

Hear and Do

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[0:00] that your word would penetrate our hearts and that your holy spirit will enable us with with supernatural ears to hear and not only to be hearers of the word but even as we'll see further in the text that we're studying that we are to be doers of the word that you empower us lord to not only hear and understand your word but you also empower us to accomplish it to fulfill it to obey you to live it out so lord i just pray that you be with us in that way today and may you bless us in just a special way as we continue to lift you up in worship as we worship in the word together we pray all this in jesus name amen amen well what a what a great uh week we had as we had our baptism this week it was uh just great to see the baptistry up here if you will the horse trough and uh and the water wasn't freezing this time it was a little cool but it wasn't freezing and uh and so just to see each one that came through and had nine baptized this wednesday and uh it i just love a baptism you know but i just especially love it as our church because everybody came and supported and uh maybe you weren't being baptized or somebody in your family wasn't being baptized but you came and supported them and showed what we have in christ and as each one is getting baptized we celebrated those individually and then afterward drew those people together and we we surrounded them and we prayed over them and now it's not them it's us we are together in christ working side by side for the sake of the gospel and it was just a great picture of that right so every time we do that man we ought to it ought to be a big celebration for us and and so when we do that next month and we're going to have it again next month and there are already some in the making right now of some that need to be baptized and and maybe you're one of those or one that is just saying you know what i need to get my right my life right with jesus and the lord's been working on your heart drawing you to himself you need to get that right and settle that issue in your life so that the lord can start using you in a great way and then baptism is the symbol outwardly of that transformation that jesus does in your heart so so man let's uh let's continue that work and keep this dunk dynasty going okay it's going to be good i want you to turn your bibles to james chapter one we are looking at the epistle of james and this is going to be just i think this i've been looking so forward to preaching in james obviously it's a great name okay let's get that out of the way it's a great name but uh just i've been looking forward to it because james is so filled with practical application and wisdom and it just digs into your private life and i mean it just it just rips the scab off of uh all of the the things going on in your life and gets down to where the infection is and just starts doing a cleansing work because it it doesn't allow you to hide right i mean it starts bringing this to real practical application where you start to see what genuine faith looks like what does it mean to follow jesus and what does that look like in your life

and so that's that's what i love about this i and i think of just uh the theme that i i was thinking as i was just reading through these verses especially in the first chapter i was thinking of the gladiator i

mean is this is a guy right uh because life is hard and and i and i just remember the opening scene of that movie uh if you're if you're ladies may not be tracking with me but guys all the guys are like yeah man what a scene right this roman legion of soldiers and they're all lined up and i mean you've got the camera slowly panning by these soldiers and they've got scars and they've got wounds that they're dealing with and yet they're lined up for battle and and and they've got their swords and their swords and their armor's got chinks in it and and and it's it's kind of a just a uh director's uh kind of focus as he goes by those soldiers and you see that these are war seasoned veterans you know all along the line and and and they've got their weapons and they've got their catapults and they've got their uh bows and arrows and all of this stuff and everything's being made ready and then the general comes out you know and and the general as as people are snapping to attention all along the ranks as he comes by and uh and just just a picture of life and the battle that it is and all of this is really as that movie opens is really the precursor to what the story is going to be about him you know it's he's getting ready to go through just an unbelievable ordeal himself and it's going to be just a raging battle that he's going to go through a a guy that you think is a possible emperor in line and and his story is going to be he's going to go through some hard things that are going to bring him down to be a slave and uh and a gladiator and he's going to have to fight and and it's just the struggle of life so that's why men can relate to that not just because of the rough nature of all that but because uh it doesn't take you very long in life to realize that life is a battle and struggle and you can you can relate to so many elements of this even if you've never been to war you've never been in a physical fight that way and even you ladies can see a movie like that and be inspired just because of the the strength that's necessary to endure hardship and you know that even as a woman you can see that and and you know that life is actually hard and it's a battle and and it requires a whole lot of strength and it doesn't take long in life for you to realize that it requires strength that you don't have can i get an amen it requires strength that you do not possess you don't you don't have an army big enough you don't have you don't have weapons good enough on your own and and really this is what i see in in james as he's defining for us what genuine faith looks like the kind of faith that's going to enable you to endure and make it be successful in life not from the world standards but from god's standard perspective what does real faith look like the kind of faith that actually works the kind of faith that actually does something because i think for us we've got a challenge in our generation and john piper drew it out in a quote somebody brand i think it was you that posted it maybe somebody else on facebook and it just really resonated with me the last few weeks where he said there is a great gulf fixed between the christianity that wrestles with whether to

worship at the cost of imprisonment and death and the christianity that wrestles with whether the kids should play soccer on sunday morning there is a great gulf fixed between these kinds of christianity uh it's we're talking about two vastly different things right because in our generation we're wrestling with with things like that when the reality is there are believers in most of the world that are wrestling with whether or not they're going to be imprisoned for being in church on sunday morning or they're going to die i mean it's that kind of faith now we're not living that kind of persecution in our country we have freedoms at least at least for the moment you know uh but there is a reality that we need a kind of faith that's going to endure because life is actually hard it is difficult and the challenges that we face are real can we trust god when we're scattered i mean this is the james who is in the jerusalem church when persecution comes in the book of acts chapter 8 it gives the description of all of this where everyone is scattered except the apostles and james is still there as we talked about last week he endures a season of incredible persecution that drives the church to scatter all over the place now god had purpose in that and that the gospel is going to be preached everywhere they go yet this does not mean it's going to be easy for those that stay james endured a whole lot of persecution are you going to be faithful and is your faith going to endure when you get scattered you see this in paul's life the persecution that he sees he paul points back to even james back in in galatians chapter one in the letter there where he says after three years i went up to jerusalem to visit cephas and remained within 15 days i saw none other except the apostles and james the lord's brother and in this just reminding us that james is is somebody who's speaking from experience in that yeah when things were scattered i was able to trust the lord and and i endured through that time because there is a kind of faith that actually works and actually produces something in us and we trust god when we're when we're suffering when things get really hard james saw the persecution in jerusalem and it's the kind of persecution where rich people are oppressing poor people it's not all about that kind of oppression and class warfare for sure but

there's a reality that james is going to come to you in chapter two of the letter and where he says but you've dishonored the poor men are you are not the rich ones the ones who are oppressing you and the ones who drag you into court it's because of their faith and their goods are being plundered and their stuff's being taken from them they're losing their livelihoods because their faith in jesus does your faith work when you suffer is it the kind of faith that's going to endure the kind of faith that james is going to say in chapter five be patient therefore brothers until the coming of the lord because things are hard until then until the coming of the lord see how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth being patient about it until he receives the early and the late rains you also be patient establish your hearts for the coming of the lord is at hand do not grumble against one another brothers so that you may not be judged behold the judge is standing at the door as an example of suffering and patience brothers take the prophets who spoke in the name of the lord behold we consider those blessed who remained steadfast he said you've heard of the steadfastness of job and you've seen the purpose of the lord how he the lord is compassionate and merciful and you trust god when you're suffering and you trust him when you're struggling and you come here to verse two and verse two is talking about the testing and the trials of your life how many of you have been through a trial or two some of you have got it easy man that's good yeah i ought to hang out with you more uh some of you have got trials going on right now don't you some of you have just come out of some and some of you don't realize that tomorrow you're going into some and there's some ahead are you going to have the kind of faith that perseveres you're you're not facing necessarily the uh barbarian hordes tomorrow but you sure better be ready because the trials are coming and they're going to be real and you're you hope that you you've got the kind of faith that's going to carry you and i think the assurance that we're going to see here in the text is is really not so much one of those moments of well just suck it up buttercup right because we get that message and we need that sometimes it's like hey things are hard well suck it up and move on right well that's not quite the message we're going to get here because we don't always need that kind of message i think there's also the message that not only do you need to sometimes suck it up buttercup but sometimes the lord's going to say just lean on me and when you're not strong because you're going to need strength to carry on you're going to need to lean on christ because that's what faith does faith actually works and this is a work of faith that we trust him it's really us looking at the problems and just saying jesus you've got this it's not just saying i've got this saying you've got this so james chapter one verse two let's go ahead and stand we're going to read this section together in fact i'll i'll read from verse one just bringing us down to verse four we're going to be slowly creeping through this and it's going to be good james a servant of god and of the lord jesus christ to the 12 tribes in the dispersion greetings count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing father may you bless the reading of your word in christ's name we pray amen so james is referred to sometimes as the proverbs of the new testament he's got a a name that he's earned of being kind of the preeminent practical man among the new testament writers so one commentary just summarized it saying james's practical letter finds its focus in one set of topics it's a letter about relationships and then he goes on to describe how our obedience is being played out in the context of relationships he calls us for example to care for orphans and widows in chapter one verse 27 to be impartial in our courtesy and care for others in chapter two verse one he emphasizes the duty of love for our neighbors in chapter two verse eight he talks about uh just the the uh royal law of love and how he scorns kind of a profession of faith which fails in love and compassion in chapter two verse 15 he applauds the life that risks itself for the sake of others who are at risk chapter two verse 25 he warns against feelings that imperil fellowship chapter three verse 14 words that denigrate a brother chapter four verse 11 we're to discharge our honorable debts in chapter five and pay those who we owe we're to guard our reaction with others in chapter five verse nine we're to minister to the sick in chapter five verse 14 share with the distressed in chapter five verse 16 to pursue those who stray from christ in chapter five verse 19 this is an instruction manual about how faith works in the context of all your relationships all of your life how god's going to get the glory and how you're going to get the growth what is it going to look like for faith to work as you mature and come to full maturity in your faith it deals with first you as the individual here and so he's talking about you counting it all joy brothers as you are going through suffering it's like being on an airplane and and they try to instruct you at the beginning when the oxygen masks drop from the ceiling who are you to take care of first you're actually to take care of yourself first and put your mask on first so that you

can breathe because in life sometimes the problems are going to be so bad you're not going to be able to breathe you're going to feel it now i was talking to somebody last week just being reminded about carly going through the cancer and just being at the the hospital at saint jude's and just sitting at the front door and and and watching kid after kid get off the bus from saint jude's housing at the ronald mcdonald's house or domino's house or one of these other places as they bus them to their doctor's appointment and one kid after another coming out just emaciated just so thin skin and bones bald trembling with every step and just sitting there as we were starting the journey even with carly and just and literally never in my life have i had this before but literally just sitting there and watching one after the other until my breath is just taken away is your faith going to work in those moments you got to be able to breathe there's going to be times when it's going to be so overwhelming you can't think there's times when it's going to be so paralyzing you can't act and what james is coming to here from experience is to tell you how to grow and how to be steadfast and how to endure and what that's going to look like in the kind of faith that matures to a to a full maturity and the these first two verses are going to be key for this it's it's really a message of enduring joyfully and going through hardships and struggles and scatterings and all those kinds of things and to do it joyfully enduring joyfully is the end and the means of this as you go through these two verses is really the counting of it and the knowing it and the letting something happen here how to enjoy hardships joyfully and it's going to be

[20:24] three things that you see in the text and we're going to unpack these how to endure endure hardships joyfully one is going to be considering them predictable two is going to be knowing them to be purposeful and three letting them be profitable and i'll come to these if you're writing those down you're going james you're talking too fast i can't write it all down consider consider them predictable knowing them to be purposeful and letting them be profitable and the joy of this or the the theme of this is the joy that we can find in serving god even consistently through those moments that's what mature faith looks like and so as i said last week when we started this this letter there's kind of a play on words happening from where he ends in verse one and to where he begins in verse two and we don't see it as well in english but in the original language the two words that he's using here at the end of verse one is the greetings that we see there in english and then to count it all joy so this joy and greetings are two words in the original language that sound very similar and it's a play on one being a greeting of expressing joy to those that you're greeting as we talked about this is in the context of their dispersion they've been scattered and so when they they could be sad they could be fearful they could be you know just dealing with the hardship of of being scattered he's expressing to them joy you be joyful greetings to you i'm wishing joy upon you i'm expressing joy to you even in the middle of your dispersion and then in verse two it's it's going from that joy that he's expressing for them and to them to now calling them to a level of joy and calling them to be joyful even as you notice as they're going through trials of various kinds so it's just it's just an interesting play on words when you you look at the word uh count it in chapter or verse two chapter one verse two counting it is the ground you're you're neat you're counting this all joy and what are you counting joy the trials no this is not a call for you to be a sociopath and love pain okay this is not for you to to live in a state of you know irony that oh i love to suffer oh bring it on i love suffering no uh if you want that i mean go to the dentist every day right uh that's not the call here it's actually you're you're you're praising god for the end result in spite of the suffering in spite of the trials uh there is something coming in this uh you're you're to endure the hardship joyfully first of all by counting it as something predictable this is how you're going to mature in your faith suffering is not a surprise it's something that you all you anticipate as a follower of jesus now you're not going through life and like bewildered every time

suffering comes and every time hardship comes like oh where did that come from god must be so completely surprised by the suffering that i'm going through right now right like oh where did god's up there in heaven going oh where did that come from how'd that happen in your life man i didn't see that coming at all that there's never a moment when

god is that way and james is speaking from experience in this count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds where you face these things it's implying not if you face these things but when you face these things it's an expectation the word in this being translated here when you meet trials is a word in the original language that speaks of possibility it refers to an action that is conditional possible and in many cases repeated meaning it is expected and it's predictable the the trials when you face when he when james words it this way he's indicating that this is something that you can absolutely expect when you meet these trials well when are you going to expect them well on the road uh he uses the word peripeteo there that's talking about just the walk your your walk of life your everyday life you moving through from uh getting up in the morning and going to work and and coming home and eating dinner and going to school and all the things that you do the daily activities as you're walking through life so count it all joy my brothers when you meet these trials as you meet them on the road as you're walking along in this in this uh part of the world during this period everybody walked and so when your life is being described your life would be described in terms of your walk that's why we talk about our christian life as our walk with christ it's it's not just an occasion on sunday morning where we gather together and that's my relationship with jesus this is just the culmination of the week and preparation for the week there's a week coming where i'm going to be walking day in and day out living my life out and what james is saying is count it all joy my brothers when you meet as you walk various kinds of trials where trials here is talking either actively or passively here it's talking passively uh is speaking of uh something that happens to you that's real technical something happens to you you're not the cause of it passive uh it's not the trouble you've gotten yourself into we do plenty of that amen i mean i mess up enough stuff on my own uh i was working on carpet in the house uh somebody lent me a carpet stretcher i won't say who because i don't want everybody going hey let me borrow it uh but i did the living room it looked great got a little cocky and then i went and did the bedroom moved all the furniture out of the bedroom and well i've got a patch of place in there shouldn't be any problem got some up in the attic and so i pulled out that carpet and i i went to put it together and i and i couldn't pull it up because i didn't want to move the bed out of the room and so uh so i just tipped it up and i i patched it on the backside and then came back rolled it out and it looked like frankenstein's monster i mean because i had a couple of pieces patched together this way and i had one piece patched together it's all good it's all the same looking carpet so surely it'll look right and i pull it over and i pulled it over and it was the absolute worst and so this was all day my day off friday is spent you know doing this all day long trials things that happen there's enough things that i do on my own and i mess things up but there's some things i have no control over there's some things that i do and i and i'm not the cause of it it's passive it's things that happen you're going to go through life as you walk as you live and you can expect that there's going to be things that are completely out of your control difficulties that come your way as you walk that you didn't do and it should not be a surprise to you and you cannot keep saying to yourself oh why is this happening to me why is this bad stuff always happening to me well because you're alive and you live in a fallen world and because we're alive and we live in a fallen world the the rain falls on the just and the unjust it's all going to happen sometimes to you i mean i think of a flat tire how many times are you going to have a flat tire in your lifetime right so you drive around without a spare tire in your car and you think well that's okay i'll do that later oh yeah you know when it's going to happen right it's going to happen when you go on a trip and you forgot to fix that flat tire and and you're going to go because everybody has a flat tire i was looking the average once every five years if you live to be 70 years old and end up driving about 52 years you're going to have five flat tires in your lifetime do something about the tire right because you can expect that it's going to happen it's not that it's just out there and maybe i'm going to dodge this bullet it's going to happen that's why they have the road hazard service it's completely predictable if you're not prepared for hardship you're going to think that the world's out to get you or god's out to get you and it's not true well maybe it is if you're disobedient that's the things you're doing to yourself but the things you have no control over verse peter 4 peter said beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you

as though something strange has happened to you but insofar as you share in christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed in other words the situation of suffering in your life the trial in your life is actually the opportunity for you as a believer to display the glory of god you've been looking for an opportunity to preach you've been out looking for an opportunity to tell your neighbors about jesus you've been looking for the opportunity to show your family the distinction about what it means to follow jesus and how it's made a difference in your life guess what when the next trial comes in your life as you're going down the road and it's not your fault and something's happened to you suffer differently you'll show the world what it means to follow jesus when you demonstrate faith that works faith that shows that you trust god even when you're scattered and suffering jesus said i've said these things to you that in me you may have peace in the world you will have tribulation but take heart i have overcome the world what's he saying i've got this i don't know what your trial is it's not a surprise it's something that should be expected maturity in our faith and the kind of faith that's going to make it is the faith that counts trials as predictable

number two mature faith endures hardships joyfully and how's it going to do that number two by knowing them to be purposeful god actually has a purpose in suffering trials are part of the plan of god for us in verse three you see the transition that he makes here for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness for you know this so in the in the one thing in the first part this is something that you are to count count it all joy or to consider it to be so that's an interesting word that he uses there because that word is first speaking of a leader and and i was trying to understand this as i was looking the word up when it says count it all joy i was like how does that speak of a leader and and it's kind of in the sense of the leader he's assuming his position of leadership he's assuming a position and so you've experienced this if you're if you're older you come to a place in your life where you realize you've got responsibility like as a husband or as a father or in a in a business in your job as a mother you've got a place of responsibility over your kids yeah you're not there to be their buddy you're actually there to be their parent it's different you love them you want to have fun with them but you actually have a responsibility and when you realize this as a as a young person you assume that position of parent and you start saying things to your kids that you never thought you'd hear yourself say right uh go clean your room if i have to tell you one more time you know all these phrases that you heard your parents say when you're growing up you're like i'm not going to be like my parents and then you have kids and you're like man here we go uh you you assume that position uh and so that word is is is has somewhat of that meaning of assuming something but it then is secondarily meaning to consider something to be so so really what he's saying here is you're in the middle of your trials you are to consider it to be good count it all joy you're to consider it to be joyful count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness you're you're to assume the position of joyfulness not about the trial but about the results about what god's going to do you're to take that on and so you count it and then in verse three he said for you know so now you're moving from counting it joy to knowing something knowing something that you're you're knowing that this is going to be purposeful for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness hardship is not random it's actually meant for us to grow james endured hardship he's been through it he understands he had no idea that he is going to be the leader of the church in jerusalem as he begins going through that stuff he has no idea how god is going to use him and what god's going to do but in the fire of all of that he emerges as the leader of the church james was being forged in fire i mean that's how you make a sword and then like you you take metal and you you put it in heat until that thing is glowing

it is under intense heat and then while it's under intense heat you take a hammer and you start to hammer that metal on an anvil so that while it's there on that anvil and being pulverized by this hammer it is just getting harder and harder and harder more dense steel more dense metal you as a person are going through difficulty so that god can strengthen you for your responsibilities ahead for your life ahead you don't know what's coming down the road you don't know what position he's going to put you in you don't know what it's going to mean to be a parent and the things that you're going to have to know you don't know what it's going to be like to be a grandparent and have to garden and still guide your kids along you don't know what it's like to be somebody that's given responsibility and yet god is using every little thing in your life to get you to that place where you're ready for what he has ahead you're being forged steadfastness it's producing this it's building in you an endurance so that you can make it

[38:00] Romans chapter 5 verse 3 Paul said it's not only this but we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because god's love has been poured into our hearts through the holy spirit who has been given to us in other words he's saying your trials are not meaningless they're not meaningless there's actually a point to this this isn't like nazi prison camp where the prisoners are digging a hole and bringing all the dirt to one side of the other camp and they get it there and think that they're finally done and then then the prison guard says okay now take the dirt and put it back it's not mindless tasks that god's bringing into your life it's not not punishment in some way where he's trying to cause you to to go to the point of despair he actually has purpose in what he's doing he's got meaning in what he's doing you're to know this you're to not only reckon this to be so and understand that god is going to have these things and so you anticipate them they're predictable but you're also to know these hardships have purpose in your life he's producing something in you he's bearing something in you he uses the word here of production just the same word that's used to in gardening where produce comes as a result of a farmer doing his work a farmer is plowing the field he's fertilizing and I don't know how all that works

I never grow anything I can't grow anything because I don't know how all that works but a farmer does and he sees the signs of the season and he starts doing things and he starts tilling the ground up and doing what's necessary aren't you glad god knows how to produce in your life he knows when to till he knows when to fertilize he knows when to seed he's got a purpose in your life that he's bringing to pass and you don't have to wonder this is the kind of faith that is at a place of maturity you know that difficulties are coming and you know that god has a purpose in this there's purpose and it's for his glory he's going to be glorified in your suffering in your struggles in your scattering he's going to grow you in this and so he's going to get the glory you're going to get the growth you're going to get the good out of this no matter how bad it is I've seen people go through struggling and situations and respond in the completely wrong way right?

you've seen that in your own life family members that have gone through something somebody else it's not you okay right? but they go through some suffering and somebody says some encouraging word to them and just says well you know the bible says that all things work together for the good of those called according to his purpose all things work for good and somebody hears that somebody that claims to be a believer hears that and say I don't need that cliché right now and I've seen that post on Facebook when somebody's going through something and somebody quotes that scripture in the middle of a situation and in our hurt and in our pain sometimes you're not listening to what you should be learning from James and instead you're responding in a wrong way and you're saying I don't need that right now I need to wallow in my suffering I need to absorb I want to drink a little bit of my wrath right now

I want to really just take it in and enjoy this moment and that is not mature faith that is absolutely immature faith that is the response of an unbeliever but for the believer mature faith looks like this it's not you coming to the suffering and the circumstance and saying I don't need clichés that's not cliché that's the revelation of God that's God speaking into the circumstances of our life so that you get a peek into heaven for just a moment and get to be reminded for just a second that everything's not about you and everything's not about your suffering there may actually be a purpose in this that's bigger than you and the suffering that you're going through right now may actually be for the purpose of your kids you got small kids in your house some of you right now and you're going through difficulty and you're thinking whoa woe is me

[43:05] God why are you bringing this into my life that's God's perspective He doesn't have to answer you He may be doing that because there's a legacy of faith that He's bringing about in your family and your kids are going to see how you suffer and they're going to watch you go through some things and they're going to watch you trust God through

your suffering or not and some of your kids are going to determine their faith because of what they've seen in you God has a purpose mature faith that actually works understands this you know this brothers it's producing something in you it enables you to endure hardships joyfully not meaning you love the hardship but that you understand the bigger picture number three letting the trials be profitable for us let perseverance have its finished work its complete work knowing this that faith produces steadfastness and let verse 4 let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing teleon full effect let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect so when he says full effect and perfect there in the ESV it's the same word let it have its full effect that you may be up to your full effect let it have let it become its finished product in you so that you can be a finished product let it bring to maturity what it's trying to bring to maturity so that you can be mature that's why I'm saying this is about mature faith

James is raising the bar from the ground where we've got it and he's raising it up to say no this is what mature faith looks like you want to see where you're really at with the Lord you want to see where your growth really is keep wallowing in your suffering and talk about being a mature believer in Christ see how that works doesn't fit maturity is seen when we count it all joy brothers when you meet these various kinds of trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness let steadfastness have its perfect work so it's in the counting it's in the knowing it and it's in the letting it letting it have its perfect work it's it's letting it be profitable let it do its job it's it's you coming to the place James is living from experience he grew up in the same household with Jesus he saw what it meant to be Jesus not just to follow Jesus he saw him day in and day out you know what your siblings are like right nobody knows you like your siblings knew you when you were growing up right they don't let you live it down amen

Dale right I mean it's just it's just the way it is you they know you James got to see Jesus now remember he was still a skeptic he became a servant something changed in him after the resurrection when he saw the risen Christ it changed him and Jesus coming to him changed him like it ought to change you and me because if the risen Jesus has come to you in your life and awakened you to your sin and shown you that you're separated from Christ and that he's your only hope and that you've surrendered your life to Jesus and you're walking with him James is saying this is what it looks like you're going to walk with him this is the goal and you may be immature in your faith and you may be struggling at those times but what James is saying is this is where the bar is let it have its full effect let steadfastness endurance have its full effect let it work let me use the word ergon work let it work its way to completion in you faith it's your trust in Christ in the crisis until he comes through because he's either going to deliver you from the crisis or he's going to give you the strength to endure it that's what mature faith does

John 15 1 Jesus said I am divine my father is the is the vine dresser every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit his purpose in you is to bear fruit I mean I had we one time we moved and we got a plum tree it was there when we moved in and there was a peach tree and when we moved into that house I just remember man it was the most beautiful thing because it was right around the time those things were blooming and that plum tree was so full of plums and that peach tree had some peaches on it and we're just we're thinking man this is going to be awesome we picked some we Brandy made some jelly out of that those plums and and they're probably still stored somewhere

I don't think we ate all those I don't remember but there wasn't many peaches but made I think we made some peach jelly or something out of that it was just awesome and then the next year there weren't hardly any and then I think it was that next year or whatever either that next year there was none or there was just a few but but before long there was nothing I mean there was like one sick little peach on there and and just a few plums and I'm like man what happened man it was growing so well it was doing so good it was coming along I was expecting all kinds of fruit out of these trees I'm I'm thinking man I need to open a little vegetable shop or something you know sell some stuff on the highway this is going to be awesome and and we get there and it's like there's nothing and I'm talking to somebody they said well did you prune the tree like prune the tree like what do you

even mean I thought that stuff just grows right it grows produces fruit and it's awesome and you just keep picking it and eating it and it's great and they're like no if you don't prune it see especially on that plum tree what happens is the branches start growing over each other in different places and when the wind blows those branches start knocking the blooms off and and start taking them off so you're supposed to trim them

[50:30] I can't remember it's 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock along the branch or something like that I never did understand it but you're supposed to trim those so that they don't knock the blooms off and then eventually it starts producing all kinds of fruit because that's what you do you keep pruning it and as you prune it it produces and what God is doing in our life along the way as you're going through life things that you didn't necessarily bring in your life circumstances that have fallen on you are actually moments where God is using the heavenly prune pruning shears that's the word I was working for the heavenly shears to prune your life and he's pruning in such a way that if you'll let him have his perfect work in your life and you'll look at this as God's purpose in your life and let him have his way in this he's going to grow bring fruit that you could have never produced without him it's his plan

I am the true vine my father is the vine dresser every branch in me that doesn't bear fruit he takes away every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit the purpose is for fruit bearing I mean you look through the scripture and we have example after example of people going through very difficult circumstances the severity of trials and they're provided here to show us what maturity looks like look at Job's life as James even refers to maybe the prime example of suffering in the Bible how's he tested was tested in his health wasn't his fault wasn't something he brought wasn't something he did to himself this was as he referred to an arrow of the almighty it was from the hand of God

God brought these things into my life my sickness you can sit around and be bitter about it you can wallow in your anger about it wish it was somebody else's stuff to deal with or in the maturity of faith you can recognize that God has a purpose in this these things that have befallen you are actually from the Lord with a purpose his wealth is taken away from him his livestock is lost his family dies and all he's left with is a nagging wife amen curse God and die friends that talk too much intense suffering he said oh no this was from the hand of God scripture says and he did not sin with his mouth you look at somebody like Joseph and you look at Joseph sold into slavery by his own brothers falsely accused imprisoned in Egypt talk about trials wasn't his fault he didn't do it he was doing the right thing yet he said what you meant for evil

God meant for good God had a purpose in all the trials every one of them David being persecuted running from Saul and what a picture we've seen in our bible reading constant danger and yet he's able to continue to maintain his faith in the Lord and says it's the Lord who's my refuge it's the Lord who's my rock it's the Lord who's my hiding place the Lord is my light and my salvation Psalm 21 7 David said whom shall I fear for the Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid what do I have to be afraid of what circumstances what can they do to me it's not just faith in faith itself it's faith in Christ make no mistake this isn't just about faith and pulling yourself up by the bootstraps this is you putting your faith in

Jesus it's Christ who gives you strength it's what Isaiah spoke of in Isaiah 53 when he said he was despised he was rejected by mankind a man of suffering familiar with pain like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised and we held him in low esteem he gave the picture of who Christ was going to be Christ understands our suffering he understands our difficulties when you come to the New Testament Peter reminds you in 1 Peter 2 21 he said it was to this you were called because Christ suffered for you leaving an example that you should follow in his steps he committed no sin no deceit was found in his mouth and when they hurled insults at him he did not retaliate when he suffered he made no threats instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly what does mature faith look like count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing you see I think the kind of strength we need today is going to be more than just some kind of superficial faith you don't have to live long as a follower of Christ to realize that our focus needs to be on Jesus and when the trials

come every time we've got to say he's got this there's not a single thing in my life that I can't say he's got this he's going to deliver me or he's going to give me strength but he's never never never going to leave me the promise

[57:08] I remember James Dobson giving a story he was talking about this Shaw in India and how this he was a man that really loved his wife and had such a great relationship with his wife and she was sick and she was dying so he she made him promise that he would make a shrine and all this stuff and obviously they're pagan make a shrine that I'll never be forgotten and so when she died he comes to this place he starts building this building they bring her casket there and the construction starts around this place and it just it turns into this incredible incredible building it's the Taj Mahal it's it's just immaculate all this marble and beautiful structure and all of this stuff and it was all being built and it ended up turning from a project that was just going to be a short time into years of a project year after year he's working on this project and continuing to add to it and add pools and add this stuff and it's just this it turns into this gigantic edifice beautiful people everywhere talking about how awesome this thing is and as he as the story goes it comes along and it's getting closer to the time of opening this thing up for everybody to see the inside and he commands his servants there's trash everywhere he's like get all this stuff out of here and they clear it all out not realizing that one of the boxes that they cleared out was the actual body of his wife and as

Dobson told the story he said he said this is just the perfect picture of a focus gone wrong building beautiful edifice so that his wife will be remembered and in the process gets so caught up in the work itself that he forgets it was all about her I think the reality for our spiritual life is this as we go through life it's not just about pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps and being a better you and being stronger in yourself it's realizing that as you go through this life and as you travel down the road of this life it's actually not about you it's about Jesus who died for you and gives you life and it's not just that he died for you and gave you life but that he's giving you life right now we come to our invitation time really a time of response it's really a time for you to just to do some self examination as you look at the scripture to say

God going through some times in my life right now going through some difficulty and I don't want a faith that's going to fail in this I don't want the kind of faith that's going to stumble along every time something happens Lord do I have faith that's real in you are you really the focus of all this are you really the heart of my life are you really what I live for what I'm breathing for the strength that's going to carry me from day to day my prayer for us is that as we continue on in this and start examining ourselves that we will start to take hold of Jesus in some fresh ways and say you know what I'm not going to live like I used to live I'm going to let God do what he's going to do I'm not going to get mad about these things in my life I'm not going to be frustrated with this

I'm going to let these become the platform for his praise I'm going to let these become the platform for my preaching for me to be able to tell of the God who actually makes a difference in my life because we need a faith that works I have every head bowed and every eye closed as we come to our invitation time down here and die here and part of our