

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Turning Trials into Triumph James 1:2-12 Part Three**

We have introduced this epistle by saying that the theme is “Tests of Living Faith”. The first of those tests is the, Response to Trials test. We find this test in **VV. 2-12**. Let us open our Bibles to James and read **James 1:2-12**, “**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.**”

What is the proper response to trials? Perseverance. Those who persevere in the midst of trials, possess genuine, living, saving faith. And those who do not, most likely do not have a genuine, living, saving faith.

**Verse 12** is the key to this entire section. “**Blessed** (happy or fortunate) **is a man who perseveres** (endures) **under trial**. Why? “**..... for once he has been approved** (or tested and found genuine) “**... he will receive the crown of life**” (or in other words he will enter into his eternal reward) “**... which the Lord has promised to those who....**” What? “**love him.**” The promise of eternal reward is not offered to those who endure or persevere in the sense of just simply gritting their teeth and getting through it. Even those who do not love the Lord can do this, but this promise of eternal reward is being extended to those who love the Lord and only to those who love the Lord.

When we are in a trial, do we find ourselves becoming more dependent on God or less? Do we come to the Lord to ask for grace, for strength, and for wisdom or do we fight our own battles in our own strength? When we are in a trial, do we find ourselves vigorously pursuing holiness or do we get caught up in our own fleshly and earthly interests? The way we, as professing believers, go through trials should give us a clear indication as to whether our faith is living or if it is not. Hopefully as we mature in Christ the way we respond to our trials will stand in stark contrast to the world because of our very special and intimate loving relationship with God.

There are a number of different elements that need to be present in our lives as we respond to trials if we are going to stand out from our unsaved friends and family.

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The first element is a Joyous Attitude. Look at **V. 2, “Consider it all joy”** (means to once and for all consider or evaluate our trials as “joy.” But not just “joy,” but what? “All joy.” We are to once and for all consider our trials as “joy” and the joy that we experience as a result of this decision will hopefully be unmixed with other reactions. Or, in other words, the joy that we feel in the midst of our trial will actually dominate all other thinking or feelings.

How can this be? How could we possibly do this? This leads us to the second element that must be present in our trials if we are going to respond properly to them.

We need to have an understanding mind. The first element, a joyous attitude, helps us to understand how the Lord wants us to respond when we are in the midst of trials. The second element helps us to answer the question of, why. Why should we? How could joy in the midst of things so painful be the right and appropriate response? Paul addresses this issue in the very next verse. Let us read **V. 3, “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”** Why can we count it all joy when we encounter various trials? It is because we know that the testing of our faith produces endurance. This on the surface may not seem very significant. In fact, it might seem to you to be rather bland, but certainly this is not the case at all. Endurance has very immediate and significant benefits.

First of all, endurance produces a vibrant hope. Let me ask you a question, What is the first test that this epistle gives to us in order to examine our faith to see if it is a living or dead faith? It is the way that we respond to trials. If we endure in the midst of trials we are demonstrating to ourselves and others that we have saving faith and if we fail to endure we are demonstrating to ourselves and others that we do not have saving faith. It is important that trials come into our lives because we know that without the trials we will not have the opportunity to endure. And, without the opportunity to endure, how can we be sure that we possess a living and saving faith?

Peter certainly understands this point. **1Pet.1:3-7**, says, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) In this (In what? The certainty of our salvation) we greatly rejoice.**

I don't want to go through this life thinking I am a Christian and then to find out after I am dead that I was never a Christian at all. I don't want to go through this life thinking that I am heaven bound only to find out after I am dead that this was not the case at all. So certainly for me to know that I am heaven bound before I die would be a wonderful thing. It would be something that I would rejoice over, and not just rejoice over, but greatly rejoice over. But this certain knowledge does not come without pain.

The verse goes on to say, **“.....even though now for a little while, if necessary you have been distressed by various trials, (7) that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

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Peter is making it clear to us that to know that we are saved and that we have an inheritance in heaven reserved for us is a cause for great rejoicing. But this confidence is not produced unless our faith is first tested by fire.

Oh the trials of this world may threaten to take my marriage, my family, my health, even my life, but if these testings of my faith produce endurance, biblical endurance, then I need to greatly rejoice. Because the endurance that my trials are producing testifies to myself and others that I am truly born again.

Trials are not a threat to those who value the certainty of glory. Rather they become the vehicle through which we can experience joy because we know that our life in Christ is secure. Listen to Paul in **Rom. 8:35-39**, “**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword: (36) Just as it is written, “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” (37) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” Did Paul see trials as a threat? Not to what he valued. He in a way saw trials as servants lighting his path to glory. The more frequent and fierce the trial, the brighter the light along our path to glory.

Having our faith tested by trials gives us the opportunity through endurance, to know that we in fact possess saving faith and this knowledge should cause us to consider our trials all joy. It is not the trial which is the source of our joy, but the knowledge that we will gain because we endured the trial.”

We see a classic example of this in **Acts 16:25**. Paul and Silas had been beaten. After this beating the passage tells us that they were not led away to prison but “thrown” into prison. And not given a nice cot to lie on but rather put into “stocks.” You can imagine what agony they were in. And, in addition to all of this, their very lives were in jeopardy. But in spite of these trials they endured. They were not looking to escape their trials but to remain faithful.

Their testing had produced endurance. And because it had produced endurance they could count or consider their trials all joy. Did they do this? and the answer is yes. In **Acts 16:25** it says, “**But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;**” How could this be?

The beating, the imprisonment, the placement into stocks and their uncertain future could have cast such a dark cloud of despair over their lives they could have been suffocated with its darkness. But, instead of this happening, each trial produced an ever increasing measure of endurance. And with that increasing measure of endurance came an ever increasing measure of light on their path to glory. In fact I think the light being produced by their endurance was so bright that they were looking in a figurative way at the gates of glory thinking to themselves that they may be very close to going home.

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Is it possible for the born-again Christian to experience joy in its totality here on earth? Hardly. But even so, let us rejoice and let that joy of what will be ours in Christ once we endure this trial dominate our thoughts. Blessed be His name.

The future of the Christian should dispel the gloom of the present. The Psalmist wrote, **“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”** Let joy, pure joy, joy in every circumstance, lead the way, and then the circumstance will be easier to bear.

But there is more. Endurance does not only produce a vibrant hope, but endurance also helps us mature.

Endurance helps us to mature - Let us read **V. 4, “and let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”** In V. 3 we were told that endurance is the result of the trials of life. Now we are told of the result of endurance upon us. It tells us that we will be made **“perfect and complete.”**

The word translated “perfect” here is the Greek word TELEION. This word comes from the same root as TELOS, that’s primary meaning is “fulfillment, goal, end.” What is the result of endurance? It is maturity. It is coming into conformity with the Lord Jesus. Without trials the goal of becoming Christlike or fully mature cannot be realized.

**Psalm 40** is a beautiful passage that allows us to see this process being worked out in the life of the Psalmist. **“I waited patiently for the Lord;”** (In this expression we see endurance being produced through the trial). Now look at the result **“... he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, and out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God...”** Now look at **VV. 4-5, “Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. (5) Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.”** Through the trials and the endurance that was produced through those trials this Psalmist has grown in his understanding of God. He has a growing appreciation of God and His ways. He has grown in maturity.

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### CONCLUSION

Let us not respond to trials as the world responds, but rather let us respond in a way that is totally different. Let us count it all joy. Let us do this because we understand that trials produce endurance which promotes hope and personal maturity.

We are not certainly going to seek out trials, but let us not be afraid of it either. We certainly should not see trials as good in and of itself, but hopefully we will see beyond present pain to it's glorious results.

Pressed out of measure and pressed to all length  
Pressed so intensely it seems beyond strength.  
Pressed in the body and pressed in the soul.  
Pressed in the mind until the dark surges roll.  
Pressed by foes and pressed by friends,  
Pressure upon pressure till life nearly ends.  
Pressed into loving the staff and the rod.  
Pressed into knowing no helper but God.

Pressed into liberty where nothing clings.  
Pressed into faith for impossible things.  
Pressed into living a life in the Lord.  
Pressed into living a Christ life outpoured.