

The Right Perspective on Trials: The Successful Conclusion of His Work

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[0 : 00] Amen. Okay, you've got your notes there, and they just really kind of take up where we left off last time.

I've got one more point in this kind of three-part kind of journey through verses 5, I think it's through 5, from 5 through verse 18.

And then we'll move on from there, but I want to finish this. And these are really some rich verses of Scripture. Let me, again, and don't want to belabor this point, but our focus is, well, it's a perspective.

It's what we're considering a right perspective on what? On trials, the trials of life. When I say the word trials, what to you does that include?

Maybe I should ask it this way. Is there anything excluded from that? I don't think so. It's just kind of an overarching term that includes all manner of problems we may face, whether they're physical, emotional, spiritual.

[1 : 23] Could be persecution. About everything could come under that heading. And so we're to have the right perspective on them.

Now, obviously, some of the trials, in fact, maybe we could even go so far as to say that, I don't know if we could say most of our trials, are to some degree or another of our own making.

We have kind of made our bed and we're lying in it. Which, by the way, is kind of a difficult thing to deal with. And I deal with this all the time as a pastor and have over the years, helping people and counseling with people who are going through tough times.

And more times than not, I will discover that those who are having horrendous difficulties are having those difficulties because of decisions they've made.

Now, God still uses those. So even if they are trials that you brought upon yourself, God has a purpose through those. And you need to discover them.

[2 : 31] But the first thing we need to do is realize that we sometimes are our worst enemy. And so we can't, at that point, blame others and blame the world and, oh, woe is me.

We've got to say, this was a decision, a direction that I took in my life that was wrong and apart from God's will. And so I need to seek the right direction.

That, by the way, was what we were talking about when we dealt with that part of this chapter concerning wisdom. We need wisdom. We need to see the right perspective.

So that's what we're looking at. And just again, to kind of set this up, these verses, 5 through 18, comprise a major part of James' argument for why a believer should count it all joy when you fall in all diverse or various trials.

This is his argument. He's wanting to make this point. He's wanting us to understand this. And so trials then, according to James, I want to drive this home, trials reveal the genuineness of our faith and work and work to bring it to full maturity.

[3 : 43] We've got to get that down. Trials are not God slapping you and hitting you and kicking you when you're down.

Trials are not that. Trials are meant, for the believer, meant to reveal our faith, the genuineness of our faith or the lack thereof.

Trials are not. But it's a two-fold thing. Also, God uses them to work to bring our faith to full maturity. And that's what verses 3 and 4 are talking about. Knowing that the testing or proving of your faith produces patience, endurance. But let this work, this patience, have its perfect work.

That you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. So you see both those things in there. Proves your faith, tests it, proves it to be real, the genuineness of it.

[4 : 40] And it also works to make it complete, make it full. So we ought to, instead of grumble about the trials we face, we ought to thank God for them. Yeah?

We ought to thank God for them. And so that's kind of what we're doing. So the words lacking nothing, that's the last few words, couple of words in verse 4 before we launch out into verse 5. Those words lacking nothing set the stage for what we've been studying for now at least three or four Wednesdays. And we're going to finish that up here tonight.

And so he says, if any of you lacks, lacks, that's how he starts verse 5. And what do we lack? We lack God's provision of wisdom. We need wisdom for our trials.

All right? We've studied that. We lack God's perspective on wealth. And I'm not just talking about cash in the bank. Talking about the things that we have, the things that we possess, and the things we want to possess.

[5 : 47] The things we don't have and do want. There's a connection in our thinking and our lives, a connection with how to respond to trials. There's a connection with our perspective on money and finances and material things and so forth.

And so we lack that and we need a right perspective on that. And the right one, of course, is God's. And we've studied that. Then we have God's promise at work. We lack an understanding.

An acknowledgement. And it's not that we can just settle this issue tonight and then never have to think about it again. We have to revisit this reality every time a trial comes.

We need to acknowledge that God has promised to work through that trial. God has promised to do that. We may not see it. We may be so, you know, in the dark and in the doldrums of whatever we're facing that we don't see it.

That's why we've got to be convinced of it on the front end before we get there. That God, no matter what it is and how deep it is and hard it is. And some of you have experienced some very, very hard, hard things in your life.

[7 : 00] And you're still experiencing some of those. But you must understand. And it's not that Don is saying you need to understand. It's God's Word that is saying you need to understand, acknowledge, that God has promised to do a work in that.

A great work. In fact, it's a work that, and this is what we're going to consider tonight, a work that will not be complete, absolutely complete, until we leave this place, leave this world.

And under the promise at work, we have looked at the spiritual character of His work. We have looked at the sinful corruption of His work.

And that's our part. We have a tendency always to want to throw a monkey wrench in what God is wanting to do in our lives because we're fleshy and fallen and sinful and selfish and, you know, and so forth.

So, there's the sinful corruption of His work. And then, the successful conclusion of His work. It's moving us towards something. And that's what we'll be looking at here tonight.

[8 : 09] So, the successful conclusion of His work. Verses 17 through 18. We'll just kind of walk our way through this. And I really want you to know that the successful conclusion of His work is to reveal His goodness toward us.

He's wanting to reveal to you that He's good. His goodness. That's the successful conclusion of His work.

Although, when we're done here, we're going to take that to the ultimate revelation of His goodness and we'll wait until the end of this to get to that.

So, I better get going or we're not going to get to it. Alright, now, divided these verses into three parts. First of all, there's an expression of God's goodness.

Verse 17 gives us, expresses something to us. It's an expression of it. The goodness of God. And how's that done? Well, verse 17. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.

[9 : 21] Now, isn't that an interesting passage? Every good gift, every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights. You know, just a casual observation.

First of all, you want to say, well, there's some redundancy there. Good gift, perfect gift. What's the difference between those two things? And some would suggest that really that's what James is wanting to do.

To be kind of redundant. Well, not redundant, but to overstate. By making an emphasis through repeating a thing twice.

But there's more to it here than that. First of all, you need to contrast this verse, verse 17, with verses 13 through 16, which we have already studied.

I might just read it, though, just to remind us. 13 and 16 of this chapter says, Let no one say, When he is tempted, I am tempted by God.

[10:22] For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone, but each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

This is the corruption of his work. Remember, we talked about this. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. All right, so that's stated. Then he says every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, and it comes down from the Father of lights.

There's meant to be a contrast here between our sin or the thought, the devilish thought, that God is the author of sin, author of wickedness, that that wickedness, that sin, is coming from Him, the devilish conclusion about that, and contrasting that with who God really is and what He really does, and that is He gives good gifts.

He's the perfect gift giver. So, in the first place, you need to see the contrast that this is meant to be, a contrast between what He has said before, verses 13 through 16.

[11:36] God is not the source of evil. Is He? No, He's not. That's just what James has been telling us in the preceding verses.

God, rather, is the source of all good and perfect things. Every good gift, every perfect gift. Second, understand the nature of God's gifts.

The nature of God's gifts. And there's quite a bit said about that in this verse that looks to be just kind of a repetition of ideas, of an idea.

James uses here two different words for gift. You see gift there twice, right? The English word gift is there twice. But what we don't know, unless we look under the English into the original language, the Greek language, we wouldn't know it, but there are two different words in the Greek language. And it's a subtle difference. Well, maybe not so subtle. Dosis speaks of the act of giving. Now, this is important. So, when He says, every good gift, He uses the word gift, the emphasis of that word, the meaning of that word, points to the giver, not the gift itself.

[13:01] It's the giver, the act of giving. Alright? So, that's important. Dosis, the act of giving. The other word gift, do-re-ma, do-re-ma, speaks of the thing given, the actual thing given.

Isn't that interesting? Now, in English, we'd never see that. We have gift, we have gift, to us means the same thing. Well, it's talking about the gift, but in the first place, it's the act of giving it, and then there is the thing actually given.

Alright? The act of giving is good, and the thing given is always good. See, it's perfect, is what James is saying, because it comes from God. The good gift giver, here's how we can kind of sum all that up, what he's saying, actually.

The good gift giver, who's that? Well, it's in capital letters, must be God. Now, the good gift giver always gives perfect gifts. That, in essence, is what, at least one of the things he's wanting to convey here in this passage.

The good gift giver, in fact, we could even translate it, every good gifter, we could translate that literally. Of course, we know God is the only one in view here, but the good gifter, or the good gift giver, always gives perfect gifts.

[14:31] Perfect gifts. The things that we really need. Third, we need to understand the source of God's gifts. And, you know, we can read the text, and we know, I mean, it's pretty plain, right on the front end, but it's kind of interesting how James conveys this truth.

When he uses the word from above, what's he talking about? It has a heavenly origin, right? The good gift giver who always gives perfect gifts, those gifts come from him, and he's in heaven. So, it's a heavenly origin, not an earthly origin. There are gifts given, sometimes, that are earthly, have an earthly origin.

In fact, we won't look at it tonight, but James 3.14 talks about a negative side of this. So, from above is a heavenly origin.

But he also says, and comes down, and this is, this is important, this gets into the grammar of how James wrote this. It's so important, you know, when we're studying, and many of our commentaries

that we use, because we're not, we're not Greek scholars, but many of our commentaries have already done the work looking at the language, and so their commentaries will bring out some of this, maybe even state it matter-factly, so we can kind of understand it, but this, this word, and it is just one word in the Greek, comes down, is a participle, and it's present tense, and I, and I guess I've made this point many, many times, even since I've been your pastor, when a, when a verb, or participle, is present tense, it always conveys continuous action.

[16:20] So, God's gifts descend to us, they're, they're, they're lavished down upon us, in unceasing succession. Now, we may not always see them.

You say, well, it's been a long time since I've had one of those gifts. I mean, what do you mean, unceasing succession? Well, it's because you, you, you, you haven't, you, you failed to recognize these gifts, and they're every day.

Many of them, we would, take so for granted that, that, they're just kind of out of our mind, out of our sight. Some things are, from our perspective, maybe small things, even some, some, maybe even insignificant things.

But, God is always giving His gifts. And by the way, it's not always a tangible thing. Don't, don't think that God's gifts, the kind of good gifts you really want, must always be tangible. You know, money in the bank, or a new car, or a better house, or, you know, something like that.

And God can give those gifts. But, He's not talking about that primarily. He's talking about other things. How about wisdom? That's one of those gifts. How about, you know, the faith that you need to, to stand strong in the midst of your trial, the endurance that you need?

[17:33] How about, you know, how you respond to maybe someone who has mistreated you? Your ability to respond in the right way and to return a blessing for a curse, that's a gift from God.

It's a perfect gift. And God gives those gifts to His children in unceasing succession. That's what James says. Whether, whether or not you have seen that or think you've experienced that, that's not the, the proof of the truth of Scripture.

It's Scripture that is true. And God is that kind of gift giver. He gives and it comes down in unceasing succession. then we have, secondly, and this is, the second in it is kind of three-part division of these two verses, an explanation of God's goodness.

So we have an expression of it. Every good gift, every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights. Alright, so that's an expression of it.

And then we have an explanation of God's goodness. and this kind of really gets into who God is. This explains how God is always the good gift giver.

[18:49] And every gift He gives is perfect because of the nature of God. So we get a little closer to that in this part of it. Verse 17, from the Father of lights. So He says, comes down from the Father of lights with whom, and these verses are kind of, this part of the verse is one of my favorites.

Even though, by the way, scholars say it's difficult to translate but it seems very clear to me, at least in English. But with whom, this is our Father, the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

But what does it mean exactly? Let's just pick it apart. First of all, God gives good gifts because He is the Father of lights. What does that mean?

The Father of lights. Well, in the Greek text, you know, always talking about that and you say, well, what good is that for me? Well, I can assure you that in the Greek text, there is a definite article just before the word lights.

And in case, you know, you've forgotten what a definite article is, then I've put it in brackets. The. What's an indefinite article, by the way?

[20:08] Time for school. A. A. Marshall, you need to have a little grammar lesson with my... Alright, so, what big deal?

So, there's a definite article there. I mean, a lot of Greek nouns have definite articles and they're not translated and they're kind of part of the meaning. In this case, it really is a part of the meaning. And that is because the lights, it's the lights and that's a reference to the heavenly bodies.

You go out at night or even in the day, I mean, you see one, the sun. Though you shouldn't look directly at it, right? At night, we see many lights, many heavenly bodies, you know.

There's the moon, there are the stars, there are the planets, though it's difficult to tell the difference between a planet and a star unless you know what you're looking for. But they're all out there.

Those are the heavenly bodies. So, if He's the Father of lights, then what does that mean? It means He created them. Alright, so we're talking about the one who's the good gift giver, He's the one who created these heavenly bodies.

[21 : 15] Created this planet as well. And the point being, if God can create this extremely complex and beautiful universe, if He can do that, by the way, do it, you know, all of it in six days, and do it just with the spoken word, just speaking it into it.

If He can do that, then He can give us perfect gifts, you know, and give us exactly what we need when we need it. Not by our judgment, but by His judgment, His wise judgment. Second, God gives good gifts because He is unchanging and unchangeable.

the technical term for that is immutability. But I, you know, immutability, what is, it means He doesn't change.

He can't change. He's, because, you know, for, for, we change because we, we're not immortal, so, naturally we have changes.

We change because we don't have absolute knowledge, we're learning things. God has absolute knowledge, not learning anything. We, we change for a number of reasons, but God never changes.

[22 : 27] And, nothing can change Him. He's unchangeable. Circumstances sometimes change us. Do always, nearly, you know, it's kind of cause and effect.

and our directions are changed. Our minds are changed. Our knowledge is changed because of external situations and information and so forth.

But God never changes and nothing can change Him. He's unchangeable. That's immutability. The same yesterday, today, forever. That's what Scripture says.

James is then in this, in this verse and we're going to pick up lights and then add the rest of that. James is, again, making a contrast.

He's contrasting God with the lights He has made. So, he said He's the Father of Lights and so that focuses us on the heavenly bodies and so forth.

[23 : 21] Stars and sun and moon and planets and so forth that God has made. and so now He's going to contrast who God is or that with who God really is.

And it's easy to see the contrast. The stars and the planets, I mean, you look up at them at night and the light that really they are reflecting and some are actually producing like stars, the lights are not the same.

They're not the same brightness, same brilliance. There's variations out there and of course, you know, they tell us that stars are, you know, gradually getting darker and maybe because they're so far out they've already become dark and we just haven't seen it yet.

So, there's variation even our own sun and moon. The light and the size of the moon, not the actual size but what we visibly see, that's constantly changing, isn't it?

And the sun appears and it disappears. It's about to disappear here tonight and we know it's still there but we can't see it and the light from it is diminishing greatly and pretty soon it will be almost gone totally except for what is reflected off of the moon and so it appears and disappears and even throughout the time we're revolving around it, it causes shifting shadows and so forth these are the things that God has created and they're variable as great as they are and also we have some sense of their permanence and we have some sense that they're going to continue and work and move like they're supposed to and nothing will ever ever change that so there's some kind of trust in the heavenly bodies but by stark contrast

[25 : 24] God never changes his brilliance is always the same his wisdom always the same his nature the things he loves the things he hates God never changes with whom is no variableness there's no variableness with God he's not you know stronger some days and not other days and you know we have good days and bad days and you know we feel good some days and we have bad hair days and good hair days and you know all that kind of stuff but God never changes no variableness you don't have to wonder whether God is in an ill mood today you know when you come to him you know like maybe a family member well should I ask a certain thing or say a certain thing maybe they're not having a good day and so we kind of get used to gauging that and knowing when to speak to people and you know

God is always the same never changes no variableness no shadow of turning now God never turns from us and casts his shadow upon us and that that means he's never moving away the sun is

setting here tonight and pretty soon it you know will be under the shadow of our earth but there's no shadow with God so it's an explanation of God's goodness then finally who I'm going to finish this all right just have to have to well I'm going to finish an example of God's goodness an example and it is a supreme example verse 18 of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures this is an example the supreme example of

God's goodness and the greatest example of God's goodness is his saving grace our salvation by his grace that is the supreme example of the goodness of God isn't that a good gift now all of his gifts are good and perfect but you know not all of them are equal in our sight and not all of them are equal in their ramification for eternity but this one obviously is the supreme gift there are four truths in this one verse concerning God's saving grace first the subject of this verse is salvation we ought to state that even though I've already stated that but that's pretty clear he brought us forth is a reference to birth in fact even in the King James it is translated begat and rightfully so I think we probably should have left that in here not changed it because that's what was intended he begat he begat us birthed us we were birthed from above

Jesus said you must be born again and so it is then an abiding metaphor in the Bible for salvation so the subject is salvation second God alone is the author of our salvation of his own will by the way again even though it's four words in the English text it's one word in the Greek text the participle that's significant and I don't know why even some of our more literal translations I don't know why they don't bring this out but it really could be translated although it would be awkward literally having willed having willed is a participle a certain form of a participle and so it's having willed and that points to a decision made by God in the past now it doesn't specify how far in the past but obviously before

I was born and you were born before I think the foundation of the world if I understand scripture so it's having will it's about salvation and it's of his own will he willed it and has already willed it of his own will also means that nothing outside of his sovereign determination influences him to save so you know you're not saved here today because you deserved it we don't have this kind of scale kind of thing and what we've got to do is just make sure we've got more goodness than badness on the scale so that it tips it in the right direction and God favors us because of our goodness there isn't anything anything outside of his sovereignty that determines or influences him in salvation it is of his own will he not you not your mama your godly mother or grandpa not this so-called

[30 : 57] Christian nation not your works he brought us forth of his own will also third the means of salvation is the gospel the means of the gospel of salvation how God brings that about is the gospel the word of truth that's what James mentions so of his own will he birthed us begat us brought us forth by the word of truth and the word of truth is used in scripture a number of times as a synonym for the gospel so this is the gospel for example Ephesians 1 13 I gave these passages for you in him you also trusted after you heard what the word of truth what is the word of truth the gospel of your salvation so it's equated there to whom also having believed you were sealed by with the

Holy Spirit Spirit of promise Colossians 1 3 5!! and kind of just take pieces out of it so we get it all in here we give thanks to God this is Paul giving thanks to the Colossians since we heard of your faith and then he says in verse 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven of which you heard before in what the word of the truth of the gospel so again they equated the!

word the gospel so we are talking about the gospel here so then faith comes by hearing literally that which is heard faith comes from the thing heard and what is that thing heard it's the word of God it's the word of God and so we are talking about the gospel it's the word of God fourth the purpose of salvation is the redemption of a people for God's own possession do you ever think about your salvation in those terms that God saved you because he chose you for his own to be his own possession special possession and that's the purpose of salvation redemption of a people for God's own purpose first fruits that we might be a kind of first fruits is an Old Testament concept and you find a number of places in the Old Testament I meant to give you those passages but forgot because in the Old Testament first fruits were offered to God sometimes it was possessions! things grains such first fruits sometimes even people not as human sacrifices but as dedicated to the Lord first fruits were offered as for his purposes and so first fruits then refers to the redeemed of all ages including us and this is God's purpose of salvation the redemption of the people for his own possession his personal possession now then that leads us to kind of finalize this because we kind of end on the subject of salvation then the successful conclusion of God's work in trials well God's work in every respect but also in trials God's work through our trials is salvation in its third and

fullest sense you know that we we must understand from scripture salvation in three senses really three tenses past present ongoing and future and we articulate that with these words regeneration [35 : 03] I have been saved regenerated justified saved a one time event of salvation regeneration but then there is a present tense of salvation that's sanctification and that is ongoing ongoing right now we're in that tense of salvation God is making us like his son Jesus and then what's the last one the future glorification glorification that's not going to happen here on this planet that will be when Jesus comes when we are resurrected so that's the successful conclusion of his work it certainly has a beginning point and it's continuing on and this is the place where we experience the trials but the successful conclusion of it all is when we see him face to face you

Thank you.