

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

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

We have introduced this epistle by saying that the theme is “Tests of A 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.

As we have shared, v. 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 never 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 the way we respond to our trials will stand in stark contrast to the world because of our very special and intimate loving relationship we have 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”** this 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. This, however, is impossible without a second element.

The second element that must be present if we are going to respond properly to trials is an UNDERSTANDING MIND. Before we can expect to yield ourselves to the command to count it all joy, we need to understand why this would be an appropriate response. **v. 3** gives us the answer to this question. **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. If our faith is genuine then biblical endurance will be produced when we encounter difficulties. And hopefully we understand that the presence of endurance has the potential for immediate and significant benefits.

When we see endurance produced in our lives it gives us a basis for a vibrant hope, the assurance of our salvation. Certainly we saw this in **v. 12** and this is reinforced in **1Pet. 1:3-7**.

The presence of endurance in our lives is necessary for us to spiritually mature. We saw this in **v. 4** **“and let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”** If we are not tried, if endurance is not produced as a result of those trials, we will never become **“perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”** or in other words, we will never become spiritually strong and certainly this is not what the Lord has purposed for us.

One of the many fascinating events in nature is the emergence of the Cecropia moth from its cocoon--an event that occurs only with much struggle on the part of the moth to free itself. The story is frequently told of someone who watched a moth go through this struggle--the viewer snipped the shell of the cocoon. Soon the moth came out with its wings all crimped and shriveled. But as the person watched, the wings remained weak. The moth, which in a few moments would have stretched those wings to fly, was now doomed to crawling out its brief life in frustration of ever being the beautiful creature God created it to be.

What the person in the story did not realize was that the struggle to emerge from the cocoon was an essential part of the developing muscle system of the moth’s body and pushing the body fluids out into the wings to expand them. By unwisely seeking to cut short the moth’s struggle, the watcher had actually clipped the moth and doomed its existence.

The adversities of life are much like the cocoon of the Cecropia moth. God uses them to develop the spiritual “muscle system” of our lives. With this understanding, counting it all joy when we encounter various trials is not only an appropriate response but it is the appropriate response.

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This weekend I would like us to consider some specific ways God uses trials to mature us and make us the people that He wants us to be.

### He Uses Adversity to Produce Dependence

Jesus said, **“Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)**. Apart from our union with Christ and a total reliance upon Him we can do nothing that glorifies God. We live in a world that worships independence and self-reliance. “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul” is the motto of society around us. Because of our own sinful nature, we can easily fall into the world’s pattern of thinking.

God has to teach us through adversity to rely on Him instead of ourselves. Consider what Paul said in **2 Cor. 1:8-9**, **“For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; (9) indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.”** Praise God for trials! Nothing of eternal value can ever be accomplished through a person who is not relying on the Lord. And trials in fact help us to do that.

Consider the words of Stephen in **Acts 7:22**, **“And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”** Certainly with such great personal resources we might think that Moses would be able to do some wonderful things for God. Well, let us continue to read. **Acts 7:23-25**, **“But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. (24) And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. (25) And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand.”** When Moses attempted to take matters into his own hands, God so frustrated his efforts that Moses had to flee for his life. Forty years later Moses still had no confidence in his own abilities and even had difficulty believing that God could use him. The trials that Moses had encountered had been used by the Lord to do His work. The trials that the Lord permitted to come into Moses life was preparing him to trust in the Lord alone for anything of eternal value.

God uses trials in our lives to mature us. He uses trials in our lives to produce holiness and He uses trials in our lives to produce dependence upon Himself.

### He Uses Adversity to Produce Holiness

There is nothing quite like adversity to expose our sinfulness. In **Heb. 12:5-10** it says, **“ ..... have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; (6) for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives.” (7) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) but if you are without discipline, of which we all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**

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**(9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much more rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? (10) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.**

Adversity exposes the corruption of our sinful nature. Before adversity and testing comes you may think of yourself in one way, but, when the fire becomes hotter and hotter, you and I may have to change the assessment of how truly holy or unholy we might be.

I remember a meeting some time ago with a certain individual who said to me that I am very quick to accept blame for whatever has happened. Certainly I don't want to take on blame when I am not in fact at fault. But what I have discovered so often throughout my Christian life is the fact that I fall far short of God's holy standard and can find much in my life to take blame for. And certainly the adversities that the Lord has permitted to come into my life He has certainly used to expose those shortcomings.

Jesus said, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are those who mourn; Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness”** in **Matt. 5:3-4-6**. All of these descriptions refer to the believer who has been humbled over his sinfulness, who mourns because of it, and yearns with all his heart for God to change him. But no one adopts this attitude without being exposed to the evil and corruption of his own heart. God uses adversity to do this.

How else does God use adversity in the life of the one who endures?

### He Uses Trials to Produce Greater Service

God brings difficulty into our lives to equip us for more effective service. **2 Cor. 1:3-5** tells us, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; (4) who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (5) For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”** In times of suffering, it is very easy to think only of ourselves and to forget others. We, in a sense, can become cisterns instead of channels of blessing to comfort and encourage. Because God has encouraged us, we can encourage others.

When we suffer and see endurance produced in our lives and personally experience the comfort that God gives, we are then in the position to comfort others. If you have suffered a broken home and were comforted by God, certainly you can encourage others who have suffered the same thing. If you have lost a child and were comforted by God, certainly you can encourage others who have suffered the same thing. If you have been diagnosed with a terminal disease but in the midst of it find yourself experiencing the comfort of God, you certainly can encourage others. Certainly whatever trials we might personally go through makes us particularly able to help those who are going through or have gone through the same things.

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Does this mean that we have to have the very same experience of suffering in order to be an encouragement or comfort to others. And the answer is clearly no! Look at the v. 4 again, **“Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in the “same affliction” with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God.”** This is not what it says, it does not say the **“same affliction,”** it says, **“any affliction.”**

Think about this for a moment. Consider the apostle Paul who wrote this passage. Paul refers to God as the God of all comfort not in a theoretical sense but in a personal sense. He had suffered greatly. In fact Paul is one of the most afflicted persons we could possibly ever meet. He suffered from hunger, cold, nakedness, stripes, imprisonment, from perils by sea and land, from robbers, from Jews, and from gentiles. And besides these external afflictions, he was overwhelmed with the personal care for all the churches.

And as though all this were not enough, he has “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan,” to buffet him. In the midst of all these trials God not only sustained him, but filled him with such a heroic spirit that he was able to say in **2 Cor. 12:10, “I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”**

Certainly Paul, by virtue of the fact of his sufferings and the comfort which he himself had been comforted, was in a position to comfort others not only in the same afflictions but in “any affliction.”

### CONCLUSION

James is written so that we might come to know whether or not our faith is living or dead. It is written so that we might know whether it is saving faith or if it is not. The first test that James gives to us is the Response To Trials Test. When we are tested to we find ourselves drawing closer to the Lord or withdrawing? Do we find ourselves continuing to press toward holiness or do we become indifferent?

The way we respond to trials should set us apart from the world. What are the elements that need to be present in our lives if our response is going to stand in stark contrast to the world?

A joyful attitude .....

An understanding mind. We know that as endurance is produced in our lives we will become more and more dependent upon the Lord. We know that as endurance is produced in our lives through trials that we will become more and more holy. And we know that as endurance is produced in our lives we will become more and more useful.

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

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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.