

James Part 2

Trials / Triumph

James 1:2-12

Memory Verses: James 1:2

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Last week we began looking at the book of James. James is a letter written by James; the half brother of Jesus, to the persecuted church. And that's why James wrote about what he wrote about... because James knew that every believer, especially those going through hard times, really needs two things... they need faith, and they need to live in accordance to that faith by working diligently for the Lord. They need to depend on God and they need to do work for God... Because Faith Works. It's as simple as that; Faith works.

And so this morning we are going to begin to see how exactly faith works. Look with me if you will at **James 1:2-12** and let's read that together and as we do I want you to take a mental note every time we read the word faith; I want you to notice how in this passage faith works.

If we had to boil this entire passage down to one idea, one main point, I think it would be this; **"Every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish."** Listen, I know we need faith for a lot of things...if not everything, but I am so glad that James starts here, because I don't know about you, but for me, the thing I feel that I need faith the most for in this life is trials... its the times of suffering and pain. When I'm going through a storm, and I can't figure out the why and the how and the when... and I'm pressed and stressed and overwhelmed and on the verge of giving up... what I need in that moment is faith; to go on, to persevere, to accept the fact that I may not get an answer as to why... but I can trust that my God has it all under control. You don't get to that point on your own... you only get there with faith!

That's why I love the Bible. Faith is messy. It's not a "if we go through trials." It's a "when we go through trials." Like, if you aren't in one right now... you will be in one soon. We will all experience trials and storms and suffering. It's not a maybe... its a guarantee. But in the midst of our trials we have a promise that they aren't all bad... in fact they are good. I don't know about you... but thats messy. Well what kind of trials? What about divorce? Well, I love that James just lumps every trial into the word "various." Divorce would fit in various. What about a kid who is just off the rails? Various. What about loosing a loved one? Yep. What about financial trouble? Various. All of them. If you fear it and if it tries your faith... its a trial.

And so every trial that we fear to go through is a test of our faith

meant to lead us to a triumphant finish. Our trials have a purpose and a plan... and so we don't need to be afraid of them. In fact we are called to embrace them. We are called to consider them all Joy!

How do we consider our trials joy? There's where the messy comes in again. You see, I've heard this my whole life, since I was a little kid, and since then I've gone through a lot of trials, but standing here thinking about the trials to come, I just have to be honest... I'm not like "man, I can't wait for the next trial. Lisa, babe, the next trial, it's probably gonna be a doosy man... I hope its a big one cause it's gonna bring us so much joy!" Right? Like even then you should be like... that guys cracked... like he's one conspiracy theory away from a straight jacket. His raisin bran only has one scoop of raisins. Right? No, counting our trials all joy is still a little out there for us right? So how do we come to terms with this idea? Let's go back to our main statement; **Every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish**. Every trial is a test, that if we pass will help us triumph... it will lead to greater joy. We don't necessarily ask for trails, but when we are going through a trial isn't in a comfort to know that if we pass the test it will lead us to a better place then we were before? So this morning I want us to know how to count it all joy. I want us to know how to face our trials and pass the test of faith. There are four ways in this passage this morning where we can find the faith to pass the test of our trials and triumph in the end.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first is this... **Our Trials Become Triumphs When We Allow Them To Mature Us**. Look again at **vs. 3-4** which tells us that the testing of our faith produces steadfastness which when complete matures us so that we are lacking nothing spiritually. Now let's put this up against the backdrop of your life; how have you matured as a person and as a believer? Is it because everything that you have gone through has been great? Every obstacle: conquered, every temptation: overcome. There's been no heart ache, no loss, no sorrow, and life has been a perpetual paradise on earth for you? Or have you grown because there have been hard times, sorrows, pains, hardships and failures? The answer is simple, you don't even need to answer... we all know we grow through trials. That's why we have phrases like; "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Right? Every pain, every obstacle, every time you thought you were right but you were dead wrong has been your guide into maturity. In the words of the great theologian Yoda; "the greatest teacher, failure is."

And we know this and yet we still hate the trials... we still run from that wave. Even though we know that our trials are our greatest teachers, we still don't believe that the gain is worth the pain. So let me try to show you how God uses our trials to mature us and maybe it will help ease some of your fear of the trials yet to come. Let me teach you a phrase from A. W. Tozer. **"Nature's wonders follow the plow."** You say, what in the world does

that mean? So let me give you a visual illustration to help us here. Here we have some fallow, **undisturbed soil**. In his book, Paths to Power, Tozer tells of the relationship between fallow undisturbed ground and the farmers plow. The undisturbed, natural field; beautiful and serene lies there in sleepy contentment. It just exists without a care in the world. But it also produces nothing. No fruit, no vegetables, nothing of value. Until one day it is violently ripped apart by the farmers plow, broken up, and shredded into chaos. Only after it has faced it's crushing defeat to the plow is the ground ready to accept seed and burst forth with life!

You will face the plow in this life... but the plow isn't meant to destroy you, it's meant to cultivate you and bring real life out of you. "Nature's wonders follow the plow." The point is clear... when the plow comes, when trials come... **Don't let any of your pain go to waste, rather let your suffering produce spiritual maturity.** Our trials become triumphs when we come out a more mature, stronger person on the other side. **Every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish.**

So one way our trials become triumphs is when we allow it to mature us. But secondly... **Our Trials Become Triumphs When They Cause Us To Depend More On Jesus.** Look at **vs.5** which tell us that if you need wisdom on how to persevere through these trials and the test of faith ask God for wisdom and you will get it. So it works like this. When things are great, and you are living that sitcom life then your need for Jesus or his wisdom goes down. When you are flying high like that... my guess is that God's not really on your radar as much. I mean you may give Him a couple "atta boys" but if everything is smooth sailing, there's no need to talk to the captain.

But, our captain wants to chat... he wants to be a part of your life and so he causes you to lack so you will come to him and he can supply your needs. That's why while in verse 4 it says you will be lacking nothing in verse 5 it says "but if you lack." Cause you may be growing in your walk with God as you allow your trials to be a teacher and lead you to a stronger maturity but... you may still be like God enough is enough. You may be like me sometimes and say, "hey God; have I not learned your lesson yet? Have I not grown in maturity through these trials yet? So what gives? Why are you still allowing me to go through this stuff... and at that point in our lacking.... we go to him and depend on him to fill our lacking with wisdom. **God's desire is that you would depend upon him as the most satisfying thing in this world...** and when you don't... he'll send you a scenario to help you put your eyes back on him. Listen, God doesn't want to cause you pain for pain's sake... he isn't sadistic. Rather he is the exact opposite... he wants you to be the happiest most joyful you can be, and so he must do whatever it takes to take your eyes off of the pleasures of this world that don't fulfill and onto him... this is real

wisdom.

So let's go back to the **soil illustration**. I've plowed my field and planted the seeds and did everything that I could possibly do to make these plants grow. But what's if a famine comes and there's no rain and my plants are withering in the sun. I've done everything I can do so where else can I turn? I must turn to God. That's why every ancient religion has a god of the harvest or a rain god; because they knew they had to depend on a higher power to bring the rain and harvest. Of course, we know that there is only one God and he is God of both the harvest and the rain and so we must depend on him. Trial always turn us back to prayer and back to depending on God! **Every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish.**

So trials lead us to maturity. That's a win. And trials lead us to depend more upon Christ more. That's also a win. But there's more here. You see... **Our Trials Turn To Triumphs When We Choose To Fight Our Doubts.** Look again at **vs.6-8** which tells us to believe in the Lord's help in our trials without doubting – but if you doubt you are not good. That seems rough... it seems pretty harsh huh? Like am I not allowed to doubt? At all? That's a good question. Let's address that. I want you to look at one story that I think will help us frame what these verses are talking about. In **Mark 9** we see the story of the demon possessed boy who Jesus heals. The father basically says help him if you can and Jesus is like, If I can? I can do anything for those who believe and the father says this in **Mark 9:24** "I believe, help my unbelief." Now can any of you agree with this statement. Like, God I want to believe so help me believe. This was good enough because Jesus healed his son. Why? Because his father believed even though he doubted a little. So... believing doesn't mean never doubting... it means choosing to believe even though we doubt.

So there may be some of you here who have gone through trials or are going through a trial and that trial has caused you to question some things when it comes to Christ and his love for you... or maybe it's shaken your theology a little.... and you're all like maybe i'm not even worthy to be a Christian anymore because I have doubts. That's not right... that's not Christianity. Doubting is all a part of growing and maturing. Where in the world did you get this idea that in order to be a Christian you couldn't have any doubts... That's foolish. Of course you are going to have doubts. The difference is whether or not those doubts cause you to stop fighting. That is what these verses are talking about... the double minded man is the one who doubts and then just gives into those doubts and gives up on his faith and simply says... i'm done with God i'm done with Christianity... God didn't do it my way so I'm out. Listen... God honors the fight. When you go through trials and still choose to keep fighting doubts and choosing to believe God you will come out on the other side triumphant! **Every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish.**

But still there is one more way to win in our trials. **Our Trials Turn To Triumphs When We Overcome Resentment.** Look at **vs.9-11** where we see that there's a trial of poverty which we can rejoice, and there's the blessing of riches which will vanish. What is God showing us here? He's showing us that our trials will test not just our love for God but our love for others. When we are going through hardships it will be very easy for us to see everyone else who is not going through hardships and envy them and even resent them. Why am I sick and they are healthy? Why am I poor and they are rich? Why is my marriage so hard and theirs so easy... it's not fair. So back to our **soil illustration**. So i've plowed up the ground, I've planted the seeds... and i've got nothing over here... famine has killed my hopes of growing anything. I've prayed, I've gone to church and prayed, I've tithed extra money and prayed, I've served my neighbors... like i've done all this for you God and yet nothing? And... I look over there and my next door neighbor, who is a pagan, who beats his wife, who steals at his job, who is just an awful person and he has the most lush, beautiful garden i've ever seen right? What gives? It's not fair. Have you ever been there? Where you begin to resent everyone who you think has a perfect life because you are struggling and they aren't?

First, if they aren't struggling they will be. **Real life isn't what you see on facebook and Instagram.** That family you are resenting doesn't have it all together, they aren't always happy, and they have storms just like you. Secondly, the same love, forgiveness, and mercy you need to come to a loving God... they need that too. James is saying... with God the playing field is level... we all need Jesus.

Application

So how can we consider all of our trials joy? How do we turn our trials into triumphs? We let them mature us, we let them turn our eyes upon Jesus, we let them grow our belief in the midst of doubting, and we let them see others as they truly are... in the same boat as us; in need of Jesus. Listen... this is the bottom line – we all need Jesus. Nothing else matters. If everything goes wrong and the bottom falls out on our finances, our health, our marriages, our relationships, our homes, our kids, if it all goes to pot... and in the midst of that you find that Jesus is all you really need... then you have won! You have really won! This is how trials and the testing of our faith turns into triumph... when we come through it still holding onto Jesus. And at that moment we will realize something crazy.. we haven't been holding onto him... he's been holding onto us! **Every trial we fear is a test of faith for our triumphant finish**

Conclusion

As we close... let's look at our final verse today, **vs.12**. Blessed

are we when we come through the trials and testing steadfast... still standing... we will receive the crown of life. The ultimate triumph is when we have left the trials and pains and sufferings of this life behind and have received eternal life in heaven with Jesus forever. Listen we are not living for our best life now... even though Jesus is trying to give that to us to some degree. But we are living for our best life forever after... and so we gladly endure the pain of this life for that. **Every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish.**

So are you in a trail or testing today? I want to pray for you. Do you know Jesus; the only way to truly triumph over the pains of this life? Today would be a great day to surrender your life to him.