

James - Joy in Trials

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 August 2026

Preacher: Christopher Baker

[0:00] We are going to be this morning in the book of James, James chapter 1. Part of the reason we're in James is the last couple of Sundays we've been looking at things! in the Gospels and God's Word that are hard, that are not easy to do.

And to be honest, there's a lot of things in God's Word that are sometimes hard for us, aren't there? So, instead of avoiding those things, we're going to stick right with it.

We're going to get into the book of James. And we're, for the next few Sundays, Lord willing, we're going to kind of walk through James because James is one of those books that, as you look at it, it's been described in actually several different ways, the book of James.

Some of the things I wrote down that people have used to describe the book of James, James, it's kind of like the Proverbs of the New Testament. The Old Testament has the book of Proverbs, and what is Proverbs?

In the Old Testament, what does it do? It gives you knowledge, it gives you wisdom, ways that you should live your life, practical things that you should do. James is often called the Proverbs of the New Testament because it is full of practical things, day-to-day things that you and I as believers should be doing in our lives.

[1:24] Some of the other phrases that I read that are used to describe the book of James, see how you feel about these. The book of James is a punch in the gut. What do you think it means by that?

A wake-up call. The book of James is about rolling up your sleeves. What does that expression mean? Get to work.

There's business to be done and you need to be doing it. The book of James is about getting your hands dirty. What does that expression mean? It's about action.

Things that you should be doing. The way I would sometimes or have sometimes described the book of James, it's where the rubber meets the road. You know, we can talk about our faith, we can talk about being a Christian, but James is talking about then applying that.

Taking it from just knowledge that's in our head to actions that are present in our life or ways that we need to think about life. So all these things describe the book of James. It is a down and dirty, practical, this is what we need to be doing kind of book.

[2:32] So we're going to walk through James. And the book of James in the first chapter, there's only five chapters. It's not a really long book in the Bible. It's relatively short.

But as James goes through in the first chapter, he lists a lot of different things. And then in chapters 2 through 5, he kind of expounds on those. He explains them a little bit more.

So we're going to take a little bit of chapter 1 each week and then look in the rest of the book of James at how it explains those. So James was written by who? Oh, you guys are good.

You're right on top of things this morning. Written by James. But here's the question. Which James? James is a pretty common name, isn't it? Or at least it was in biblical times.

James was a... I mean, when you hear the name James, what do you immediately think? A disciple, right? Disciple of Jesus. The book of James, however, is thought not to have been written by one of the 12 disciples, not by that James, but by another James.

[3:37] The James that it was thought to have been written by was James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Not the disciple, but the half-brother of Jesus.

The interesting thing about Jesus' half-brother is, guess what? He wasn't a believer at first. When Jesus was here and teaching and preaching and doing miracles and sharing, his half-brother, James, was not a believer.

He didn't become a believer until the resurrection of Jesus. And that is when he became a believer in Jesus Christ. And James, the half-brother of Jesus, would go on to be a major leader in the Jerusalem church.

The Jews that had converted to Christianity in Jerusalem, James was one of the great leaders of that church in Jerusalem. And he was often called James the Just, is what he was called.

So, that's who wrote James. And again, we're going to look at several things in James, and a lot of these things are not easy. And here's the thing, the first one we're going to look at, it's kind of, there's a reason it's kind of at the top of this list.

[4:45] Because it is not an easy thing. So, James chapter 1. I'm going to ask if you'd stand, if you're able, as we read this morning, starting in James chapter 1.

And we're going to share the first four verses to start with. And this is what God's Word shares this morning. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Let's pray together. Lord God, thank you again for this morning that you've given us. I thank you for your Word, for the truth that it contains. And I just pray that your Holy Spirit would move in this place, that it would give us an understanding today.

That we would understand your Word and that we would, more than understand it, we would have a desire to apply it, to live it out in our lives. And Lord, the things that you ask us in your Word, they often go against our natural tendency.

[5:53] But I pray, Lord, that your Spirit would give us the strength to go against our natural tendency and to respond the way you would want us to respond. So work in our hearts on this day. And it's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

And all God's people said, Amen. All right, you may be seated. So James starts out, first verse, it's just kind of a nice greeting to a letter, isn't it?

James, a servant of God. So he's explaining, I'm a believer. I'm trying to do my best to serve God in the way that He wants me to, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's all wonderful.

So what does that mean to the 12 tribes? To Israel. He's really writing this predominantly to the Jewish people, especially the Jews that accepted Jesus Christ that became believers, because often they needed a tremendous amount of encouragement, because they had come out of the Jewish faith.

And when you became a Christian and you had been a Jew, guess what? Not everybody liked that. If your family was Jewish and you became a Christian, often you would be shunned, you would be pushed out, you may lose your business.

[7:02] It was not always an easy position to be in. But he was writing this primarily to the Jewish people that had converted to Christianity. But it is also for us.

The truth that is contained in this is not just for them. It's for all of God's church, which includes us. So he gives this very nice introduction in the first verse. He says, greeting. So in other words, good to have a chance to talk with you.

Here's the thing. He wastes no time after that greeting to hit them with something or hit us with something that is not easy. He doesn't waste any time.

Because what's the first thing he says after greeting? My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations or your Bible may say into various trials.

So what he's saying is when you have trials, when you have difficulties, which I just told you often they did, being shunned from your family, losing your business, losing your standing in society.

[8:06] Is that a trial? Is that a difficulty? Absolutely. Absolutely. We probably don't face that, but do we face other kinds of trials? Yes. That's why he uses the word diverse temptations.

What does that word diverse mean? Many. All different kinds. He's saying, I know that you are going to face all different kinds of trials.

All different kinds of difficulties in your lives. And to be honest, that is certainly true of us today, isn't it? If we were to start up here in the front row and work our way back on this side and then go through this side and make a list of all the difficulties you are facing right now, people just present here this morning, how many different things do you think we'd have on that list?

We'd be still here tomorrow. Be still here tomorrow? Think about it. We face all kinds of difficulties. Some of you are facing physical difficulties, challenges, sicknesses, illnesses, I don't know, recovery from things.

All different kinds of physical things. Some of you are facing that, aren't you? Right? Some of you are facing financial problems, difficulties, trials, struggles.

[9:18] Some of you are facing problems in your job. Some of you are facing problems within your family's arguments, disputes, somebody not talking to somebody else. That happens, doesn't it? I mean, we don't like to admit it.

We don't always like to talk about it, but that is life, isn't it? And we could go on. That list could continue of trials that we are facing. Diverse, various trials that all of us face.

So this includes everybody. And again, he's talking to the church. Anybody that's facing any trials, what does he say to do when you face trials? It's this part after the comma right here.

I'll give you a hint. Let's read it together. Count it all joy. There's the hard part, isn't it?

And he says when you fall into these temptations and trials. I think that's... We should take note of that. He says when you fall into these trials. What does it mean to fall into something?

[10:19] How many of you have ever fallen before? Yeah, raise your hand if you have fallen before. Is it fun to fall? I heard something the other day.

You know how you know whether you're old or not? This is not the sermon, but you know whether you're old or not? When you fall down, do people laugh or do they get scared? If they laugh, you're still young.

If they get real worried, you might be getting older. Okay, that's not the sermon. But falling, we all fall, right? Is it something you choose?

I mean, not often do we say, I think I'm going to go over there and I'm going to trip over that crack and fall down. This is going to be great. We don't pick that. We don't say, oh, there's some ice. I'm going to walk right over there, slip and fall down.

We don't do that, do we? We don't plan for it. A fall happens when we don't expect it. That's the same way with trials often, isn't it? They come, they catch us blindsides.

[11:21] We're not expecting it. Boom. All of a sudden, there's a trial right in front of you that you didn't feel prepared for. He says when we fall into these trials, they come. We don't choose them. We don't have a choice in them.

They just happen. When we fall into these trials, into these difficulties, what does He tell us we're supposed to do? Count it joy.

Is that what you do? Is that your natural reaction? A trial comes, a health difficulty, a financial difficulty, a family difficulty, a relational difficulty. Do you say, boy, I'm glad I get to go through this. This is wonderful. It goes completely against our natural tendency, doesn't it? So what does it mean to count it all joy? What does that really mean?

Tori? Okay, so what do you try and do say is even though we encounter these problems, we should still be thankful because they're... Even though we encounter them, we should still be thankful why?

[12:21] We should still be thankful for our trials. Okay. Still be thankful for our trials because there's a lesson in it. I think that's certainly a large part of it. But it's hard.

We're in that trial and we don't like it. Do you like having physical stuff going on in your life that isn't ideal? Do you like having financial struggles? Do you like having family difficulties?

None of the trials are things we like. So counting it joy is not always an easy thing to do. But he says, count it joy. I was thinking about that a lot this week.

What does it really mean to count it joy? I think it means find joy in the midst of it. Because there is still joy to be found. Now, he's going to go on to explain a little bit how we do that.

But let's look at verse 3. Knowing this. So this is how we begin to find joy when there are trials in our life.

[13:18] And it's interesting that the first thing he says is knowing this. He doesn't talk about feelings here, does he? There's a difference between feeling something and knowing something, isn't there?

There's a great difference. Because guess what? We have all kinds of feelings, don't we? We can feel disappointed. We can feel discouraged. We can feel angry. We can feel upset.

But he doesn't say rely on your feelings. Because our feelings, guess what? They're going to come and go. You may wake up feeling one thing and go to bed feeling something else and have a whole

lot of different feelings in between.

Feelings come and go, don't they? He says knowing this. What does knowing mean? It means it's something up here that you know, that you are convinced of, that you can hang on to, that doesn't change from morning to evening.

Feelings will change. What you know shouldn't change. So he's saying rely on what you know.

Know this. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith, that's where the struggles are.

[14:22] Because our struggles can try our faith, can't they? We can wonder, why is this happening? Why do I have to go through this? That why can be huge in our lives, can't it?

Can it? I know it can. Because guess what? I've had a lot of you ask over different things, why is this happening to me? Over the years, 30 years, some years as a pastor, I've had a lot of people ask, why do I have to go through this?

You know my response to all of them? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know why you have to go through hurt.

I don't know why you have to struggle. I don't have all the answers. I just wish I had an answer for people, but I don't. I don't know why. Other than this, to know that the trying of your faith, these difficulties, works patience.

What does it mean that it works patience? It means it produces patience. It makes you stronger.

The purpose in it is to strengthen our faith, not to destroy it.

[15:40] And these trials, as we go through them, they result in patience, more patience in our lives, more understanding. And then that continues, but let patience, in verse 4, have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

So it says patience leads to perfection. Does that mean as you have these struggles and you develop patience, that then you're going to be perfect?

So if you've gotten to that point, how many of you are perfect? Anybody? Raise your hand if you're perfect. Ridge is raising his hand.

You're not there yet, buddy. Close. He's my grandson. He's pretty close. When it says perfect here, the other thing we need to understand is it's not talking about perfect, no flaws.

That's not the meaning of perfect here. In the Greek, if you look at what the really, the meaning of perfect here, it means complete. It means whole.

[16:49] It means mature. That's what being perfect means. So what is he really saying? As we have these trials in our lives, they help us to become what?

Mature in our faith. Because think, if we never had any struggles, if we never had any trials, would our faith ever be tested? Would we really know where our faith was if we never had any tests of our faith?

You know, school is starting back up. Tammy's really can't wait to get back in the classroom. But as teachers go back, are you going to give any tests this year?

Anybody in here have her as a student this coming year? Oh, you've had her as a student. You don't need to get brownie points now. You're already graduating.

Okay. But I'm certain this year, Tammy and all teachers are going to give tests. Why do they give tests? So people can see where they're at, whether they're gaining the knowledge, whether they're growing in the knowledge like they should.

[17:58] That is what a test is for. Do you like having tests? Any of you, when you were in school, did you look forward to tests? Oh, I can't wait to get to school today. We're going to have a test. How many of you instead panicked?

Like me. Oh, I should have studied and I didn't. We don't like tests. But they're necessary to show us where we're at. Folks, when our faith is tested, when we have difficulties and trials, it is necessary to help us see where we're at.

Because if we struggle, we realize, hey, I have growth that needs to happen in my life. I need to continue to gain in faith as these struggles come. So this testing, these trials that we face, they help us to become mature Christians.

You know, I think over the years of the people I've known that I would consider very mature in their faith. And they are ones that, as I look back, they're ones that, they certainly had difficulties in their life.

But you know what? They handled those difficulties with grace. They didn't complain. They didn't question why. They just trusted God. Their faith had been tested and they had become more and

more mature in their faith.

[19:11] And you know what? That's what God wants to see in us. Is it an easy path? No. The only way to get more patience is what? To have more situations where they require patience.

It's not always fun, folks, but it's necessary for our growth. So that's what James is talking about here. As believers, we will have trials. It does not... The difference between us and the rest of the world is not that we have no trials.

That's not the difference. You know, I will share, it bothers me when there are believers or other churches that say, oh, you become a Christian and all of a sudden, your life's going to be rainbows and sunshine and everything is going to be exactly the way that you want it.

That is not the way Christianity works. That is not what the Bible teaches. You will have hope and peace and joy in the midst of difficulties. It doesn't promise you an absence of difficulties.

But what it does promise us is that as we have these difficulties, if we maintain our faith, it will help us to grow into the mature believers that God wants us to be. Now, I said that James always expounds on these things and explains them a little more.

[20:24] I want you to look in James back in chapter 5, the last chapter of this book. Because James shares a few more verses that talk about struggles and talk about trials, how we should handle them, and things to help us handle them in the right way.

James chapter 5, beginning in the first verse, I want to share some of these verses. And you may listen to this first part of this chapter and think, what does this have to do with facing trials? But stick with me.

Go now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and you shall eat your flesh as it were fire.

You have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of the Sabbath.

You have lived in pleasure on the earth and have been wanton. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed the just, and he does not resist you. What group of people is this talking about?

[21:38] Rich? Wealthy? Ones that have just lived in pleasure on this earth? One that seem... People that seem to have everything? Are there people like that today? Yeah.

Have there always been? Yeah. They can succeed. They can be wealthy. Are they living for God? No. Are they believers? No. We talked about this last week.

Does that seem fair? No. Because if they're not living for God, and they're practicing evil, and they're being successful, what do we often think? God, why are you allowing that?

They're not living right. Take it all away from them. Knock them down a peg. But it's talking about ones that are doing well here on this earth. But verse 7 is where it ties into what we're talking about. Be patient, therefore, brethren. Isn't patience what we've been talking about? That as you look at other people that seem not to be living for Christ, and yet they seem to be doing well, what is James telling you?

[22:40] Be patient. Be patient, therefore, brethren, to the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it until he receives the early and the latter rain.

Be you also patient. Be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near. Here is James telling us the one thing that we need to keep in mind when we face struggles and trial. And it doesn't matter what kind of a struggle. It doesn't matter what kind of a trial. It is found in verse 8. Because this verse is all about our perspective of life.

What is a perspective? Your outlook. How you view it. So what does it say in verse 8? Be patient. Establish your hearts.

Or strengthen your hearts. What does the last part say? All right. All right. Let's read it together. After the colon there. For the coming of the Lord draws near.

[23:49] Why is that so significant? Why is that something that you and I need to make sure that we remember? Everything is temporary.

Every struggle you face, every trial that you face, is temporary. Let's say that together.

Every struggle I face is temporary. Let's say it one more time. Every struggle I face is temporary.

Isn't that true? That's a perspective that I believe God wants us to have. Will we have trials and struggles? Absolutely.

Absolutely. Will they last forever? No. Why? Because the coming of the Lord draws near. Because there will come a day when Christ will return.

[24 : 49] And guess what? All that's going to be wrapped up. Every trial, every struggle, done. The end. Over. And at that point, if you have established and strengthened your heart in the Lord, if you have remained faithful, if your faith has grown, if you have become mature as a believer, if you have Christ in your heart, guess what?

No more struggles. No more trials. I don't know about you, but that sounds pretty good to me. Don't you think? Look at verse 9.

Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the judge stands before the door. Something significant in that too.

It says, the coming of the Lord draws near, and then it says, the judge stands before the Lord.

There's going to be a judgment, isn't there? Christ, as He returns, He also returns in judgment upon this earth.

And if we have Christ in our hearts, guess what? We're going to pass that judgment just fine. I want to end, though, with verses 10 and 11, because this gets back to our struggle.

[26 : 05] Take my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience. He's talking about all the prophets. So many prophets in the Old Testament, they were sharing God's Word.

They were doing exactly the thing that they were supposed to be doing, and guess what they faced? Persecution. Death. People didn't like them.

They threw them out of their towns. They drove them out. They stoned them. They didn't want to hear what the prophets had to say. The prophets had some trials, and the prophets had some suffering. And He says, take them for an example.

An example of suffering, an affliction, but most of all of patience. They were patient. They were faithful. Did they get a reward in the end?

Yes. Behold, we count them happy, which endure. That last word is pretty important, endure. When we have trials, when we have struggles, we need to endure.

[27 : 05] You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. The example that He gives here at the end, when it talks about our trials and our suffering, is perhaps the greatest example of trials and suffering that the Bible gives us.

And that is the story of Job. You know the story, right? Job was a good man, doing all the right things. And what did He lose?

Everything. Everything. He lost, well, He didn't lose His wife. She wasn't helpful. He lost His, well, name some things He lost.

His family. All of His kids. Wind, storm, earthquake, I forget which came. The house fell down, killed them all. They were all together. Lost all His children. What else did He lose? His livestock.

Wealth in the Old Testament consisted of what you owned and livestock, cattle, all those kind of things. They were all taken away from Him. What else did He lose? In the end, He lost His health.

[28 : 13] He was sitting in the street covered in boils. Does that sound like fun? You talk about trials. There is a man that did nothing wrong and lost everything, except for his wife who told him to curse God and die.

Why? Why do you think James points us to Job? Because he was still faithful?

He endured? And here's the thing. Look in verse 11. Let's see. You have heard of the patience of Job, so we know the story, and have seen the end.

That part really caught my attention. We know how that story ends, don't we? How did that story end for Job? God blessed him.

He gave him back more than what he had lost to begin with. We know how that story ends. But folks, the same thing is true in our lives. If you are a believer, I don't know what trials you're in.

[29 : 19] I don't know what suffering. Well, some of you I do. I don't know what all you're going to suffer through. I don't know all the burdens that you have. But if you are a believer, you know the end.

Don't you? What is the end if you're a believer? Heaven. All those struggles gone, and in eternity in heaven, with your Father God.

In a place where there are no more tears, no more sorrow, no more struggles. That is the end that we know. Folks, we know how the story ends. Isn't that a wonderful thing?

You know, we watch stories, we watch football games on TV, we watch all kinds of things, and we don't know how it's going to end. Well, sometimes we kind of do. But most of the time, we don't really know how it's going to end.

In our lives, folks, that is not the case if you're a Christian. You should know how it's going to end, and it's going to end with you in heaven, in the glory of God, with no more trials and struggles.

[30:23] There are so many people in this world that the one thing they lose in the midst of struggles and trials, they lose hope because they don't know how it's going to end. Folks, for a believer, we should never lose hope because we know the end.

Count it all joy when you fall into struggle, when you have trials. Why? To put it simply, because you know the end. You know the end of the story.

That the end isn't being lost in that struggle, but that struggle will end, and the end is in eternity in heaven. That's, folks, the true joy that we can find in the midst of struggle.

And I pray we remember that in our lives and we share it with others because there's a lot of struggle and trials out there. People need hope, and there is no greater hope that we can give them than this. Let's bow our heads as we pray.

Lord God, I thank you again for this day that you've given us, and I thank you for your word. And I pray, Lord, that as we go through the struggles, as we go through trials here in this life, that we would not lose hope because, Lord, most of all, we know the end of the story.

[31:35] We know how it ends, and that is with either Christ returning or our lives on this earth end. Either way, we end up in heaven in the glory that you have prepared for us.

And Lord, I just pray that that would always override the thoughts of struggle and the difficulties that we have. So Lord, I just pray you'd help us to remember to know these verses in our minds and to never lose sight of them.

We ask and pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.