

Slide 1

Growing Through Our Trials

JAMES 1:2-4

Introduction

1. Why does God allow the righteous to suffer?
2. Have you ever stopped to seriously consider that question?
3. At the end of Hebrews 11, the great chapter on faith, the writer speaks of the various accomplishments of God's faithful:
 - a. In verses 32-35, we find these words:

“And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection;” (Hebrews 11:32–35, NASB95)

- b. Then, beginning in the middle of verse 35, we encounter something which makes us stop and think:

“. . . and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.” (Hebrews 11:35–38, NASB95)

4. In our reading today, James, the half-brother of our Lord, speaks to us about how we should respond to the various trials which we encounter in our own lives as Christians.
5. He tells us what God is doing and what we must do if we are to be successful.
6. Let's study the Scriptures together to see how we can grow in the midst of our trials.

Slide 2

I. We Must Embrace A Radical Attitude

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,” (James 1:2, NASB95)

Slide 3

A. EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER TRIALS IN YOUR LIFE

1. Notice that James did not say “if you encounter various trials,” but “when you encounter various trials.”
2. Perhaps you have heard someone say, and maybe, you yourself have even believed that once you become a Christian, life is a smooth road — God keeps us from having to face any difficulties on our lives.
3. In reality, the opposite is true — all of us who are saints of God will encounter trials.
4. What are the trials of which James is speaking?
5. We don't have to read far in James' letter to see that a number of the Christians to whom he wrote were poor and were being mistreated:
 - a. They were being dishonored in the worship assembly (James 2:2-6a).
 - b. The rich were oppressing the poor and dragging them into court (James 2:6b).
 - c. They were having their wages dishonestly withheld from them (James 5:1-6).
6. When James said that you and I will encounter various trials, he included

more than just our mistreatment by others.

7. No doubt, he also intended other trials which many here today have experienced — sickness, disappointment, the loss of a loved one, loneliness.
8. All of these and many more we are sure to experience during our stay here upon earth.

Slide 4

B. CONSIDER IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER SUCH TRIALS

1. How does James tell us we should respond to these trials?
2. We are to “consider [count] it all joy” — this is certainly a “radical attitude.”
3. There are two things I want you to ponder this morning:
 - a. First, such an attitude is not natural.
 - 1) Those in the world around us do not “consider it all joy” when they are confronted with the trials I have just described.
 - 2) No, it is more common for those who do not belong to Christ to become angry, curse and lash out.
 - 3) Our response should distinguish us from the world.
 - 4) Instead, we should “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4), because we know that He is in control.
 - 5) He “causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).
 - b. Second, this radical attitude is the result of a deliberate choice.
 - 1) When you and I “rejoice in the Lord always,” we make a conscious decision as to how we will respond to the trials we encounter.
 - 2) In Romans 5:2, the apostle Paul wrote that “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”
 - 3) In the very next verse, he adds, “not only that, but we rejoice in our

sufferings . . .” (Romans 5:3, ESV).

- 4) In the midst of our trials, we make a deliberate choice to “trust in the Lord with all [our] heart” and not to “lean on [our] own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).
- 5) We do this because we know that “God is for us” (Romans 8:31), and if God is for us, it doesn’t matter who is against us.

Slide 5

II. We Must Cling To A Reassuring Truth

“. . . knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” (James 1:3, NASB95)

Slide 6

A. GOD USES THESE TRIALS IN OUR LIVES FOR A PURPOSE

1. Why can we respond to the trials in our lives with such joy?
2. It is because we know that these trials are a test of our faith.
3. God is using them to perfect our faith and make us stronger Christians.
4. Go back with me for a moment to Romans 5:3:
 - a. Remember, Paul said “we also exult [rejoice] in our tribulations?”
 - b. At the end of this verse he tells us why, “knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance” (Romans 5:3b, NASB95).
5. In 1 Peter 1:6-7, the apostle Peter says much the same thing:

“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;” (1 Peter 1:6–7, NASB95)

- a. Peter compares the “testing” of our faith to the refining of gold in a furnace.
- b. Our faith is “tested” or refined in order to prove its “genuineness” (1 Peter 1:7, ESV, NKJV, HCSB).

Slide 7**B. THIS TESTING OF OUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE**

1. Other words are used to translate the Greek word, **ὑπομονή**, which James uses here — patience, fortitude, stead-fastness, perseverance.
2. It is a word which speaks to our ability to keep bearing up under difficult circumstances.
3. Time and again in the N.T. we find an emphasis upon the need for those of us who are Christians to develop this quality of perseverance or steadfastness when facing difficulty:

“But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” (**Luke 8:15, NASB95**)

“therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.” (**2 Thessalonians 1:4, NASB95**)

4. Just as our muscles become strong when facing resistance, so we as Christians learn to remain faithful to God over the long haul as we face difficulties in our lives.
5. The apostle Paul reached a point in his life in which he described the various trials he experienced as “momentary light affliction” (2 Corinthians 4:16) and said “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Slide 8**III. We Must Submit To God’s Refining Process**

“And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:4, NASB95)

Slide 9**A. IF GOD IS TO REFINE US, PERSEVERANCE MUST FINISH ITS WORK**

1. God’s refining process is just that, a process.
2. It doesn’t happen overnight — it takes time.
3. This is why James says to us, “let endurance have its perfect result,” or as another translation says, “perseverance must finish its work” (NIV84).
4. If “endurance is to have its perfect result,” we must submit to God’s work within us.
 - a. In Philippians 2:12, the apostle Paul encourages us to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.”
 - b. But then he tells us in the next verse, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
5. At the end of Hebrews chapter 13, we find the writer closing his letter with a prayer for the Christians to whom he is writing.
6. Beginning in verse 20, he writes these words:

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20–21, NASB95)

Slide 10**B. GOD’S GOAL FOR US IS THAT WE MIGHT BE “PERFECT AND COMPLETE, LACKING IN NOTHING”**

1. This does not mean that we will reach a point at which we can say “we have arrived,” and have no need of further progress.

2. The word, **τέλειοι**, translated as “perfect” in the last part of this verse also means “mature.”
3. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote about “the building up of the body of Christ” in Ephesians 4:12 and added in verse 13, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13, NASB95).

Conclusion

1. Can I share a little secret with you today?
2. Actually, it is a truth, which I imagine, you already know: God is not finished with you yet!
3. He is using the various trials, which you will continue to experience in your life, to refine your faith.
4. He is seeking to produce a person who is able to keep bearing up under difficult circumstances.
5. His ultimate goal is that you will be “mature and whole” in your faith, lacking in nothing.
6. Do you respond with joy to the trials which you encounter in your life?
7. If so, you are already on your way to the maturity and wholeness which God seeks in your life.
8. If not, I must ask you if you have started your journey yet.
9. Christ is waiting to lead the way. Will you come to Him today?