

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Turning Trials into Triumph

James 1:2-12

Part 1

Let us open our Bibles to **James 1:1-12**. **“(1) James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.” (2) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (5) But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, (8) being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (9) but let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; (10) and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. (11) for the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. (12) Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”** We have introduced this epistle by saying that the theme of this epistle is tests of living faith. Verses 1-12 gives to us the first of those tests. We can call it “**THE RESPONSE TO TRIALS TEST.**”

True believers when they undergo trials will endure. Those who are not true believers, who do not possess living or saving faith will not endure (V. 12). The key verse illustrating this point is found **V. 12 “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”** Endurance is not an option for a professing believer it is a necessity. Another verse which makes this very clear is **Matt. 10:22** which says, **“... it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”**

What does it mean to endure from a biblical standpoint? Does this mean that we simply need to grit our teeth and get through something. This is not what the Bible means by endurance at all. If this were the case then my unsaved friends and neighbors have “endured” and are even now presently “enduring.” People have great survival instincts and they will find a way to keep going.

There is not a day that goes by that we do not hear of more suffering. It might be the suffering inflicted on those whose homes are falling into the sea or down the slopes of various California communities. Or the destruction of crops and people’s livelihoods due to freezing temperatures in the southeast. Or it could be the reports of renewed fighting in the Balkans. In **Job 5:7** it says, **“For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward.”** Then again in **Job 14:1** it says, **“Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil.”** And in spite of all these troubles people for the most part will find a way to cope.

If this is true then what does James mean by “endurance?” In order to answer that question we need to look at **V. 12** again, **“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”**

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The phrase that we want to focus in on is the phrase, “**to those who love Him.**”

Everyone has trials but the question is, “In the midst of trials do they manifest a love for God?” This is the key to understanding the “RESPONSE TO TRIALS” test. Those who have a genuine or saving faith will, in the midst of their trials, persevere in manifesting a real and genuine love for Christ.

Those who have been born again by a true, genuine, living faith will what? Love God! **1 John 4:19 says, “We love, because He first loved us.”** Perseverance under trial in this passage is all about a love relationship. Those of us who are truly saved will have an ongoing love for Him and this will not only be demonstrated in good times but even in bad times. Not only in easy times but also in hard times. You can underline this in your Bibles, “**those who love him.**”

This works itself out practically in several different ways.

There are those who have identified themselves with the Christian community in the midst of personal trials in the hope that they might be able to escape them. This might be those who are having various family problems, legal problems, financial problems etc. and they come into the church and may even make a profession of faith but when their problems continue or even get worse they bail out. They abandon the Christian scene. Oh, they may still say that they are Christians, if they are asked, but Christ plays no meaningful part in their lives at all.

There are those who encountered trials later in their so-called Christian experience. Oh they may have grown up in the church and have continued to attend church and may be involved in some form or fashion. But when they are hit with significant trials rather than being drawn closer to the Lord and the Lord’s people they buckle and collapse. They look to their own strength and to their own resources. They may maintain some outward form of religiosity, but the trials will fill them with overwhelming sorrow, anger and perhaps even a settled bitterness.

Then there are those who finally come to the place in their so-called Christian lives where they understand that they have been called to live their lives in a certain way. They begin to understand that Christ has not called them to live a life of ease but of ministry and service and they step forward to do that, but the difficulties that they encounter are simply too great. I believe that this is what James is primarily afraid of in the audience that he is addressing in this epistle. They are individuals who could be tempted to pack it in, to be undercover “Christians,” to hide themselves. They might remain moral but they will not be striving to obey all that Christ has commanded his disciples to perform.

Hopefully you remember that we said that James in this epistle is writing to Jews, “**James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes.**” But not only to any Jew, but rather to Jews who had been dispersed abroad, “**James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.**” Not only to dispersed Jews but to dispersed Jews who happened to be Christian. We saw this in the context of the epistle itself. But not only to dispersed Jews who happened to be Christians, but primarily to Jewish Christians who had to flee from Jewish persecution in Jerusalem.

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We saw this from a historical overview of the book of Acts. James, the brother of Jesus, as the leader of the church of Jerusalem, is writing to those Jewish believers who had suffered for their faith. He is writing this book in order to encourage them and to make sure that they do not falter. And he is pointing out to them that they must continue to **“persevere under trial.”** They must not shrink back from manifesting their love for Christ in the midst of this persecution.

The meaning is not that we will never sink in defeat under a certain trial. Failure can be repented of and reversed. Rather, the tense portrays us as characteristically enduring the varied tests and refusing to abandon our love for our Lord. Such perseverance is the sign of genuine faith.

If we see ourselves persevering in our love for Jesus no matter what happens to us, we need to consider ourselves blessed. Let us look again at **V. 12 “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”**

The word “blessed”(MAKARIOS) means, “happy” or “fortunate.” It implies a congratulatory element as recognizing the desirability of the condition. When we see a person persevering in their love of the Lord in the midst of their trials congratulations are in order. If we see a family undergoing financial difficulties who continues to give of their meager resources to help and assist others in obedience to Christ, we need to consider that family blessed. If we see a family drawing comfort from the Lord in the midst of a loss of a loved one, we need to consider them blessed. If we see an individual whose business was ruined by the sin of another, but who is able to forgive and be at peace in the Lord, we need to consider that person blessed. If we see ourselves persevering in our love for Jesus no matter what we are blest. WHY? Because after he has been **“approved he will receive the crown of life.”**

The word “approved” (DOKIMOS) was used of the testing of coins and metals to establish their genuineness. To receive the crown of life it is not only necessary to be tested but to be attested as having shown ourselves genuine.

The “crown of life” describes the Christian’s final reward in heaven. The word for “crown” (STEPHANOS) refers to a victors crown (Rev. 4). Those who have persevered and been victorious in the midst of their trials will be eternally rewarded. For James it is a **“crown of life;”** for Paul it is a **“crown of righteousness”** in **2 Tim. 4:8,** and for Peter it was the **“crown of glory.”**

What is that final reward? It is that we shall reign together with Jesus Christ and with Him shall judge the world. Let us read **Rev. 4, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” (2) Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. (3) And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. (4) And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their head.**

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We need to stop here and ask the question who are these 24 elders? I believe that they represent the church.

In the OT the priesthood was represented by twenty-four orders of priests by David in **1 Chron. 24**. There were actually thousands of priests in Israel during the time of David but they all could not minister at the same time. Accordingly, they were divided into twenty-four orders, each of which was represented by a priest. When these priests met together, even though there were only 24 they represented the whole priesthood and at the same time the whole of the nation of Israel.

While Israel was called to a priestly function (Ex. 19:6), that nation never entered into this chief function because of their sin. To the tribulation saints the promise is given that they shall minister as priests in the millennium (Rev. 20:6). However, at the beginning of the tribulation period, which would be the time period that we are talking about in Rev. 4, Israel has not been restored to the place of a priestly nation, for they must await the millennial age for the realization of that privilege. The tribulation saints, likewise must wait the millennial age for their realization of it. The church is the only body definitely constituted by a priesthood that could fulfill the function of priests ministering under the High Priest (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

And certainly they are dressed appropriately. The white raiment could very well refer to those who had been given the gift of righteousness. In **Is. 61:10** it says, **“I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; For he has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness...”** Certainly these white robes could symbolize that.

But more important are the crowns they are wearing. There are two kinds of crowns in the book of Revelation. One is the crown of a ruler or sovereign (DIADEM), which is a crown of governmental authority. The other is the crown of a victor (STEPHANOS). The word here is the crown of a victor rather than that of a sovereign. This is the same crown that is promised to Christians who endure in their love for the Savior in the book of James.

I believe that these 24 elders clothed in white garments, and with golden crowns on their heads, represent the church. And if that is so and with that in mind, let us continue to read this wonderful passage, **Rev.4:5**.

Rev. 4:5-11, “And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; (6) and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. (7) And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. (8) And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and who is to come.” (9) And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

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(11) Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.” This is glory! And this is what is yet ahead for those who, in the midst of their trials, persevere in their love for Jesus.

What does **Verse 12** say? **“Blessed (happy) is the man who perseveres (in their love for Jesus) under trial; for once he has been approved (having their faith tested and found genuine), he will receive the crown of life (he will receive glory) which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

CONCLUSION

What is the very first test of genuine saving faith that James gives us? The **RESPONSE TO TRIALS TEST**. And how does genuine living faith respond to trials? It will continue through thick and thin. It may be battered but it will not be broken, continually and persistently manifesting itself in our love for Jesus.

For saving faith, for living faith to manifest itself in all of it's fullness, in all of it's glory, there are certain elements that need to be present. Those elements are given to us in **VV. 2-11**. Next week we will begin to examine those elements.