

Our Unrealized Blessings #5

James 1: 12

I have heard my pastor say many times that trouble is something everyone has, and nobody wants. There is a lot of truth in that statement. None of us are immune from trouble and adversity in this life, and I don't know anyone in their right mind who welcomes or enjoys trouble. I know that I have a hard time dealing with adversity and conflict. I seek to avoid trouble if at all possible. Most of us are probably in that category.

As we begin our study this evening, I would like to raise an interesting and thought provoking question: Is it possible that we are looking at our trials and burdens from the wrong perspective? Should we welcome them, and in fact rejoice because of them? Before we answer, take just a moment to consider a couple biblical examples. I was reminded of the difficulties Joseph faced: being sold of his brothers into slavery, lied upon by Potiphar's wife, forgotten by the butler, and forced to spend two full years in prison. One would think that Joseph would have been bitter toward all men, especially his brothers, and likely even God. But notice how Joseph responded when he was reunited with his brothers. [Gen.50:20 – But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.](#) Take a moment to consider the reflection of Job after all he endured. [Job 23:10 – But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.](#) Notice what the Psalmist said. [Psalms 66:10 – For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.](#) Clearly God allowed these burdens to enter the lives of His people, and in the end, they benefited greatly from them. If we could learn to look through eyes of faith, with an eternal perspective, our view of burdens and trials would be vastly different.

Let's take a few moments to discuss the [eternal perspectives](#) in the single verse as we consider: [Our Unrealized Blessings](#).

I. The Biblical Instruction for Trials (12a) – [Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:](#) Once again this seems to be a paradox, but God's view is not consistent with a worldly view. I want to consider this statement in reverse order. Consider:

A. The Burden of Trials – Once again James is speaking of [temptation](#). Clearly this is an issue the early church dealt much with, and he has dealt with it extensively in his opening comments. We must bear in mind the true meaning of temptation within this context. James isn't speaking of temptations as we generally think of them. This is speaking of "*a trial, test, adversity, or burden through which we are tested and proven.*"

▪ The “prosperity gospel” has gained much momentum in recent years, but it certainly isn’t biblical. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that those who are born again will live life free of difficulty and adversity. On many occasions the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Joseph wasn’t out of God’s will, nor was Job. The disciples were following the command of Jesus when they encountered a life threatening storm on the Sea of Galilee. In fact, we can count on having to deal with trials and temptations in this life. It isn’t a matter of if we will be tried, but when!

B. The Boldness in Trials (12a) – **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:** James reveals that we are expected to endure trials as they come our way. That is an interesting aspect. The word **endureth** is the verb form of the noun, patience. It is made up of the preposition *hupó* which means "under," and the verb *ménō*, which means "to abide, to stay." ⁱ This has the idea of “*abiding or staying while under a trial or temptation.*”

▪ Human nature wants to flee or escape the trials we face, but we are instructed to stand our ground and remain steadfast in the midst of trials. If we are to endure, we must maintain a proper perspective. Often we want to tell God how big our troubles are rather than telling our troubles how big our God is. This is a practice that must be learned, but we can stand and face our difficulties without fleeing in fear every time trouble appears. We must keep in mind that God is sovereign in our lives and He is in absolute control of every situation we face. Trials will not enter our lives without His knowledge and approval. **Romans 8: 31-39.**

C. The Blessing from Trials (12) – **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:** We will deal with this at length in a moment, but I wanted to examine the blessing from our trials. That is not a typographical error or a misrepresentation in Scripture. James recorded what the Holy Spirit inspired Him to write. He uses the same word that Jesus used several times in the Sermon on the Mount. If you remember, some of that message also sounded like a paradox: **Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are they that mourn; Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.** James further confirms the teaching of our Lord. Those who endure trials and temptations in this life are blessed; they are happy in the Lord.

▪ You still may have a hard time accepting the fact that facing and enduring trials is actually a blessing. I hope to clarify that a bit more when we get to our next point. But for now consider the thoughts of a medical missionary. It was said:

➤ *Dr. Lambie, medical missionary, formerly of Abyssinia, has forded many swift and bridgeless streams in Africa. The danger in crossing such a stream lies in being swept off one’s feet and carried down the stream to greater depths or hurled to death against the hidden rocks. Dr. Lambie learned from the natives the best way to make such a hazardous crossing. The man*

about to cross finds a large stone, the heavier the better, lifts it to his shoulder, and carries it across the stream as “ballast.” The extra weight of the stone keeps his feet solid on the bed of the stream and he can cross safely without being swept away.

➤ *Dr. Lambie drew this application: While crossing the dangerous stream of life, enemies constantly seek to overthrow us and rush us down to ruin. We need the ballast of burden-bearing, a load of affliction, to keep us from being swept off our feet.*ⁱⁱ

I. The Biblical Instruction for Trials (12a)

II. The Biblical Conclusion of Trials (12b) – [Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.](#) As we further examine this verse we discover the biblical conclusion for our trials and gain a much better perspective of their unrealized blessing. Consider:

A. The Grace – You might ask: what does grace possibly have to do with our enduring trials? That is a good question, but I am convinced the context of this verse reveals the abundant grace of God. First of all, James is dealing with those who are born again, adopted into the family of God. The saved are God’s children, and that alone is enough grace for eternity.

▪ Also we must keep in mind how God views our trials and His divine purpose behind them. We are not tested or proven in this life simply to create and annoyance or grief. God is not some cruel taskmaster who takes pleasure in our pain and suffering. He uses our trials and burdens in order to conform us to His glorious image, and when they are finished, to work for our good. Joseph’s brothers meant their treatment of him for harm, but God orchestrated it for good. Job faced much suffering and pain, but in the end he was stronger in his faith and God blessed his latter end more than the beginning. God uses our trials to strengthen our faith in Him and to work on our behalf. [Rom.8:28 – And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.](#) That sounds like grace to me. If God is working in my life, on my behalf, in any circumstance, I would declare that to be nothing less than grace!

B. The Glory (12b) – [for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.](#) We may not fully understand or appreciate the trials we face in this life, but we must keep in mind that this earthly life is not all we have to look forward to. This is just the land of preparation for an eternal existence. God has promised a crown of life for those who have trusted in His Son for salvation.

All those who have been born again in Christ will one day enter into the celestial city of Jehovah, to enjoy the glorious presence of our Lord throughout eternity. We will one day receive our final reward as we stand before the Lord in heaven. [1 Jn.2:25 – And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.](#)

- Quickly I want to address an issue of concern regarding this verse. (There are those who teach that our enduring in every circumstance is essential to receiving the crown of life. These teach that one can fall from grace if he fails or succumbs to the temptations of this world.) I was not saved according to my works, and God does not expect sinless perfection if we are to inherit heaven. James is offering a word of encouragement for the believer who will inevitably face trials and difficulties. We all have our moments of weakness, but one day we will be able to look back on all our trials and declare that every difficulty we endured for the Lord was well worth the effort.
- I don't know of a single believer that lived life without failure at some point, but despite that they remained steadfast in the faith. Even though you belong to the Lord, you will likely stray from time to time, giving in to the temptations and trials of the flesh, but the Spirit will not leave you during those times. We cannot overcome without the help of the Lord so that ought to encourage us to keep a close relationship with Him. Keep your eyes on the prize, seeking the Lord daily. The crown of life will far outweigh any temporary pleasure the world could offer!

C. The Guarantee (12b) – [Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.](#) James is not speaking within his own authority, making promises he is unable to keep. The hope of the believer is guaranteed by the promise of the Lord Himself, not of mere men.

- What a blessing that is when we take a moment to consider it. We have all been let down and disappointed by broken promises at some point in life. We have had those make promises they weren't able to keep. We need not worry about that concerning our Lord. He gave His life on the cross for our sin, shedding His life's blood for our redemption. All who have been cleansed in the blood of Christ are viewed as righteous in the eyes of God. We are secure in Christ our Lord. Our eternity is based on the authority of Christ Himself!
- We also notice [this promise is guaranteed to those that love Him](#). It is promised to those who have trusted Christ as their Lord and Savior. We love Him because He first loved us. His love cannot be compared to the love of mortals, but when I consider all that I have in Christ, it makes me want to love Him more. He is worthy of all my love and devotion. Shouldn't those who have received so much cast all the affection they can on One so worthy!

Spending time in this discussion about trials will not prevent them from coming our way, but hopefully it will help us while we are in the midst of them. It is often hard to focus on anything other than the situation when we are faced with a great burden in life, but if we could learn to consider them from a biblical perspective, we would handle them much better. We must keep in mind that God is working on our behalf and He is in control of every aspect of our lives, even our trials. One day we will endure our last burden and we will enter the land of peace and rest.

The Lord has promised a crown of life for all those who belong to Him. He is there with us as we face the trials of life. Those who do not know Christ as their Savior do not enjoy His presence here and they will not receive a crown of life when this life is through. The truth is, you need the Lord. If you have never been saved I urge you to come to Christ today!

ⁱ *Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James.*

ⁱⁱ Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : A treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers.* Garland TX: Bible Communications.