

JAMES 1:9-12
ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIALS!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 1 as we continue our study through this letter written to Jewish believers that were scattered due to the persecution against Christians. And they were also struggling with growing, they were immature in the faith, they were carnal Christians!

And James is focusing on our walk, how we live out our faith. And the focus here in James chapter 1 is ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING!***

And James opens up by looking at that multifaceted trials that come into our lives. Not “*if*” they come into our lives, but “*when*” they come into our lives and they will, and they have. You may be in one right now.

And James is telling these believers who were struggling that God is working in them through these trials, testing their faith, helping them to grow, producing endurance or patience or perseverance in their lives!

In other words, the Christian life is a battleground not a playground - mature Christians understand this, carnal Christians need to!

And the idea here is as they would apply these things to their lives that they would be perfect or mature in the faith. They were struggling, like I have said, and they needed to learn these things so that they would grow.

Then James speaks of us lacking wisdom as we go through these trials. We just don’t understand what God is doing and it is not because God is hiding these things from us. God wants to give us this wisdom. And the reason He wants to give us this wisdom, is so we can walk accordingly but we don’t ask or we ask and we doubt and we thus, lack wisdom!

And James says that if we live that way then our life will be unstable, we will be like a roller-coaster with all the ups and downs. He wants them to be stable and the Lord wants us to be stable in our walk with Him. Thus, if we lack wisdom for the situation we are facing, we need to ask God who “**... gives to all liberally and without reproach ...**” James 1:5.

This morning, as we continue our study looking at ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING*** we are going to focus on ***ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIALS!***

Let’s face it, we all can use encouragement as we are going through difficult times. But, many times we hear something like this from our friends, “***Suck it up!***” Now we will not say it like that, hopefully not, but when we do say it we will be a little more spiritual than that, but it is the same idea. There is no compassion and there is really no encouragement!

Let me show you what discouragement looks like and then what encouragement looks like in the same story. And, as you will see, they have drastically different outcomes. We are told,

One man who was ousted from his profession for an indiscretion took work as a hod carrier simply to put bread on the table. He was suddenly plunged into a drastically different world; instead of going to an office each day, he was hauling loads of concrete block up to the fifth level of a construction site.

Gone was the piped-in music in the corridors; now he had to endure blaring transistors. Any girl who walked by was subject to rude remarks and whistles. Profanity shot through the air, especially from the foreman, whose primary tactics were whining and intimidation; “For - - - sake, you - - -, can’t you do anything right? I never worked with such a bunch of - - - in all my life . . .”

Near the end of the third week, the new employee felt he could take no more. "I'll work till break time this morning," he told himself, "and then that's it. I'm going home." He'd already been the butt of more than one joke when his lack of experience caused him to do something foolish. The stories were retold constantly thereafter. "I just can't handle any more of this." A while later, he decided to finish out the morning and then leave at lunchtime.

Shortly before noon, the foreman came around with paychecks. As he handed the man his envelope, he made his first civil comment to him in three weeks. "Hey, there's a woman working in the front office who knows you. Says she takes care of your kids sometimes." "Who?" He named the woman, who sometimes helped in the nursery of the church where the man and his family worshiped.

The foreman then went on with his rounds. When the hod carrier opened his envelope, he found, along with his check, a handwritten note from the payroll clerk: "When one part of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer with it. Just wanted you to know that I'm praying for you these days." He stared at the note, astonished at God's timing. He hadn't even known the woman worked for this company. Here at his lowest hour, she had given him the courage to go on, to push another wheelbarrow of mortar up that ramp.

- Dean Merrill, *Another Chance*, p. 138

James is trying to give these immature Christians, these carnal Christians, some encouragement in the trials that they were facing so that they would continue on strong, that they would not give up, drop out, stop serving the Lord! It is speaking of maturity in their Christian lives!

One more point before we get to our text this morning. Please keep in mind that James is not changing the subject here as some feel. James has been talking about trials and double-mindedness and I think that same thought flows into what he is saying in these verses we will be looking at this morning.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in James chapter 1, beginning in verse 9 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we continue to look at this topic of ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING*** and specifically here, ***ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIALS!***

JAMES 1 **VERSE 9**

Again, trials will come our way, not might. And God is working in us through those trials, testing our faith, maturing us, helping us to build up endurance in our lives for the next trials that we face.

And as we go through these trials we can seek the wisdom of God, asking Him to help us understand them, help us to do the right thing as we are going through them.

I think we are all in agreement with that, James is pretty clear.

But now we come to this idea of the poor glorying in trials and we will see the rich glorying in trials, and what in the world is he talking about? These two groups of people live in different worlds it would seem. The poor have nothing and yet, the rich have so much. So how in the world do you compare the two. The answer is really very simple – ***TRIALS!***

What James is doing is that he is addressing both ends of the social spectrum by admonishing both poor and wealthy Christians. There are lessons for us all!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, "As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ the two are equals." (Hiebert, citing Lenski)

I have called this section – *GLORY IN TRAILS* because I believe there are so many lessons for us here that we can apply to our lives no matter where you are at on the social ladder, you might say.

So, let's deal with this first group, the poor. James says, "**Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation.**" James 1:9.

Now this seems kind of strange. The poor brother, the one who has very little is to glory in all that he has! How can that be? I mean, he has nothing, right? That is right, he has nothing tangible you might say in an earthly aspect.

The idea here is this brother may not have riches, he may be poor, but spiritually speaking, he is rich, and he can glory in that!

And since James is writing to Jewish believers who were scattered because of the persecution that they were facing for their faith, these must then be poverty-stricken Jewish Christians who lost everything when they came to Christ!

Now, here in America, we have so much. And in spite of all that we do have, I think many American's are not content with what they have. "I just need to make a little bit more!" And that happens and then we want a little more and there is no satisfaction, we are trying to reach something, and we are not sure what the end point is, or even if there is an end point!

Many years ago now, my wife took the youth group to Mexico on a missions trip. And they visited some of the poorest areas in Mexico. These people lived in cardboard houses. They had nothing.

But one of the things that our youth group noticed was the joy that the kids had. They may not have had any tangible things, toys, but they had a joy that filled their lives and was manifested with their smiles.

And please understand, things were so bad in these areas that they would not name their children until they were two years old because the death rate of these young babies was so high. If they made it to two then it was safer to name them!

And life was hard for them. It was not easy. And yet they learned that there can be joy in spite of these things!

And to put things in perspective for you, back in 2001, there were more human beings suffering chronic deprivation than ever in history. Recent estimates show that nearly half the world's population, about three billion people, live on less than two dollars a day. Most of these are destitute, trapped in absolute poverty.

Here in America, yes there is poverty, but not on the scales that we see it in other parts of the world.

And it would seem like James is being insensitive to the plight of these Jewish Christians who have lost everything when they came to Christ. That this trial, you might say, was overwhelming and it did not look like there was a way out of it and James is telling them to glory in these things!

James is not being insensitive to the situation that they were in, not at all. What he wants these Jewish Christian believers to do is have a correct perspective in the situation that they are in.

Listen to what Paul said in Philippians 4:11-13, "**Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**"

Let's face it, situations in our lives can change very quickly and Paul understood that fact. And his joy, his contentment was not based in what he had or didn't have but it was in the Lord.

You see, he knew that whatever state he was in; rich or poor, God would provide what he needed, and the Lord would then get the glory!

Let's face it. Contentment for the world seems to be an unattainable goal.

Why is that? Because they seek contentment where it can't be found; like money, possessions, jobs, power, freedom from difficulties and-so-on.

In this fallen world that is impossible to attain.

Then how in the world can we find contentment as Paul did?

Not by looking to the world to find it but Paul found contentment that was based on the person of Jesus Christ and not things.

Thus, like I have said, when he had much, it was great. When he had nothing, praise the Lord, it didn't matter to Paul because he knew God was in control.

And thus, he learned how to be content in all things! This was not just some theoretical idea. Paul lived it out in his life and thus, he could speak with certainty regarding these things.

Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs put it this way in regard to contentment. He said, "Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition." Absolutely!

But it can be hard. We can lose perspective of the situations we are facing, the trials that come our way. And thus, we need to get re-focused back on the Lord, back on the One who loves us knowing that we too can glory in our poverty!

Again, Jeremiah Burroughs tells us, "A Christian finds satisfaction in every circumstance by getting strength from another, by going out of himself to Jesus Christ, by his faith acting upon Christ, and bringing the strength of Jesus Christ into his own soul, he is thereby enabled to bear whatever God lays on him, by the strength that he finds from Jesus Christ . . . There is strength in Christ not only to sanctify and save us, but strength to support us under all our burdens and afflictions, and Christ expects that when we are under any burden, we should act our faith upon him to draw virtue and strength from him."

But contentment is tough in the days we are living in when we are bombarded with all kinds of things and the push is to get this and get that. You buy this smart phone and before you know it, another one is out and they are telling you that it is better than the last one. They almost make you feel like a fool if you don't get the new one. And this is not only for smart phones, this is how the industry works. They compel you to buy the newest and greatest, in their minds; gadgets, clothes, cars or whatever. And even when we do, we are not content because there is something else that is out there that now has our attention!

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

Coming downstairs one morning, Lord Congelton heard the cook exclaim, "Oh, if I only had five pounds, wouldn't I be content!"

Thinking the matter over, and anxious to see the woman satisfied, he shortly after handed her a five-pound note, then worth about twenty-five dollars. She thanked him profusely.

He paused outside the door to hear if she would express her satisfaction and thank God.

As soon as his shadow was invisible, she cried out, "Why didn't I say ten?"

- Prairie Overcomer

How true that is. Just a little bit more and then what? Just a little bit more. And then what? Just a little bit more. And we can go on, but you get the idea. No contentment.

The prophet Habakkuk had a problem trusting God, accepting what God was doing, being content in what God was bringing to pass. And we see that God changed his heart, he learned how to be content by his life experiences.

In the judgment that was coming upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians. With all the death and destruction that was to come. A life of poverty you might say. Notice what Habakkuk says as he now has a correct perspective of the situation!

In Habakkuk 3:17-19 we are told, **“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.”**

That is the proper perspective to have. God is in control, thus, no matter what may come my way, rags to riches or riches to rags, I know how to live – with a content heart.

There is another man in the Bible that went from riches to rags you might say, and that is Job. Make no mistake, Job was a good man. God was not angry at Job, but God was testing the faith of Job and we see that Job lost his animals, his servants and even his children in ***ONE DAY!***

And keep in mind that Satan went before God and basically said that the only reason Job loved him was because God had blessed him so much. If that was all taken away, he would not love the Lord any longer!

But that did not happen. Yes, Job lost everything, even his children in one day in a series of circumstances. And I am sure at this point Satan felt he has got Job where he wants him, and he will curse God because of all this. How can he love and worship God when this has come upon his life?

And I love the response of Job as he said, **“... ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”** Job 1:21-22.

But Satan does not give up and he once again goes before God to get Job to curse God. And Satan felt if his health, the health of Job was affected, he would curse God.

And thus, the Lord said that he could do as he pleases with Job, but he could not kill Job! And again, we see Satan attack Job and his health is falling apart. He has all these sores all over his body, he is a mess. He looks so bad that his wife tells him to **“Curse God and die!”**

And I love what Job said as he responded to her statement. **“But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”** Job 2:10.

And as Job is sitting down, devastated over what has happened to him, his three friends come by and they can't believe what they see.

They can't believe this is their friend Job. And for seven days they just sat with Job and said nothing. I am sure they were shaking their heads in disbelief and trying to figure out what Job did that this has come upon him.

And then Job finally opens up and he is cursing the day that he was born, not God. But he just feels that it would have been better not to be born than be in this condition! And as Job

finishes speaking, his three friends begin to speak, and they will take turns. And they just blast Job for having some sin in his life and that is why all this devastation has come upon him.

But they were wrong and later on in the book of Job God is going to rebuke them for what they were saying.

You see, what we see here is a trial from God to test the faith of Job. And, from Satan it is a temptation to get Job to sin and curse God! It is the same situation and the Lord is going to use it for good, to test his faith and help him to grow while Satan wants to destroy his faith and get him to fail!

Listen to what Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary had to say regarding the book of Job. We are told,

At one time or another, almost everyone has felt like Job. While going through trials and times of suffering, we are often overwhelmed by self-pity. We want an explanation for why God allows trials to happen to us. The Book of Job records the troubling questions, the terrifying doubts, and the very real anguish of a sufferer. The Book of Job can help us in the time when we are surrounded with troubles by giving us a glimpse of God's perspective on our suffering.

- Radmacher, Earl D.; Allen, Ronald Barclay;
House, H. Wayne: Nelson's New Illustrated Bible
Commentary, Job

And this goes on, this horrible counsel of his three friends, with one more so-called friend coming later on, up until we get to chapter 38 of Job.

And in chapter 38 God does not answer the how's and why's of all that is happening to Job. What God does is ask Job if he was there when the foundations of the world were created? Of course, he wasn't!

And what God was doing with Job was showing Job that he is not God and thus, he is going to have to trust in the One who has created all these things even though he may not understand it!

I am not saying that life is easy, it isn't! And for some, it seems even harder. But whatever state you are in, can you give glory in what God has given you?

Now you may be wondering, "Hey, I have nothing! What are you talking about Pastor Joe?"

Let's think about that for a minute. You have nothing? I don't think so!

You see, if you have repented of your sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, then you are a child of God. You have been adopted into the family of God. God has given to you all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places that are in Christ Jesus. He has given you gifts to use to minister to others and bring glory to Him. Being placed in the family of God you have brothers and sisters in the Lord that you did not have before and what a blessing that is! He has given to us His Spirit to live in us to guide us in His truth according to His Word!

I can go on, but do you still feel you have nothing? I hope not.

Now, if you have not repented of your sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, I agree, you have nothing. You might not agree with that, but it is true.

You see, we tend to evaluate our success by the riches we have and that is not how God wants us to look at things. Why is that? Because riches, possessions can be taken away in an instant, but Jesus can never be taken from us!

That is not what I have said, it is what God has told us in His Word. In Hebrews 13:5-6, **"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For**

He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'” What a great perspective to have. God is always with us and thus, no one can touch us without the Lord’s approval!

One writer summed it up like this for us. He wrote,

Here is wisdom for Christians of every age, all of whom live in a world which equates prosperity with happiness/God’s blessing and humble circumstances with misery/God’s displeasure. The lowly who are in the midst of hard times are tempted to doubt. No Christian who has been oppressed either economically or socially or both has not at some time doubted.

Unamuno, the Spanish philosopher said, “Those without anguish in mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God of idea, not God Himself.”

A living faith has its ups and downs because it is the faith of a living being who is imperfect and in process. But to the doubting, James stands deep spiritual truth on its head and shouts that Christians are the *rich poor*, the *low high*, and paradoxically commands that “The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.” This shouts for attention in our upside-down world!

- R. Kent Hughes, James - Faith That Works, p. 37

You see, despite that circumstance, a believer was and is to glory in his high position.

Peter reminds us of this very thing in I Peter 1:3-9, where he tells us, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

Perspective is everything and we need to focus not on what we don’t have but what we do have in Christ. And the reality is, we have everything in Christ and in that we shout for joy, we glory in what we do have in Christ!

John also speaks of this in I John 3:1-3, where he wrote, **“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

Again, the perspective of the situation changes everything for us. We are children of God and what we are experiencing now is not all that is coming, not at all. In the end we will be united with Jesus and we shall be like Him! Thus, we glory in what we have now because God is working in us to make us more like Him. And even with physical poverty, even in sickness, even in losing everything in this life, we have Jesus!

One write put it like this, “Instead of resenting his poverty and being discontented with his obscurity, let him remember that he is a prince.” (R. W. Dale, The Epistle of James and Other Discourses, p. 15)

We should not be disheartened by the present poverty we find ourselves in, whatever that may be. We are a son of the King, an heir to the future Kingdom and thus, we glory in the Lord no matter what we are going through!

A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They’re building a palace for me over there;
Tho’ exiled from home, yet still I may sing:
All glory to God, I’m a child of the King.

- Hattie E. Buell

As James has said, “**Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation.**” James 1:9.
As we read on we will be looking at the *RICH POOR* you might say.

VERSES 10-11

As some read this about the rich man they see him as a non-Christian. I don’t see it that way. I believe that when James used the word “**brother**” in verse 9 it flows into what he is saying here in verses 10 and 11 of James chapter 1.

Think of it like this. Just as the poor brother can forget all of his earthly poverty, glorying in all that God has given to him, so too the rich brother can forget all his earthly riches and glory in all that God has given to him, spiritually speaking! Because of their faith they are equal in Christ! And that means if the rich man lost everything, nothing would really change for him, spiritually speaking!

Now some don’t see the rich brother taking pride in his low position related to trials that have come into his life. I don’t agree with that. One writer put it like this as he notes that James, “can hardly mean, let him glory in the loss of his wealth, for such loss without change of mind would be no true reason for glorying, nor does the desirable frame of mind depend on the loss. It would seem that here to be “made low” is to find something of incomparable greater value than his wealth, something that by its greatness makes him feel small, so that disillusioned in his old ground of glorying, he attains a basis for a better glory.” (Arthur Temple Cadoux, The Thought of St. James, p. 48)

Yes, there is no doubt that the cross puts rich and poor at the same level, sinners in need of a Savior and it doesn’t matter what you have or don’t have, Jesus is what you need. That is very true!

But keep in mind that the focus here in James chapter 1 has been trials and I think that as you look at the context of what James is focusing on, that thought plays out here with this rich brother.

Make no mistake about it, trials for the rich are beneficial because they tend to bring clarity to what is really important in life. And it all has to begin with God, your faith in Him. That you are growing in the Lord. And then family! It truly has nothing to do with money!

Not that money is evil or wrong, but if the focus of our life is money, then our priorities are wrong, and it will get us into trouble!

Many of you remember Lee Iacocca. He was the former CEO of Chrysler. He had so much and yet, he made this interesting observation. He said, “No man on his death bed ever wished he had spent more time at the office.” How true that is!

What is the priority of your life right now? Yes, we all have to work but is work your god? Are you spending your days working, working, working and the time you have for God is getting less and less?

God can allow us to get to that point where we finally have to look up and repent and return to our first love, return to the Lord!

And listen again to how James speaks of these trials that can also come upon the rich, the picture he is painting for us.

James tells us, **“For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.”** James 1:11.

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For the sun comes up with a scorching heat and parches the grass; its flower falls off and its beauty fades away. Even so will the rich man wither and die in the midst of his pursuits. [Isa 40:6,7.]”** James 1:11.

I think we forget how quickly things can change. Let me show you what I mean because some of you remember very clearly what happened to your retirement funds back in 2008!

This article is from September 2008 and listen to what happened in just one day. We are told,

Even before the opening bell, Monday looked ugly.

But by the time that bell sounded again on the New York Stock Exchange, six and a half frantic hours later, \$1.2 trillion had vanished from the United States stock market.

What had started 24 hours earlier, with a modest sell-off in stock markets in Asia, had turned into Wall Street’s blackest day since the 1987 crash. The broad market, as measured by the Standard & Poor’s 500-stock index, plunged almost 9 percent, its third-biggest decline since World War II. The Dow Jones industrial average fell nearly 778 points, or 6.98 percent, to 10,365.45.

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/30/business/30markets.html>

Now, today, the Dow Jones industrial average is at 26,90.75 as of around 2:00 pm on January 31, 2018. That is a big change from the 10,365.45 of 2008! And yet, as we have seen in our history, those numbers can change very quickly, and we can be left with a big loss.

And if our life is built upon money, when it is gone, we have absolutely nothing!

Wealth will not last, they are temporary and if you think about it, your riches can’t be taken with you.

And this picture that James is painting is one that every Jew would understand, and its point is the temporary or transitory nature of riches!

In the springtime in Israel, March and April, the rains cause the wild flowers to bloom throughout the land and it is gorgeous!

But, as beautiful as they are, their beauty is short lived because, in just a few months, by early June, it gets very hot and very dry and the flowers dry up, they wither, and they die!

Think about that for a minute. You can build a great empire, acquire much money, many possessions and when compared with eternity, this life is a flash in the pan you might say. Like the flowers in the spring, they are gone very quickly!

Remember King Solomon, he was one of the richest men that has ever lived, and he had so much wealth, so many possessions and in the end, it was meaningless to him. Listen to how he kept trying to acquire things to satisfy himself and it was empty, meaningless.

And in Ecclesiastes 2:4-19 we are told, **“I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king? - Only what he has already done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all. So I said in my heart, ‘As it happens to the fool, It also happens to me, And why was I then more wise?’ Then I said in my heart, ‘This also is vanity.’ For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool! Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.”**

Look at the restlessness of Solomon. There was no contentment in his life. He tried building up his empire, and his empire was truly magnificent. But because of his pursuit to find the meaning of life, contentment, it caused a heavy tax burden on the people. The same is true today, those that are restless, their actions, behaviors affect family and friends; they become burdened down by this. We have not learned the lesson and we are looking for this highway to happiness in wine, women and song, all kinds of possessions and in the end, it is just vanity!

Alexander the Great experienced the same thing when, at 33, he wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer. You will not be satisfied with a little more money, with a different lady, with a higher career move, or the next educational degree. It’s all empty and I realize that this is depressing so far but keep in mind that this is under the sun and not in Christ. It is our choice where we want to live!

And Ralph Barton saw the folly of his life as this top cartoonist wrote, “I have few difficulties, many friends, great successes. I have gone from wife to wife, from house to house, and have visited great countries of the world. But I am fed up with devices to fill up twenty-four hours of the day.” You see, pleasure and possessions fail to meet our needs apart from Christ. It is only in Christ that we are satisfied and content in whatever state we are in!

And it is the same point that Jesus drove home in Matthew 6:19-21 in His Sermon on the Mount. He said, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Where is your treasure at? If it is in earthly things, when those things are taken away you will be devastated. If they are in the Lord, then no matter what comes your way you will endure, you will glory!

Make no mistake about it, it is interesting to see what the world glories in and what God glories in. You see, it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, in God's eyes we are on equal ground.

We don't glory in earthly riches but eternal riches that are ours in Christ! Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, **“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”**

Also, in Jeremiah 9:23-24 we are told, **“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.”**

Trials will come on the rich and the poor, that is not the issue. What matters is how you walk in them – walk in the wisdom of the Lord!

As James said regarding what we are to glory in, **“but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.”** James 1:10-11.

As we finish up here, let's look at ***THE RESULTS OF TRIALS*** in the next verse.

VERSE 12

As you read this verse it sounds like one of the Beatitudes that Jesus spoke as He gave His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 – 7.

And James uses the same Greek word for **“blessed”** or MAKARIOS, (mak-ar'-ee-os). This word speaks of more than just being happy, having a carefree life. It speaks of an inner joy and satisfaction even in the midst of various trials because that joy is found in the Lord and not the ever-changing circumstances of life!

Literally, in the Greek it is, ***“blessed is the man who perseveres under trials.”***

Now let me also say this. I want you to understand that James is not saying, ***“Blessed is the man who is never tempted.”*** We know that is not true. Temptations are all around us!

Nor does it say, ***“Blessed is the man who finds all temptation easy to conquer.”*** Again, we know that is not true. Temptations are tough to conquer, it is a battle and that battle is daily it seems!

What James is saying here is that God promises to bless the one who **“endures temptation.”** How do we endure temptation? By saying ***“Yes”*** to God and ***“No”*** to the temptation!

And notice what else James is saying here. He is saying, ***“Blessed is the man who hangs in there through every trial of life so that his faith is purified and strengthened - he will receive the crown of life . . .”***

Folks, as trials come our way they can weaken our faith if we let them. But God's desire is to strengthen it, to make us complete.

And in the end, as we go to be with Him, He will give us the crown of life, not a kingly crown but a ***STEPHANOS*** in the Greek, or a victor's crown! You see, true love for God will endure all kinds of hardships, it will endure till the end!

It is as Jesus said in John 15:9-11, **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”**

Folks, we can enjoy the fullness of life, that abundant life now in Christ and one day with Him in glory!

Yes, there are blessings in enduring through temptation and following the Lord. But why do people really resist temptation? Some resist temptation because of the fear of man. The thief suddenly becomes honest when he sees a policeman. The man or woman controls their lusts because they couldn’t bear to be found out and thus embarrassed. Others resist the temptation to one sin because of the power of another sin. The greedy miser gives up partying because he doesn’t want to spend the money.

But why does God want us to resist temptation. It is simple, we resist temptation because we love Him and that love for Him, if it is greater and stronger than your love for sin, will cause you to resist temptation!

Spurgeon put it like this, “So that those who endure temptation rightly, endure it because they love God. They say to themselves, ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ They cannot fall into sin because it would grieve him who loves them so well, and whom they love with all their hearts.”

Remember, faithful service to Jesus is important - but meaningless if not coupled with a heart of love.

As one writer put it,

Their love for God is the outcome of their faith in Him, which produces willing endurance for Him (1:2-4). Love is the essence of true faith. Where there is no love for God, death reigns. The verb “love” (agapo) denotes the noble love of understanding and purpose that prompts the believer to aspire to implicit obedience to God’s commandments (John 14;15; 15:10; 1 John 2:5-6; 5:3).

The promised reward cannot be earned. It is God’s gift to those who truly love Him. Indeed, “it is unattainable by those who do not serve God from a heart of love and devotion.” An obedience that is motivated by a personal desire to win a reward is the very antithesis of Christian spirituality. The rewards that God promises to those who love Him are such a nature that only someone prompted by unselfish love for the Lord would be able to appreciate them.

- D. Edmond Hiebert, James, p. 85

As James has said, **“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”** James 1:12.

So, we have seen this morning *ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRAILS!*

We have seen that the lowly brother glory’s in what he has or doesn’t have. His contentment is in the Lord no matter what he finds himself in.

We have seen that the rich glories in the Lord for all that he has knowing that it all can be taken away very quickly. Thus, his joy is found in the Lord and that is where his glory is found!

And we have seen that God desires to give us the crown of life as we endure the trials that we face in this life!

Love produces patient *endurance*: none attest their love more than they who suffer for Him.

Let me close with these words from Linda Sandell, whose poem is called, "Day by Day." She wrote,

Day by day and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here.
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear.
He whose heart is kind beyond all measure
Gives unto each day what He deems best –
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

- Linda Sandell