ignorance. And even though they had been told of the purposes of God and His upcoming trial, it did not *register* with them; they did not *know* these things; and even after the crucifixion and resurrection, they *still* didn’t know it. They’re still in a state of unbelief, even after the *women* bring *their* report. And it’s not until Jesus opens the Scriptures to them and informs their *minds* and grants them the *knowledge* that they need to have that their eyes are opened and their *response* to the nature of the trial *radically* changes.

So here’s an example of people who *did not* respond well to a trial because they had a problem of ignorance. And Jesus *solved* that problem of ignorance by expounding the Scriptures to them in *relationship* to the particular *trial* that they were going through. And so, oftentimes, we don’t understand the ways of God, not because God hasn’t *explained* Himself. He’s explained Himself just *fine* in His word. The answers are *right* there, you’ve read them a hundred times, but they didn’t connect.

And so you go through these trials, and you’re in a terrible state of affairs as far as your *attitude* goes, as far as your *outlook* goes, because somehow you never really have understood the explanation God has *already given* to you as to why you are in the situation you are in—and what its *purposes* are. That’s why I have made every effort to bring out six of those purposes last week, that God *has in* our trials.

The second example I want to bring to your attention of failure to persevere in the midst of trials for Christians is that of the disciples in Matthew, chapter 8. Now in this situation, their problem wasn’t ignorance. The problem was just a flat lack of faith.

In Matthew, chapter 8, verses 23 through 26, they’re out on the lake again. This is a different story from the one that I’ve expounded to you in John. Matthew, chapter 8, verses 23 through 26. In this one, Jesus is in the boat. He doesn’t come walking on the water. Matthew 8:23:

“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.”

Now what’s their disposition and attitude? Are they having joy in the midst of their trial? *They’re terrified.* They’re filled with fear. In fact, Jesus says to that, verse 26, “And he said to them, Why are ye fearful”—and now He describes their problem—“O you of *little faith?*” That’s their problem. “Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marveled...”

Now we might think Jesus was being a little *harsh* with these folks, but if you read the previous *context* of the previous chapters, and understand where this story fits in to the ministry of Jesus, you recognize that these people did not have a problem with ignorance. They had seen *dozens* and *dozens* of displays of divine power in the performance of *miracles*. They *knew* of His power. But even with the proper knowledge of *who* Jesus was and *what* He could do, they still responded with *fear*; specifically, Jesus declares that their problem wasn’t lack of knowledge. He didn’t start expounding to them the Scriptures in this instance. In this instance, He says, Where is your *faith?* Why don’t you act *faith* upon what you already *know* to be the truth about Me and about My power and about where I came from and about God’s care over Me?

And so if we lack either knowledge or we lack faith, we are not going to *do* well in trials. Instead of having an attitude of *joy*, we’re going to wind up having an attitude of fear, of disillusionment, of despair, of unbelief. Therefore, first of all, we need to continually work at reminding ourselves of God’s purposes in trials, and be seeking to learn what those purposes are. We need to continually work at *reminding* ourselves of God’s purposes in trials and seek to be learning what they *are*.

And so to the extent that you understand God’s *purposes* in trials, *remind* yourself of those when you’re in a trial. And then search the Scriptures and see if you can come up with other declarations, examples, or explanations as to what those purposes are. We see that the disciples were told very clearly what those purposes were, but they just *missed* them.

Secondly, we need to have *faith* in those *purposes* and in God’s *promises* and *act* on that faith by controlling our attitudes and feelings so that they are in *harmony* with those purposes and promises. We have to control our attitudes and feelings so that they are in *harmony* with those purposes and promises, and the way we *do* so is by acting our faith upon the promises that are *there*.

Now suppose God says to you, gives you a promise, I’m going to give you a million dollars. But see, if you don’t *believe* it, then that promise doesn’t bring you any joy. On the other hand, if you believe God, but you don’t have any idea of what His purposes are, what His intentions are, and you think maybe His intentions are to take everything you’ve got and leave you in poverty, then you can have all the faith in the world, and you’re not going to have joy, because you think His intentions are *evil*.

Though on the other hand, if you know what His intentions are—and that they’re good, and you have *faith* in those intentions—that they will be accomplished, *then* you can have joy, even though at the current time, things don’t *look* very good.

So not only do we need to *continually* work at *reminding* ourselves of God's purposes in trials and seek to be learning what they are; not only do we need to have *faith* in those purposes and in God's *promises* and *act* on that faith by controlling our attitudes and feelings so that they are in *harmony* with those purposes and promises; but thirdly, we need to *maintain* that knowledge and that faith *over* the process of time by continually *reminding* ourselves of those prospectives as *long* as the trial lasts.

You see, you can have proper knowledge and you can have proper faith, but that knowledge and that faith have to be *persevered* in *over* the duration of the difficulty. This is what James means when he says, "Let patience have its perfect work." Let patience carry out its work to its ultimate conclusion. To persevere in a *godly* response of faith and trust in God's *purposes* and promises regarding our trial, until God in His time *removes* that trial, is the mark of someone who is obeying verse 4.

So—in order to not give up and quit in maintaining that response, and in order to avoid slumping into sinful and ungodly attitudes and conduct *regarding* it before it is over, it is imperative that we continually *remind* ourselves of God's purposes, that we continually exercise *faith* with those purposes, and we do it each and every day until that trial is completed.

Turn in your Bible, please, to James, chapter 5. In James, chapter 5, in verses 10 through 11, James says: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an *example* of," number one, "suffering affliction," and number two, "of patience." Now when you read the lives of Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Elijah, and the various prophets, you realize these people suffered a *lot*. They had *lots* of affliction. How did they respond to those afflictions? Did they just give up and quit and say, I'm not going to take *this* anymore? No, they persevered. And sometimes they struggled, but they fundamentally persevered, *knowing* what God's purposes were and exercising *faith* in those purposes *over* time with *patience*.

Notice verse 11, "Behold, we count them happy which"—give in and quit? No, that's not what it says, does it? We count them happy which "*endure*." You see, endurance is the only option for the Christian. Christians *don't* give up and quit. We count them happy which *endure*. "You have heard of the patience of Job" and have seen the *conclusion* of the Lord's purposes, but "the Lord is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy."

And so what James is saying here is, Look—your situation isn't unique. People of God before you have gone through the same things. They endured with patience. You need to endure with patience, too. And you need to remember that happiness comes as a result of enduring and persevering in a *proper* response to trials through proper knowledge and through proper faith, and when we do, we see that the Lord in dealing with us in those trials is very pitiful and full of tender mercy. He has great compassion on us.

And so our prayer regarding trials needs to be that of Psalm 57, and verse 1, which says, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, *until* these calamities be overpast." Now what the psalmist is saying there is, You know, I'm in the midst of calamities, and I've *determined* on a course of action. I'm going to *pray* to God and ask Him for mercy, and I'm going to *hide* myself in the shadow of his wings and find a refuge there until this stuff is *over* with.

Now of course, we don't go looking for a set of feathers to crawl underneath. What, in fact, are these "wings" that we make our refuge under? They are nothing less than the promises of God. And so we *go* to the promises of God; we huddle underneath them; we look to them for our shelter and our strength; we rely upon them by faith; and we continue to do so until the calamity is *passed*. See, he says, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, *until* these calamities be overpast." And until they *are*, I will *continue* to make God's presence and promises and purposes my refuge.

And so we need to remember First Corinthians 10:13, that there is no trial taken us but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will suffer us to be tested above that which we are able; but will with the testing provide a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. So God never puts more on us than we can endure. But if we are slothful in *marshaling* our thoughts and in *learning* the promises of God, or if we are *faithless* in exercising faith *in* those promises, or if we go on for a little while and then give up and *quit* in that course of action, then patience will *not* have her perfect work. And we will be the losers.

2A And that brings me to my second point this evening. Having considered together the need to persevere in a proper response to trials, notice secondly, the *results* of perseverance in a proper response to trials—the *results* of perseverance in a proper response to trials.

Now he says, "Let patience have her perfect work." That declares the need to persevere in the proper response. He goes on to say, "in order that"—and here's the results—"that you may be perfect and entire, [lacking] nothing." Now the result that occurs when we persevere in a proper response to trials—that is, a response of joy and faith and patience—is that, first of all, we are brought to maturity. We are brought to maturity.

Now in this passage, the word "perfect"—"that you may be perfect"—the word "perfect" means to be brought to maturity. The word is used, sometimes it is true, of true perfection. God is called perfect with this exact same word. And we're not just saying God is mature, we're saying there's utterly no defect in Him. But at other times the word is used of maturity, not perfection. Depends upon the context in which it is used.

For example, in First Corinthians, chapter 14, and in verse 20. First Corinthians 14, and verse 20, Paul says, "Brethren, be not *children* in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be"—and the King James says, "*men*." It's the same Greek word. It's the word "perfect." And so what he is saying here is that a child is someone who's immature. A *man* is someone who is mature. And he's saying, with reference to our understanding, we need to be *mature*. The same word is used in Hebrews, chapter 5, and in verse 14, when the author of the book of Hebrews says, "But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age,"—there's our word—"even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." And so when the word is used of people, it is not used of absolute perfection, it is used of maturity. When the word is used of God, of course, it refers to perfection.

The point is this, a proper response to trials brings us to a point of full maturity. You want to know who people are who are fully mature? They are people who have persevered in a proper response to trials over time. With them, patience has had her complete work and they are now *complete* and they are *entire*, and they lack nothing by way of the general description and principles of *maturity*. Now it's not to say they can't grow at all. But it's like—we have

children in this room, they're all over the place. And we would all say they're immature. And then we have adults in this room, and we would all say they're adults. They're grown up now. I'm speaking physically here. We would all say children are physically immature; we would all say that all the adults in this room are physically mature. Now does that mean that there is no room for improvement of any kind whatsoever in your physical being? Could you not improve your health a bit, or build up your muscles some, or increase your endurance somewhat? Sure you can. But you're mature. You've arrived. You've grown up.

In the same way in the Christian life, the Bible speaks of children, it speaks of young men, it speaks of fathers in the faith. And so those who have reached that level of *adult* maturity as Christians, they are Christian adults, not just merely *human* adults, but adults which are Christians. Do you understand what I'm saying. Okay? Grown-up Christians is what I mean. And they've reached that level of adulthood in the realm of Christianity in their character and maturity. Such people would be fathers in the faith. They wouldn't be called little children. They wouldn't be called young men. They would be called fathers, or adults.

And so this is what James is speaking of here. If you want to grow into an adult Christian, then what you have to do is persevere in a proper response to trials. And so *full* maturity is what we *aspire* to, and trials and difficulties are God's means of bringing us to that *point*. But you can have all the trials and difficulties in the world, but if you do not persevere in a proper *response* to them, you'll continue to be a little child for as long as you continue in an improper *response* to them. You won't grow.

This was the very means God used to bring His own Son to maturity. Hebrews 2 and verse 10 says, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing *many* sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect"—or mature—"through sufferings." Jesus was a little boy and had to grow up. He had to learn His manners, He had to learn His multiplication tables, He had to grow up *as a man*. Now of course, as God He was always perfect, but as a man, he had to grow up. And *how* did God bring Him to adult maturity, as a Christian man, if you will? Through the process of sufferings and His godly and proper response to them. Why was Jesus the most perfect man that ever walked on the face of the Earth, speaking strictly of His humanity? It was because He persevered in a proper response to trials through proper knowledge, proper faith, and proper *continuance* in those things.

And so if was the method He used for Jesus, then we should not be dismayed if it is the method He uses for us. And you see, some people—man, they grow and they make tons of progress in the Christian life, and you see other people don't grow very much, don't make much progress. I think one of the major differences can be traced to how they respond to trials. Do they respond on the basis of knowledge—biblical knowledge—and on the basis of biblical faith? Or are they ignorant or faithless, and thus don't progress through the trial.

Secondly. The second result of perseverance in a proper response to trials is not only that we're brought to maturity, but that we're brought to assurance. We're brought to assurance. James, chapter 1, verse 12 again. It says, "Blessed is the man that *endures* temptation"—here's someone who's persevered in a proper response of joy, faith, and patience—"[because] when *he* is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." Well if those who endure temptation are going to receive the crown of life, and I have persevered in a response of proper knowledge and faith in *relationship* to my trials, then what can I think of myself? That I'm going to receive the crown of life.

And so only God's saving grace can *enable* us to endure in a response of joy, faith, and patience to *trials*. The ability to *do* so is a strong source of assurance that we are saved, because only supernatural power can *enable* us to persevere. You remember, unsaved people can't do it, right? And if we are *doing* it, if we are going through our trials with joy and faith and patience, then we have every reason to believe that God has saved us. Because mere human strength and stubbornness may enable us to *exist* through trials, but not to *triumph* in our trials in a response of proper knowledge and proper faith over time.

Thirdly. The third result of perseverance in a proper response to trial is, not only are we brought to maturity, not only are we brought to assurance, but thirdly, we are *enabled* to display our love to God. We are enabled to display our love to God. Now, if you're a Christian, you love God. And you want to show that love and display that love. The Bible says, in First John 4, we love *Him* because He first loved us. And Paul said the love of Christ constrains us. That is, our love for Christ and His love for us controls and directs our behavior.

Well notice if you will, James 1:12. "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, *which* the Lord hath promise to"—who?—to those who "love him." And it is precisely those who endure through trials with an attitude of joy, faith, and patience that are those who love *God*. To love God in prosperity is *easy*. Anybody can do that. We can all run around when everything's going well, and say, Oh, I love God! But to love God in adversity and to *persist* in that love to God when we *know* that God *brought* the trial, and when we know that God could *remove* the trial but He's *not* doing it, that's the mark of true love and faith in God.

This is the attitude of Job, in chapter 13, and verse 15, when he says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job wasn't going to abandon his faith and confidence in God. He was *puzzled* and he struggled, but James said that he persevered with *patience*. "You have heard of the *patience* of Job." Job both *trusted* the hand that smote him and he *kissed* the hand that smote him, even when God was bringing the severest adversity upon him.

Can you in the midst of your trials, knowing what you know about God's providence and control of all events, recognizing that *God* has brought this to pass, irrespective of whatever second causes may be involved, in the midst of your trials say, "God, I love you. And out of my love for you, I'm going to respond to this the way you want me to, even though everything is crying out in me to strike out at you and to strike out at the second causes"?

The man who *endures* temptation in that fashion is the one who loves God. Only a true love to God will *continue* to love when it is hurting, in times of distress and perplexity, when the very *object* of that love is the one who has *brought* the distress and the perplexity. Because only true faith and true love believes that the one who is wielding the rod is wielding it out of love.

Now the man who properly responds to trials, James says, gains maturity, he gains assurance, and he shows his love to God. Now let me ask you a question. Is a man who gains maturity and assurance of salvation and shows his love to God, is that man lacking anything? He's not lacking a *thing*. "Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting *nothing*." And when you respond properly to trials and it brings that maturity, you're not missing *anything*. You have *everything*.

And so this is the caution regarding trials. If we respond, if we persevere in a proper response to them, it will bring us to maturity to the point that we don't lack *anything* with reference to that maturity. We have it *all*. Wherever you look in such a person's life, there is the presence of maturity. That doesn't mean that there's going to be the presence of perfection. It doesn't mean that at all. But it means that there is going to be the presence of *maturity* in each area of life.

Well, may God help us, then, to *obtain* that maturity by having a godly response to trials through an exercise of knowledge and of faith, commanding and controlling our attitudes and feelings, that we might persevere in love to God and faithfulness to Him.

Let us pray together. Our Father, we thank you for the trials that you bring into our lives. Father, thank you that you brought your own Son, the captain of our salvation, to *maturity* through trials. And Father, we would strive to know your purposes in trial, to remember them, to cement them more firmly into our minds and to seek them *out*. Help us not to be dull of hearing like the disciples were, regarding your purposes in the crucifixion. Help us not to be faithless like your disciples were, during the trial in the storm. When you bring storms into our lives, help us to respond not only with knowledge, but also with faith.

And Father, I pray that each of us would under the shadow of your wings make our refuge until our calamities be overpassed. Father, have mercy on us. Help them not to last long. But Father, however long they last, give us grace to be faithful to the end *in* them, that we might get the profit and benefit *from* them, both by way of maturity and assurance, and an opportunity to express love to you. Father, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.