

Rejoice In Trials

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Date: 20 November 2022

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[0 : 00] Testing and trials.

Each of us, no doubt, is familiar with these, and it need not take long for us to think before we identify ones that we have faced in the past, that we are currently facing, or that we may well face here soon.

Let me ask you this. When difficulties and testing come, when you meet suffering and grief in the unknown, when you are in the seemingly earth-shattering, unending, prolonged, painful trial, do you rejoice?

Do you rejoice? If you're a guest with us this morning, we're so thankful that you're here, and this may sound strange, rejoicing in trials. But our passage of Scripture this morning not only shows us that we can rejoice in trials, but that we should rejoice in trials.

We will resume our verse-by-verse study of the book of James. We'll be in James 1, verses 4-12. Remember that this letter was authored by James, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus, and being inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote to Jewish Christians who were out of Israel at the time.

[1 : 45] They were living outside of Israel. Remember that the early church had been scattered after Stephen's death. The early church had been scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, and the Christians he writes here to are outside of Israel, and they're facing much affliction and much persecution.

James begins his letter by telling us, to count it all joy when they face trials of various kinds, to rejoice in trials. And you can think of our sermon today as really a part two of what Pastor Mike preached on two weeks ago.

If you would now please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. And I invite you to open up a Bible or a device just so you can see the text that we will get to read today.

If you don't have a Bible, there's a Bible in the pew, an English Standard Version Bible. Our text is on page 1011. And like Pastor Mike says, if you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you as a gift from our congregation to you in the hopes that you would be good to reading God's Word regularly.

I'll begin in verse 1 just for context. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

[3 : 03] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial. For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. This is the word of the Lord.

[4 : 15] Please be seated. The main idea for our passage here today is this, that you should rejoice in trials.

Specifically today, our text gives us four reasons why we should rejoice in trials. Point number one, that God produces Christ-likeness in you.

Point number two, God gives wisdom to you. Point number three, God provides for you. And point number four, God rewards you.

Let's begin with point one. God produces Christ-likeness in you. Reading again in verse two, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Here James is instructing Christians to rejoice in trials.

[5 : 25] Now trials are not joyous in and of themselves. We're not rejoicing in the pain and the suffering and the grief or in the affliction. No, we are commanded and able to regard trials with joy, to rejoice in trials when we realize that our trials are under the authority of our good, sovereign God who is accomplishing his purposes in them.

Look to verse three. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. In your version, it may say endurance. Steadfastness gives us the idea of firmness, of being unwavering and resolute in the midst of adversity.

Steadfastness is faithfully enduring amid troubles and affliction. James continues telling us that this steadfastness matures us, making us more like Christ.

Verse four. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. When I was a college student studying civil engineering in college, we had classes over building materials like wood and concrete and steel.

And the way they actually form steel for building applications is quite fascinating, or at least to me. It may not be to you. But what they'll do, let's say a beam, for example, that you would use in a building.

[6 : 53] When they form it, they heat it up really hot, and they cast it in a certain shape, and then they make it almost long enough, but not quite long enough. And then what they do is they apply this immense load, and they start to stretch the beam.

So we're talking thousands and thousands of pounds. Think of your car tire has 40 psi on it, 40 pounds per square inch of pressure in that tire. Now multiply that by a thousand, and that's what it would be on this steel beam.

And so as they start to stretch it apart, what happens is the steel beam actually stretches a little bit, just enough to get it exactly the way they want it. But what happens is as they stretch it, the crystal structure of the steel changes.

It actually becomes stronger. It becomes stronger. It increases its capacity for weight and for load.

And the same is true of our faith. As our faith is stretched, it becomes stronger. John Piper commenting on this passage said this, when your faith is threatened and tested and stretched to the breaking point, the result is a greater capacity to endure.

[8 : 08] He calls it steadfastness. Strange as it may seem, one of the primary purposes of being shaken by suffering is to make our faith more unshakable.

As we endure trials, God is maturing us. He is sanctifying us. This is God's purpose and end goal for the believer.

Perfection. Completeness. Wholeness. For us to be spiritually mature, God is producing Christ-likeness in us in the trial.

Just as Pastor Mike told us two weeks ago that that word count in verse 2 is an imperative, meaning it's a command, an instruction, that James expects them to obey, so also is the word let in verse 4. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. This means to yield to God in the trial.

[9 : 13] Yield to his working in the trial. To love God in the trial and to not resist him or flee from him, but to be obedient. And notice that it's not the suffering that produces maturity, but the act of endurance in the midst of suffering.

If we flee from trials and resist God in them, we will not be conformed to the image of Christ.

Therefore, love God and rejoice as he produces Christ-likeness in us in our trials.

Consider Romans chapter 8, verses 28-29. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be

the firstborn among many brothers.

God is completely good and sovereign over our trials, and he's using them to conform each and every one of us who are his to look more like his Son, Jesus.

And therefore, we should rejoice. But in our trials, he doesn't leave us to our own devices or efforts to endure, which brings us to our second point, that God gives wisdom to you.

[10:37] The Bible tells us much about God and wisdom. Scripture tells us that God is all-wise. If we look at Romans chapter 11, verse 33, Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways. Or Isaiah chapter 40, verse 28. Do you not know, have you not heard, the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, does not become weary or tired.

His understanding is inscrutable. So Scripture tells us that God is all-wise. Scripture also tells us that God is the source of wisdom.

In Job chapter 12, verse 13, With him are wisdom and might. To him belong counsel and understanding. Wisdom is not knowledge alone, but knowledge with discernment and understanding.

J.I. Packer defined wisdom like this. Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.

[11:53] Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness. As such, it is found in its fullness, only in God. He alone is naturally and entirely wise.

Therefore, God is all-wise, and God is the ultimate source and sole source of wisdom. And then, in our verses here today, we see that not only is he those things, he's the giver of wisdom.

Beginning in verse 5, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

He is a double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways. God gives wisdom. James instructs Christians to ask God for wisdom.

[12:59] And it says, If any of you lacks wisdom, but the idea isn't so much if you lack wisdom. We all certainly lack wisdom. But specifically, James here is, In the midst of your trial, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given him.

For these Christians, remember that they are facing much persecution and affliction. From later verses, we'll see they're facing various trials in terms of resources. Many are poor and lowly in circumstance.

And his instruction to them is to ask God for wisdom in the trial. Now, God's giving of wisdom is not only in the most extreme of trials.

If we go back to verse 2, we'll see that it's various trials. Trials come in all shapes and sizes and durations. Some trials are more extreme. Some are more minor.

Some seem prolonged and unending. And some are quite short. But in each of these, pray to God asking him for wisdom. What might we pray?

[14:05] What we might pray, Lord, I lack wisdom in this trial. Lord, according to your word, give me wisdom. Give wisdom to this brother or to this sister. Give wisdom to us.

Give wisdom to our church. Give wisdom to this family. Lord, my child or grandchild is facing this struggle. Lord, give them wisdom to endure.

Lord, give us as parents wisdom to shepherd them well. Lord, this diagnosis has come or has continued. Lord, there's this disability or this medical condition.

Lord, there's this suffering, this grief. Lord, there's this circumstance. We're moving. We're moving. There's a struggle at school. There's a relational difficulty. There's a tragic loss.

There's a difficult relationship in the church. In all of these things, Lord, we know not what to do. We know not how to proceed. We know not how to respond. Lord, would you give us wisdom in these things?

[15:03] Lord, would you give us a proper perspective? Would you give us your perspective? Pray to God and ask him for wisdom.

Now notice the character of God here in the giving of wisdom. God gives generously to all without reproach. When I was a child, my aunt and uncle graciously adopted me.

They took me in. And I hadn't been with them very long, and I honestly really didn't know them all that well. I hadn't spent much time in the years leading up to that with them. And one night soon after I was adopted, I had become ill in the middle of the night.

So it's nighttime. My older cousins are asleep, and I kind of meander through the house coming to their doorway. They're asleep. It's dark.

And I found myself hesitant to call out to them. I got to the edge of the door, and I just couldn't get myself to say anything. At the time, I felt afraid.

[16:16] I felt reluctant to cry out to them. I didn't want to disturb them. I didn't want to upset them. I didn't want to wake them up and then feel bothered. I didn't want to get in trouble for being sick. I didn't want them to be reluctant to give or to help.

And I think sometimes that's the same place we come to in our trials in calling out to God. But that's the complete opposite of what we read here of our God.

No, we see here that our God is eager to give wisdom, that He delights to give wisdom. When we pray to God asking Him for wisdom in general and then specifically wisdom in trials, He's not disappointed in us that we're asking.

He's not expecting us to know. He doesn't rebuke us or condemn us or scold us for asking. No, He's calling you saying, come to me and ask me for wisdom.

He says, child, I will impart my perfect wisdom to you. I will pour it out in abundance. He desires that we come to Him.

[17:28] He doesn't look at us and say, well, boy, Evan, I really expected you to have this figured out. I really expected you to not need my wisdom. I expected you to endure this trial apart from me.

No. How awesome and generous is our Heavenly Father. We need only ask there's no prerequisite. We don't have to get anything figured out. We don't have to do anything beforehand. We just come and ask at any time, in any situation.

See God's promise at the end of verse 5. It will be given to Him. God will give you wisdom when you ask. God is near the lowly in suffering.

He is present with His children. He is gentle. Consider Matthew 11, verses 28-30. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[18:53] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Or if you think about Jesus with His disciples at the Great Commission when He sends them out, what does He say at the end? Surely I will be with you always.

The very end of the age. Now, after you pray for wisdom very practically, you may not feel more wise. Even in prepping for this sermon, I asked the Lord for wisdom, and I didn't really feel all that more wise.

But the Scripture doesn't say that we're going to feel wise. The Scripture says He's going to give wisdom. And so independent of how I feel, independent of my perspective or my perception, the Lord has given wisdom.

He has given wisdom. But see that when we ask for wisdom, we're called to ask in faith with no doubting. We trust God to fulfill what He has said He will do.

[20:08] We don't ask God for wisdom and then not expect Him to give it. Because really, when we do that, what we're in effect saying is, I'm going to ask you for wisdom, but I don't know if you're actually going to come through, God.

And in reality, we tell God that you're unfaithful and you're untrustworthy to do what your Word says. we make God out to be a liar.

When we doubt, we go back and forth between trusting God and trusting the things of this world. This would be like David going out to fight Goliath.

Remember, Israelites are there and he says, the Lord will deliver me out from the hand of this man, of this Philistine. That would be like David saying that and then having this separate plan B cohort thing with some other Israelites where if he gets out there and is fighting but the Lord doesn't look like He's going to deliver him, then they're going to have this plan to come and save David.

No, that's not what, that's not what happened. No, David believed God. David had faith that God would deliver him. There was no other plan and David was sturdy in his belief.

[21 : 25] See, faith manifests itself as stability and as steadiness. Doubting manifests itself as instability as James describes here.

The sea tossed about by the wind. Let me just read verse 6 again.

But like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind, for that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Now as a quick aside, as you hear that, you could be thinking, you know, man, I've doubted God. And that's true. Each of us has doubted God.

I have doubted God. And just as God is faithful to forgive all of our sins, he's faithful to forgive us in our doubting as well when we come to him. 1 John 1.9 tells us, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[22 : 40] So friend, ask God for wisdom in your trial and trust God that he will give the wisdom that he's promised.

Now God's provision for us is not only in his giving of wisdom, he provides for us in other ways as well and that's what we're going to see here in point three, that God provides for us.

Specifically, God provides for you. Starting in verse 9, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

We rely on God's resources and not our own. In turning to wealth and poverty, it may seem like James is changing subjects but in reality, he's not.

[23 : 52] In the Jewish mind, wealth was the measure of one's piety. The pious were expected to prosper while the wicked were expected to suffer. One commentator pointed out.

And James speaks to both those in poor and rich circumstances. And specifically, he tells those who are in lowly circumstances, those who are poor and in poverty, to boast in their exaltation. See, as Christians, we've been exalted. We've been raised to a high position in Christ. As we see in Luke chapter 6, first, and he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

And we also see this in Ephesians chapter 2, starting in verse 4. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he has loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[25 : 09] Jesus, this is true of each and every believer, including those who are in poverty. You have been exalted.

Boast and rejoice in the Lord for this exaltation. Rejoice in the riches and goodness of our God that far surpass any riches or resources here on earth.

I think it can be easy for us to see poverty as a trial, but we often don't think and see riches and prosperity as a trial as well. But many of us can think of a person or a family who have come into great wealth and great prosperity and then that has become their God.

See, lots of resources, wealth and prosperity, that can be a trial as well. The rich man is told to boast in his humiliation. That being his lowliness.

He is called to boast in his position before God, understanding that his resources, his financial wealth here gains him no advantage before God. He is no more superior or lesser than his brother in lowly circumstances.

[26 : 29] The truth is that wealth here on earth is fleeting. It's temporary. It's fading. Riches here will not last.

As we see in our text, like the flower of the grass will pass away and so does the person who pursues them. In both of these circumstances, poor and rich, we can so quickly begin to focus on the world and on our circumstance on our circumstance rather than focusing on God.

Being poor and rich both experience trial and being in either case doesn't keep us from facing trials or enduring trials. You know, one of the ways that we tangibly show that we trust God and rely on his resources rather than our own is by being generous.

It's by giving what the Lord has given us to steward. We know that everything in reality is his, is the Lord's. And so, as we are regularly giving, say, to the local church or as we are giving to see the

gospel advanced across the world or as we're being generous with our home or the things that we have and all of those things, that's a very tangible and practical way that we say the resources here on earth are not my God.

You are my God, Lord. I trust on you. I rely on your resources and not the things that I see here. Now, unlike worldly riches that fade, God rewards believers with that which is everlasting and permanent.

[28 : 10] And this will be our final point for today. That God rewards you. beginning in verse 12. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. God rewards those who remain steadfast under trial.

For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life. in all of our trials as we endure. At the end, when we have remained faithful and steadfast, following and loving Jesus, he rewards us with the crown of life.

Now, this crown, don't think something that royalty might wear that has precious stones and jewels, but think of a laurel wreath. So a laurel wreath is made out of a laurel plant and has branches and leaves on it.

And typically, in James' time, it would have been worn on the head and it would have been given to someone to signify victory and triumph. Oftentimes, it would have been given to a winner of an athletic competition or of a game.

[29 : 21] And this is what the Lord is saying that we will receive when we get to the end, when we endure, when we triumph. This is what will be given to us. For those who endure till the end, living a life of faithful endurance, not perfection, but faithful endurance, God gives the crown of life.

That is eternal life. Life with God forever, unhindered, forever enjoying and worshiping Him. For there will be no more trials at that point.

There will be perfect rest in God. There is no need for trials. We have no more needing for sanctification because we have been glorified. We have been made perfect because of Christ's work.

Consider 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 16 through 18. So, we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. As we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

[30 : 30] For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. God rewards us for our perseverance.

Now, this is certainly a reward, but don't mishear me. We don't, in fact, earn our eternal life. The Bible is very clear that those who are Christ's will endure. We see that here in verse 12.

Those who remain steadfast will receive the crown of life. But our endurance does not merit us salvation. as we read in Ephesians chapter 2. Eternal life is ultimately given to us because of the endurance of Christ.

See, the basis of the Christian faith is this, that in the beginning God created everything and he created us humans and everything was good. And then we rejected God.

We sinned. We disobeyed and rebelled against the king of the universe, the all-good, holy king of the universe. sinners. We doubted him and we sinned.

[31 : 34] And when we sinned, we were separated from God as we sang about this morning. Now the Bible tells us that the due penalty for sin, the wages of that sin is death.

Which means that me, as a sinner, I deserve death. And that's true for all of us here. But God, because of his great love for us, sent his son Jesus who is fully God.

He came as a man. So he's both fully God and fully man. And he lived a perfect life in complete submission and obedience and love of God. He lived a perfect life that you and I have not lived, could not live.

And he died the death that we deserve. His body was broken and his blood was poured out. He was crucified on a cross where he bore our sins. The place where we should have been.

See, he bore our sins so that in him if we trust in him for the forgiveness of our sins, our sins are forgiven and we're saved. But see, Jesus, as he was murdered on the cross and he was buried, as we sang about this morning, he didn't stay there.

[32 : 47] On the third day he rose again. He was resurrected and then later he ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven where he is now and one day he will return to judge the living and the dead and when he returns those who have trusted in him for the forgiveness of their sins will have eternal life with him just as we read about.

But those who have rejected Jesus will pay the due penalty for their sins. The judgment and wrath, the holy and right judgment and wrath of God.

If you're not a Christian, again, we're so thankful that you've joined us here this morning and if you have any questions about the message this morning or about anything in our worship service or specifically about this Jesus that we talk about whom we worship, I'd love to get to talk to you about that and I know there are many people in here that would as well.

Please come find me or Pastor Tyler or any other elder or deacon and come talk to us. We'd love to spend time with you and answer any questions that you have.

But if specifically your question is this, how can my sins be forgiven? How can my sins be forgiven? No, this is the answer. Believe in Jesus Christ.

[34 : 08] Trust in his death for the forgiveness of your sins and they will be forgiven. And in response to him and his forgiveness in response to his love, turn to him and follow him.

Eternal life is given to us because of Christ's endurance. As we come to a close, Christian, I hope you've seen that not only do we have much to rejoice in, but that we should rejoice in our trials. And I also realize that enduring trials and persevering for the long haul may seem daunting, especially when you're in the thick of it.

And if you feel that way right now, take heart, brother, take heart, sister. Christ who bought you will sustain you. Christ who secured the victory has secured the outcome, just as we've read here in verse 12.

Paul writes this to the Corinthian believers. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 37] take note of this, of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the end. Guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

as we close, a few thoughts on application. I've got four, really one for each of our points. the first is rejoice, friend.

Rejoice in trials for God is working in your trial. Ask God for wisdom in your trial.

Think of, ask God to reveal what trials you're facing and ask him for wisdom. Help him show you where you need wisdom and trust that he will give that wisdom.

third, ask God if you're focusing or reliant on the resources and things of this world or on him and his resources.

[36 : 49] And then finally, I'd encourage you to consider what awaits for us in Christ and press on with the help of the Lord. Let's pray.

Amen. Lord, help us to rejoice in trials as you have said because you're making us look more like you.

God, we can rejoice and trust and press on because of how you've loved us, not so that we can earn anything but in response to your goodness and your grace.

God, your gospel is powerful and it supplies us with joy even in trials. Fix our joy in you, Jesus.

Praise you, Father, for you are a God who we can trust in trials, who we should trust in trials.

Thank you for your present and working in them. Thank you, Father, for what awaits. Lord Jesus, we look for you to come soon. Hold us fast until then.

[38 : 00] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.