

Trial And Temptation

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[0 : 01] James chapter 1. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve 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.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man and unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

[1 : 45] Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation of shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Knowing this, my beloved brothers, let every passion be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

[3 : 01] Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

For he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law of liberty, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

If anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure, and undefiled before God the Father is this.

To visit orphans, and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. Amen. May God bless to us this reading of his holy word.

[4 : 16] Let us turn now to looking at this chapter, and we're going to focus today, James chapter 1, verses 12 through to 17.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above. Coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. We need to remember that God's great purpose for us in our life is to make us more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 35] Now, every single day, we might not be thinking like that. That might not be the priority of our thoughts. And as the days and the weeks and the months of our life go by, there are times we do think about it and we do realize and we do understand that God's purpose is to mold us and to shape us to be like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, some days, we don't think like that. And we must remember that on those days when life doesn't go as we purposed and as we planned, that God is working through these circumstances and these events that have gone completely against us.

God is actually working through these things for our ultimate good. And even things that are unpleasant and things that are painful, we so often think, oh, what on earth is happening here? And while these things can be distressful, God will use them in his hand. They are tools that he uses to mold us and to shape us.

And I think the life of Jacob is a classic example of that because Jacob, if you were to study the life of Jacob and certainly worth studying, one of the beauties of him is that as he gets older and older and older, he becomes a greater believer.

[7 : 13] The Jacob that's coming to the end of life is vibrant, he is spiritual, he's mature, he has so grown.

There's something beautiful about the life of Jacob at the end and yet throughout his life, that wasn't the main characteristic but God was at work in Jacob's life changing him. And there was once Jacob said, you know, all these things are against me.

That's how he saw it. He just looked at life and he was seeing just one calamity after another. One loss after another. Few and evil have been the days of my life is what he was saying.

And yet at the end, he was able to see that God was actually working, working it all for his good. And he's doing the very same for you and for me as well. Now, we see here that God uses trial for our growth.

And in order for us to use trial in the right way, which is part and partial of our Christian development, because we're told about this, blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test.

[8 : 32] We have to ask God for something in particular. Yes, of course, we ask for grace. But in the context of which this is written, it's very obvious that it's under trial.

If we go back to verse 5, we see there, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously. And of course, this is in the whole context of trial, because in verses 2 and 3, there we see, counted all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

And this wisdom that we ask for, it's not the kind of wisdom that you can pick up in a book. Not the kind of wisdom that you'll get by going to schools or colleges or universities.

It's not just a matter of developing knowledge in your mind. This wisdom is God-given. It's that discretion. It is that discernment.

It is that understanding that you'll never work out in the world in and of itself. It's God-given. And when you're going through trials and difficulties and you're not working out and you're crushed maybe by it, ask the Lord for this wisdom.

[9 : 43] Lord, give me the wisdom. Give me the understanding. Give me the discernment. Give me to see. Even though I won't understand fully, but give me to understand a bit of what exactly is happening.

What is going on. And so it's vital that we ask for this wisdom. Now, in the Bible, trial is shown in different ways.

Sometimes it is shown as coming in the way of like, for instance, winnowing. Winnowing wheat where you're separating the chaff, tossing, shifting.

It's like Peter. Remember when Jesus said to Peter, you know, you're coming under a fuchsia battering from Satan. And he said, Simon, Satan has desired to have you that he will sift you like wheat.

But I prayed for you that your faith won't fail. And so a lot of the buffetings that we have in life, a lot of the temptations that come our way, it's absolutely essential that we pray for the grace, the strength, and the wisdom to enable us to stand.

[10:51] because God wants us to stand to remain steadfast. This is part of what it's all about. Developing this steadfastness, this perseverance, this ability to keep going in the face of difficulties, in the face of trials.

The other picture that's often given to us of what God is doing is refining like gold. You know how gold goes through the fire, but it's simply to take off the dross.

Anything that's not of value or of worth, that's got rid of in the fire. But what is of valuable, what is valuable and of worth, that remains. And that's what God does with us as well.

You and I know fire. Fire is painful. And fire is something that we just recoil from. And yet, we are tried.

That's so often what Scripture tells us. And so, in these days when we feel like we're going to go under or we can't go on anymore or we feel like it's hurting too much and we sometimes say, Lord, this is beyond me.

[12:02] What we need to do in the midst of that is say, Lord, grant me the wisdom and the grace and the strength to keep going. I feel like giving up. I feel, Lord, it's not fair. This is hurting so much.

Ask the Lord in the midst of telling him all these things. And you know, let me say, it's important to tell the Lord exactly how you feel. We've often said it, that's one of the beauties of the Bible, one of the beauties of the Psalms is the brutal honesty of the Psalmists because sometimes, sometimes their language is language that we would be almost hesitant to use before God, the way they speak to God.

So it's important to be honest with God and to tell him how it is but also to ask for all these things which God can give us.

And we see how important it is to keep going, to be steadfast for it tells us for when he has stood the test, he or she will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him.

See, there's a crown at the end of it all. We don't just go through this and that's it. God has something glorious to give at the end of it all.

[13:17] Paul talks about how he's running this race for the prize for the crown and the reward is so, so extraordinary. It's an enriching experience. We're told the person who receives this will be blessed.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast. Scripture gives many references to the crown. Paul talks of the crown of righteousness and Peter talks about the crown of glory and Isaiah talks about the crown of glory and the beautiful royal diadem.

So here we have this crown of life and of course a crown is an emblem of honour. A king wears a crown. A queen wears a crown. And that's got a picture of how it will be in glory.

there will be a kingly, queenly, as it were, honour placed upon every single believer because we're told that we are heirs and joint heirs with Christ with the King of glory.

And we're going to reign with him. Whatever your station in life in this world is, however low you may feel that you are in life.

[14:32] Remember as a believer your future is one of reigning with Christ Jesus. Isn't that an amazing thought? And again a crown symbolises an endlessness and a fullness and of plenty and continuity and that again is a picture of how it will be in glory this eternal satisfaction.

and a crown again is a picture of victory. We receive the crown after the struggle at the end of the conquest. A conquest costs.

Don't get a conquest for nothing. Don't get a pain-free conquest. And so it is in the Christian life it is after the fight and after the struggle that you receive the crown.

The crown of glory, the crown of life that fades not away. And that is the beauty of the Christian life. The beauty of the Christian race. Very often in a race one receives first.

Very often you will get a second and a third. You know people often don't remember those who were second and third in a race. It is very often who won it. But you know in the Christian life everyone who races gets a crown.

[15:51] Everyone who races is remembered. And you know their place in glory is reserved for your names on it. Isn't that wonderful? Reserved in heaven for you as we are told in Peter.

So we are being prepared for this wonderful inheritance and we are being prepared through the trials that we go through in this life. But then from verse 13 it moves from trial and yet it is still as it were within the same sphere into temptation.

The two T's that are at the very heart of the Christian life trial and temptation. And the thing is everybody in life is tempted. There isn't one person anywhere in this world Christian or non-Christian that doesn't experience temptation in one way or another. But the Christian is more aware of temptation and is tempted I would say a lot more. And we have always got to remember that there is a distinction between temptation and sin. Because very often when we go through in our mind the things that are happening in our mind and some of the struggles that go on in our mind and when we are maybe tempted to think in a particular way or tempted about things that there is a distinction between actual temptation and sin. [17:18] Because very often we begin to think that the moment that we are tempted that we are sinning. But we are not. Temptation very often leads into sin in our mind and by our speech and by our action.

But not always. And one of the very clear ways that we can see that temptation doesn't equal sin is to look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus was tempted.

He was tempted in all points like as we are. That's what the Bible tells us. Yet without sin. So that's a very clear distinction that we have to make.

But as we say it's very easy to go from temptation into sin. It's such a fine line. And I think what we see here and it's very one of the things that James is really highlighting is that when we give in to temptation and when we sin, we are the ones who sin.

And I think it's important for us to grasp hold of that today because we live very, very much in a blame culture. Whose fault is it? When anything goes wrong anywhere, there's so often an inquiry, and don't get me wrong, often these inquiries are important and essential and so very often great findings come out of them.

[18:43] But always, there always seems to be blame. Whose fault was it? Why did this happen? We've got to find out whose fault.

It's always somebody else's fault. And when we, maybe the finger points to us, we learn to say, oh, it's my background, it's the people I hung about with, it's a family that I was raised in, it's the genes I inherited, it's always somebody else's fault.

The Bible says, no, actually, it's you, it's me. You're the one who sins. I'm the one who sins. And the blame culture goes all the way back to Eden.

Nothing new. This isn't something just for our time. When Adam was confronted by God, when he disobeyed God, what did Adam do?

Straight away, he put the blame on Eve and on God. That's what he did. He said to God, the woman that you made, the woman that you gave me, she gave me to eat.

[19:56] See what he's doing? Putting the blame straight away on Eve and on to God. That's what he tried to do. But it wasn't Eve who put the fruit in Adam's mouth and worked his jaws and made him chomp on it.

She gave it to him, but he took it. And you see, we have to own up and realize that we are the ones that disobey. We are the ones that sin.

Yes, Satan tempts us ferociously and buffets us and it's so easy to give in. But we've got to remember that there is a huge responsibility placed upon us.

We very often say, oh, it's the devil that made me do it. How often are we saying, oh, you know, the devil made me do that. Well, he might be, very likely he was in the background and very likely he was doing his worst and he was really inclining you and making the temptation so powerful and so alluring.

But we're the ones who actually bit. We're the ones who did. You know, devil's like a fisherman or a fisherwoman. You know, when you go fishing and you take all these lovely flies to catch fish, fish, but you know, they've got murderous hooks and barbs on them so that when the fish bites, that's it, it's on.

[21:15] If it at all bites properly. And you know, that's what's happening to us. That Satan is going about and he dangles, as it were, so alluringly, so unenticingly, this bait.

And you know, Satan doesn't tempt us in order that we'll have a good time. Doesn't dangle before all the temptation which is so alluding. You know, he knows you like a book.

He can read your heart like a book. He knows your weaknesses. He knows where you're most prone to give in. He knows what will get you. And he comes from all the different angles.

If there's a successful strategy, he'll keep using it, but he likes to vary it and he'll come from all different angles. But let us remember that always his end is death.

His aim is ultimate death. He isn't there to give you a good time and just to give you a wee while of enjoyment. He's there to trap you and entice you and take you away from God.

[22 : 20] And if at all possible, that you'd end up losing your soul. That's his aim. That's his purpose. And we've always got to remember that. if we could see the end result of where some temptation could take us, we'd fly a hundred miles.

If David had been able to see the end result of that long lingering look that he took looking at Bathsheba, and if he could have seen the train of events that was going to follow, and he was going to see the sword never leaving his family, and he was going to see his sons being killed, and he was going to see his wives being violated, and he was going to see all these kind of things happening, as a result, he would have walked away.

But you know, we don't see the end result. Satan will hide that from us. And so, that's why it's so important that we nip temptation in the bud.

And you know, the thing is, that you and I are not strong enough to nip it in the bud on our own. We've said it often enough before, but a hundred times out of a hundred, we will fail if we try and deal with temptation on our own.

I'm not strong enough, you're not strong enough. And we've always got to remember that temptation does ultimately end in death.

[23 : 45] You see, there's a process to it. We see it, just what it says, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

You see, it begins in the mind. Then it enters into the will. And then the will takes it into action. And the action brings death. It's a process.

And we see also very clearly that all temptation is deception. Do not be deceived, my beloved brother. brother. But then, finally, just in a word, we see, and this is so tied into all that's gone before.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Do you see what's being said here?

God is good, and God is constantly giving what is good. And that is very important for us to lay hold of in light of temptation. Because temptation tells us, you know, you need this now.

[24 : 56] There's an urgency in getting this now. You've been tempted. You've been tempted. And if we could stand back and realize, very often, or nearly always, temptation is asking us to take something out with God's plan.

Out with God's will for our lives. And we've got to remember that God is good, and God wants to give us the best. But we often want to take, we want to take, often to take out with that.

And I'm sure that very often in our lives, we've said one of two things. I wish I had waited. And often we say, the other thing we say is, I am so glad I waited.

I'm sure you said both of these things in your life. I'm so glad that I waited. And you've often said, oh, you know this, I wish I had waited. And that's so important for us to take on board is because we see from here that temptation is going against God's word, against God's will.

But God is good, and God is perfect, and everything about him is good and perfect. And God will only give us what is good and perfect. perfect. The Bible shows us that his work is perfect.

[26 : 19] His work of creation is perfect. His work of redemption is perfect. God's word is perfect. God's work is perfect. God's will is perfect.

God's way is perfect. Everything about God is perfect. So James is really saying that nothing, nothing good comes except from God, and nothing except good comes from God.

Basically, that's what he's saying. And that he is the giver, that the giver is the father of lights.

There's no darkness in God. And you know, when we take what is right, and when it's God given, there's an accompanying peace with it.

When we take what's wrong, it might feel good for a wee while, but very often it turns sour, because it's not God's way. And so it's important that we wait upon the Lord.

But the ultimate gift that he gives us is salvation. And you know, see what it says here, the last thing, that he doesn't change his mind. That's basically what it's saying. With whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

[27 : 29] This perfection, no shadows on God. And there's no change. Imagine if God was a changeable being. That would mean that your and my salvation would be up in the air all the time.

Imagine that. That yesterday you had full assurance, you read God's word, it was so clear. You came to church today and you have no idea. Because imagine if scripture said that God can change his mind or is prone to changing his mind.

That would mean that we would never, ever, ever know whether we were saved or not. Couldn't count in it. But today we can. Because God can't change.

Can't change his mind. Can't change his promise. His word is true. What a peace, what a satisfaction, what a rest that gives our souls.

Well I hope today that you know this Lord, this great Lord as your own Lord. And that you'll be able to rest in him. And remember to ask for the wisdom.

[28 : 35] I must do so as well. as we face temptation and face trial. To get that wisdom and discretion and understanding. And in the face of all that we go through.

And that the Lord will help us every step of the way. Let's pray. Lord our God we give thanks again for your word and we pray that that word will guide us as we journey through life.

And pray that you will whet our appetite for your word. That we will love you as you have revealed to us in your word. Bless us we pray. Cleansing us from all our sin.

In Jesus name we ask it. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm number 19. The 19th Psalm. This is from the Scottish Psalter.

It's on page 223. Psalm 19. Again we see there God's law is perfect.

[29 : 36] God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies. God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise. The statutes of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart.

The Lord's command is pure and doth light to the eyes impart. And all this about God's word. Verse 11. Moreover they thy servant warn how he his life should frame.

A great reward provided is for them that keep the same. Psalm 19 verses 7 to 11. God's law is perfect and converts. God's law is perfect and converts.

God's law is perfect and converts. God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

The statutes of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart.

[31 : 00] The Lord's command is pure and doth light to the eyes impart.

Unspotted is the fear of God and doth endure forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

They more than gold give much fine to be decided that land honey, honey, from the gold that drop a sweet and fire.

more more over they thy servant lord, how he his life should frame, our heavenly Lord provide for to them that keep the same.

[32 : 47] Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.