

Intro: Many scholars believe that the oldest written book in the Bible is Job, a book that deals primarily w/ the age old question, how can a good, loving, & just God allow suffering, especially in those who belong to Him as His children? The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is to be a comfort to suffering & persecuted saints in the midst of a world that antagonistic to Jesus Christ. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon, the Preacher, tells us in 1:9, “there is nothing new under the sun.” What am I getting at then? Namely, that in this fallen world, suffering is the norm, not the exception. It is essential that I highlight the word “fallen” (cf. Gen. 3; Rev. 21:4).

People who are of this world, that is, fleshly, by nature follow the advice of Job’s wife, who told him to curse God & die miserably. Those who are not of this world, that is heavenly, by their new, born-again nature are to follow James’ advice, who commands us to praise God & live joyfully in the trials that God brings our way.

Let us then hear what God’s slave has to say to us this evening.

I. The **Audience** Addressed – Primarily Believers (1:1)

- ⇒ More specifically, *Jewish* believers being persecuted (cf. NLT)
- ⇒ *avdelfoi*, (1:2) - always used for fellow believers in Christ
- ⇒ Although still applicable for unbelievers who were also in the churches.

II. The **Attributes** Defined – the nature of trials (1:2)

1. Trials are *not* temptations!

- ⇒ *peirasmo,j* – same word used in 1:12, translated “temptations”
- ⇒ *peira,zw* – to try, learn the nature or character of something (e.g. pop quiz)
 - Cf. 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12; Deut. 8:1-3
- ⇒ **Trial**: an incitement to trust God more; to obedience
- ⇒ **Temptation**: an incitement to forget God & to disobedience (thus we pray Matt. 6:13)
- ⇒ Trial has w/in it a measure of temptation. E.g. of Job

Addendum: note also the reality of discipline (believers) & punishment (unbelievers)

- ⇒ 1 Pet. 4:15 – “If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.”
- ⇒ God’s purpose is not so much to test our character, but lead us to repentance

2. Trials are certain

- ⇒ *o[ta*n – when, not “if” they come. We shouldn’t be surprised at promises!
- ⇒ Cf. Job 5:7; 14:1

3. Trials are unexpected

- ⇒ We know *that* they will happen, but not when or how
- ⇒ *peripi,ptw* – to encounter a hazard, “fall into” (Cf. Luke 10:30; Acts 27:41)

⇒ Aorist likely shows they are abrupt (punctiliar). Good news: not continuous

4. Trials are diverse

- ⇒ *poiki,loj* – multi-colored, variegated – emphasizes not the number but kinds
- ⇒ List some common & particular examples (sickness, work, marriage, etc.)
- ⇒ God has many ways of purifying us; He knows exactly what *we* need (therefore we must be cautious in comparing the circumstances of others).

III. The **Advice** Given – Count all Trials as Joy (1:2-12)

- ⇒ *h`ge,omai* – to engage in an intellectual process: “think, consider, count”
- ⇒ Aorist tense implies urgency, perhaps implying they were *now* suffering
- ⇒ They need God’s advice right now to comfort them in their trials.
- ⇒ *cara*, - not happiness, which is dependent upon circumstances. Joy is a *quality* (not emotion) which is grounded upon & derived from God Himself. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Thus, joy can only be cultivated as we obey His promptings & leadings, esp. in trials (cf. 2 Cor. 7:4).
- ⇒ *pa/sa* – “great” (NLT); “pure” (NIV); “nothing but” (NET)

1. B/c they Perfect our **Faith** (1:2-4)

⇒ ‘B/c it’s dust to dust, until we learn how to trust (K. Green)

2. B/c they Perfect our **Wisdom** (1:5-8)

3. B/c they Perfect our **Perspective** (1:6-8)

4. B/c they Perfect our **Hope** (1:12)

IV. The **Attitude** Intended – Christ-likeness (1:18)

⇒ Cf. Phil. 2:14-16

⇒ God wants to display His grace through us to the world. This is manifested as we emulate our Savior, who was made perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8)

Conclusion: Dear believer & unbeliever alike, understand this: God loves you too much to let you remain where you are at spiritually. He wants to make you like His Son, the only One in whom He is truly well-pleased. And so He not only allows, but He coordinates every trial that comes your way. May you cry out to Him for His Spirit to trust in His goodness through the pain. May they draw you near to God, so that He may draw near to you.

If you are ‘scared’ of future trials, memorize:

1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

1 Cor. 10:13 – No temptation (in a trial?) has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but

with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Trials are like cough syrup: they don't taste so good, but they're good medicine that make us better. As Keith Green sings, trials are turned into gold.