

Understanding the Trials of Life # 2

James 1: 2-4

As we begin our study this evening, I would like to ask a question: How long has it been since you faced a trial in life? I am not talking about a mere inconvenience like being late for work or having to change an appointment, but a real burden, a real trial that challenged your faith and forced you to pause and evaluate the situation. We face inconveniences on a regular basis, but trials come our way as well. I am sure that we have all faced those situations in life when it seemed as if our world was literally crumbling around us, that the very foundation of our faith was being tested, and we were uncertain how we would ever survive this great burden.

It is impossible to ignore this type of situation. When they arrive they demand our attention. In fact, if we aren't careful, trials of life have the ability to dictate our existence. They consume our thoughts and our energy.

James understood all of this as he penned these words to the Jews scattered abroad. Their struggles involved much more than a change in dinner plans or being asked to assume a new position at work. They had been forced to leave the familiarity of home for foreign places all because of their faith in Christ. Some would even face intense physical abuse or death because they embraced Christ as the Messiah.

It is important to keep a proper perspective when trials come. Some of us are compulsive worriers and tend to make mountains out of molehills, but sooner or later a real trial will come. The wisdom that James shares in these verses will help us as we face those trying times. Let's consider the [conclusions](#) James reveals concerning trials as we think on: [Understanding the Trials of Life](#).

I. The Paradox in Trials (2) – [My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations](#); As we ponder that statement it seems contradictory to logic, doesn't it? Who among us enjoys trials? I know of no one who prays: Lord would you send a difficulty my way. Let's look at this verse in detail as we seek to understand this paradox. Notice:

A. The Relationship of the Burdened – James is not speaking to those who do not know the Lord. He is not speaking to the world and those who live to please the flesh. He is speaking to the [brethren](#), the redeemed of Christ. He is speaking to those who have forsaken much to follow the Lord. They have denied themselves for their faith, and yet James speaks of their being forced to face trials and adversity. He wanted them to know and understand that living for Christ would not prevent them from facing difficulty. Their relationship with the Lord would offer benefits and provisions the world did not enjoy, but it would not keep them from trials.

- If you have served the Lord for any length of time you know that is true as well. Those who live for God, and I mean living a sold out, surrendered life, will face trouble and trials. Being a child of God will not prevent trouble from coming your way. There are those who preach and teach such nonsense, but it certainly isn't biblical. We just need to go ahead and accept the fact that we will face troubles and difficulty as long as we live upon this earth. Godly people do face trials in this life. Difficult situations occur in the lives of believers, even those who are walking closely with God.

B. The Reality of the Brethren – My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Did you notice exactly what James said there? He wasn't giving a word of wisdom to the brethren if they faced a trial; he offered wisdom for the times when trouble came. It wasn't a matter of if, but when. They may have enjoyed a season of relative calm in the recent past, but James wanted them to be prepared for the day when trouble returned. As we will discover, we can benefit from our trials, but we must be prepared when they come.

- Really we have already touched on this, but I want to emphasize the fact that we might as well expect trials in this life. Dealing with difficulties and unwanted circumstances are just part of living. It isn't a question of if with us either, but when. It has well been said, we are either on the verge of a storm, in the midst of one, or just emerging from the storm.
- While I am here, let me say that storms and trials in life are not necessarily an indication that you have sinned some great sin or are somehow out of the will of God. Job was a man who walked with the Lord; there were none like him and yet he faced great adversity. The disciples found themselves in a devastating storm after they obeyed the Lord in heading across the Sea of Galilee. Rather than immediately questioning the reason for the trial, seek to discern what the Lord may be wanting to teach you in the storm.

C. The Rejoicing in the Burden – My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

James declares that we are to be joyful when we face temptations. Our human nature does not enjoy burdens and trials. We do not like to deal with the stress and uncertainty of trials. However, James is not the only one who speaks of joy in adversity. [1 Pet.4:12-13 – Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: \[13\] But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.](#) [2 Cor.12:10 – Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.](#)

- The key to maintaining a proper focus in trials is remembering that God is sovereign and in control of every situation we face. When we put our faith in Him, we can have peace even in trials. We may not be happy, but we can experience joy in Christ our Lord.

I. The Paradox in Trials (2)

II. The Perimeter of Trials (2-3) – James also speaks of the extent of our trials. Notice:

A. Their Unlimited Number (2) – *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

This reveals that our trials and temptations will be many. The word *divers* has the idea of “*various and diverse*.” The Jews had been scattered abroad; they had faced much adversity already, and yet James wanted them understand that there would be more difficulties to come.

- We too have experienced *divers temptations*. Most of us have experienced seasons in life when it seems as if we were forced to deal with one issue after another. We no more overcame one obstacle until another was present, demanding our attention. Have you ever felt like you were dealing with all you could possibly handle, and then you had another burden cast upon you? Simply, many times when it rains, it pours. I don’t want to discourage anyone, but we might as well accept that the fact that we will be forced to deal with adversity as long as we live. You may be in a calm season of life right now, but sooner or later, another trial will come.

B. Their Unavoidable Nature (2-3) – In these verses James speaks of *temptations* and the *trying of our faith*. These are trials similar in nature, but they have distinct characteristics as well.

Temptations speak of “*trials, temptations, being put to the test*.” The severity and nature of our trials vary. Many times God will test our faith and allow us to endure particular situations that work for our good. He may be seeking to correct us if we have strayed from Him, or He may be seeking to strengthen our faith and mature us. Satan will often tempt us in an effort to lead us away from the Lord and weaken our faith. We must keep in mind that God may test us at times, but He will never tempt us to do anything contrary to His Word. *Jam.1:13 – Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:*

- We also need to consider the *trying of our faith*. This speaks of “*proving or testing through affliction*.” It has the idea of “*precious metals being heated in the fire to remove the impurities they possess*.” As I think of the trying of our faith, two great biblical examples come to mind: Job and Joseph. Each of these men was put through the fires of adversity and their faith was tried. We must keep in mind that God was sovereign in each of their lives and He allowed them to endure the trials they faced. As we read their complete story, they both came through the severe storms of life better than they were before.
- There is another interesting aspect of the nature of our trials. We will face *divers temptations*. The word *divers* also has the idea of “multi-colored.” The difficulties and adversities

we face will come in all shapes and sizes. Some will be short lived and at other times we will be forced to endure them for an extended period. We all face trials in life. When they come we must remember several things: God is in control; we will be able to endure them through the help of the Lord, and we are not the first to face difficulty.

I. The Paradox in Trials (2)

II. The Perimeter of Trials (2-3)

III. The Potential in Trials (3-4) – James also reveals that there is potential in trials. Depending on how we respond, trials can actually work for our good. I know that is hard to believe or understand when we are in a difficult situation, but we must remember that God works all things for the good of those who love Him. Let's consider their potential.

A. Trials Can Produce Purity (3) – [Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience](#). Keep in mind the idea behind trying our faith: being put through the fire in order to remove the impurities. These are never enjoyable at the time of testing, but the end result produces purity. Often we think of unconfessed sin in such circumstances, and God can use trials to show us our need for repentance. He may use a trial to cause us to take inventory of our lives, seeking to become more like Him.

- These times can also be used to remove fear and doubt, causing us to trust and rely upon the Lord instead of ourselves or someone else. Sometimes the Lord has to remove all of the things in life that we depend upon before we see the need to rely solely upon Him.

B. Trials Can Produce Consistency (3) – [Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience](#). The trying of our faith will develop [patience](#). This speaks of more than one might think. It has the idea of “*persevering and enduring*.” Many times when a trial comes, we initially seek the Lord and put forth a good faith effort to trust Him. If the trial continues, we are often tempted to try and take charge of the situation ourselves. God may allow us to take the reins for a while, but eventually we learn that the problem remains beyond our ability to handle. We then have to turn back to the Lord and seek Him to do what He desired to do all along.

- If we never faced trials, we would never learn to trust the Lord. We would never learn that there is much that we cannot handle, and that we must endure, patiently waiting on the Lord to bring about a resolution to our problems. These are not easy lessons to learn, but they will make our faith stronger. Patience teaches us to lay our burdens at the feet of Jesus, trusting Him.

C. Trials Can Produce Maturity (4) – *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* Twice in this verse James mentions the word *perfect*. This has the idea of “*being finished; that which has reached its limit, being full and complete, wanting nothing.*” It does not convey that we reach a level of spiritual perfection, but that we continue to develop and mature spiritually. Experience is often the best teacher. Sometimes our experiences are difficult to bear, but they work for our good, maturing our faith, if we will seek the Lord and learn to rely upon Him in every circumstance.

- I have met those who have learned these lessons. I have faced situations along with others, and our responses were vastly different. I was worried and concerned, and they were at peace. I wanted to work out a solution, and they simply prayed and gave it to the Lord, trusting Him to handle it.
- Trials are not enjoyable, but they can teach us valuable lessons in life and they have the potential to make us better and stronger Christians. *1 Pet.5:10 – But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

None of us enjoy trials and burdens, but in reality we all are forced to face them. The difference is in how we deal with them. I fear that most try to endure them and find a solution on their own. We don't have to endure the struggles of life alone. The Lord is there to guide and help us. He may not calm the storm, but He has the ability to calm you while you are in the midst of the storm.

If you are facing a trial tonight, why not seek the Lord for strength and guidance. Rather than immediately seeking a way out of this particular situation, ask the Lord to reveal what He wants you to learn through this trial. Keep in mind that every trial has the potential of making us a stronger Christian. If there is a need, turn to the Lord.