From Trouble to Triumph, Part 3
James 1:5-12
59-6

Let's open our bibles to the first chapter of James as we look together to the word of God. In verses 2 through 12. While you are preparing for the study of God's word together, let me just remind you that it is a common occurrence in life certainly is in my life and I'm in little doubt that it is in your life, as well, as a Christian, to meet people who thought they were Christians.

I think that's pretty routine. People who felt they were saved, believe they knew God and then some severe difficulty came into their life, exposed the reality that they didn't know God at all when they proved to be unable to deal with that severe trial. Their faith was revealed. It was found to be dead faith, not living faith, non-saving faith. They were unable to hold on to the resources provided in those who really believe in God.

And they forsook what appeared to be perhaps a genuine faith. The kind of trials that come into life all the time are intended to do that. To sort of prod people out of their security, to awaken them to the fact that they either do trust God or don't in the direst of human circumstances. Trials do serve a very helpful purpose in affirming to us, either legitimacy of the illegitimacy of our faith. And that is exactly what James has in his mind in this opening section of this wonderful epistle.

He is concern throughout the entire epistle with the matter of living faith. He is concerned with the subject and the issue of genuine salvation. And as we have noted the whole epistle is a series of tests intended to reveal the legitimacy of someone's faith. The whole epistle is a series of tests for living faith. The first one is the test of severe trials.

When trials come into our life, they reveal that faith is real or it is not. It holds or it does not. We hang on to God and count on his resources or we don't. And that is something that we need to know. We need all of us to understand the strength or the genuineness of our own faith. We need not only to recognize it in our own lives, but in the lives of other people as well.

Now to kind of bring this into an illustration biblically, let me ask you a couple of questions, how would you judge the spiritual life of a person who one, willingly heard the gospel, open ears, anxious, eagerness. Secondly, received personally the word without resistance. Thirdly, responded with joy and fourthly, believed? Someone who willingly heard the gospel, received personally the word, responded with joy, and believed?

Now, does that mark genuine salvation? Does that identify a true Christian? Is that the characteristic of genuine saving faith? Well, let's find out by looking at a verse in Luke chapter 8. Luke chapter 8 verse 13, and here is one verse that explains a portion of the parable of the soils, has to do with the shallow soil that had rock underneath the ground.

And it says, they on the rock are they who when they hear, willingly hear the gospel, receive the word, received personally, the word, concerning Christ's salvation, received it with joy. And these have no root who for a while believe, but in time of testing, what? Fall away. Now you'll notice here we have those who heard the gospel received personally the word, responded with joy and believed and fell away. So all of that in and of itself is something short of saving faith, but may never have been manifested to be less than saving faith if it hadn't been for trials. If it hadn't been for a time of testing.

A time of testing. That little phrase, a time of testing, is a very interesting phrase. It is a crucial part of God's design for people. So, that the reality of their faith, what it really is can be made manifest. The word time here is not *chronos* which means chronological time, like right now it's 6:35 or so. It's not chronological time in the sense of calendars and watches. It is *kairos*, that's a different word. That means a destined time. A time of opportunity, a circumstance, a particular season. And so what he is talking about here is not a time on the clock, but a time in destiny. A time in one's life. There will come a time of testing. And in this case, there were those who fell away. It doesn't mean that they once belonged to God, the verb literally means, *aphistemi*, to stand apart from.

In the time of testing they stood apart from God. They never had belonged to him and the testing manifested it. Again, we go back to 1 John 2:19, "If they had been of us, they would have remained with us, but they went out from us that it might be made manifest that they never were of us." These are people who in the time of testing stand alone. They stand apart from God. They do not really know God at all.

Oh, like the seed in Luke 8, they find a little bit of topsoil and it's just enough for the plant to stand up, but it never takes root, so the idea here is not uprooting, that's not the idea. There never was a root, the plant just stood by itself in the dirt as it were, and the union with the soil was only an apparent union never at true relationship. Never the kind of union that could root the plant deeply and cause it to grow and bear fruit.

But the reality of that inadequate kind of faith wasn't manifested until the testing, by the way, the term here in Luke 8:13 is the same term *peirasmos* the time of trial that James talks about. Now let's go back to James and see how James teaches us on this same theme.

Trials cannot destroy faith. I want you to know that. I want to keep emphasizing that. Trials do not destroy faith, they only put it to the test. And the faith that stands the test is proven to be genuine and the faith that fails the test is proven to be false. Trials cannot destroy faith, they can only test it.

Not last week, I showed you that trials have many purposes. Do you remember what we said? God sends trials to humble us. He sends trials to wean us from the world. He sends trials to call us to concentrate on eternal things. He sends trials to reveal to us what we really love. He sends trials to teach us the value of God's favor and blessing. He sends trials to enable us to help others in their trials. He sends trials to develop in us greater strength of greater usefulness and one I didn't mention, sometimes he sends trials to chasten us for our sin and push us toward perfection. But James is concerned with primarily one reason God sends trials and that is to test the genuineness of our faith. As I put it last week, to measure the strength of our faith.

Now we have been saying all along that in the midst of a trial true faith will preserver. True faith will endure. True faith will hold on and move through. It will persevere to the end. It will endure any trial. And the question that James really draws us too is how does it do that. How can true faith endure any trial? How can true faith suffer any loss and still hold to its faith in God?

What gives the ability to persevere and not fall away? Well, there are several ingredients and we have been looking at them. First of all, James says, a joyous attitude. True faith possesses a joyous attitude in the midst of the severest trial. Verse 2, “My brethren, count it all joy,” or total joy or sheer joy or unmixed joy or pure joy, “when you fall into various trials.” The first attitude that is characteristic is joy in the midst of trial. There is always a window somewhere in a trial for a true believer to find a source of joy.

It maybe that we know that God is in control and we do know that. It maybe the hope of heaven as we saw with the father this morning who knew that his daughters were in the presence of Christ. But for the true believer there will be a joyous attitude and we need to cultivate that in our own spiritual life, because all that trials accomplish, and because of all that trials cannot accomplish, because they do draw us nearer to the Lord. They do strengthen us, they do make us more useful. All the positives, and because of the fact that they can never destroy true faith. They can never obviate the plan of God. They can never alter his eternal design, we can find joy in the midst of any trial.

So a joyous attitude. Secondly, there is another ingredient, that is germane to the ability to persevere and we saw that two weeks ago actually and that is an understanding mind. Notice verse 3, “Knowing this that the trial or testing of your faith produces endurance.” Now you have to go into trials with knowledge. You need to know that trials produce endurance. That is staying power, persevering power. If you don’t have any trials, you are not going to be strengthened to persevere. So a joyous attitude and an understanding mind. And thirdly we noted a submissive will.

Verse 4 he says, in the imperative, “Let endurance have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire lacking nothing.” In other words, let the trial come and let it bring the endurance. And let the endurance bring perfection. And we noted that perfection here means spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity, let it do what God wants it to do. Let it humble you. Let it wean you from the world. Let it call you to eternal hope. Let it reveal what you really love.

Let it teach you to value God’s blessing. Let it enable you to help others. Let it develop strength in you so that you can be used for greater ways in the future. Let it chasten you if that means your purification. In other words, let it do what God wants it to do, don’t fight it. So the right attitude in going into a trial a joyous, joyous attitude. The right mind is a knowing mind that understands God’s purpose and a submissive will that eagerly and anxiously accepts it knowing that through trials, we come to be like Christ. That’s the path to maturity.

Now following these first three, I want to share with you tonight two remaining attitudes that are necessary in the life of one who perseveres. Fourthly, a believing heart. A believing heart. And for this we look to verses 5 through 8. A believing heart, now let me stop for just a moment before we look at the text and kind of set the scene if I might. Let’s say you are going through a trial and you are really doing your best to keep a joyous attitude, an understanding mind, and a submissive will. But you are having difficulty really grasping what’s happening. You might be saying to yourself, you know, I want to have a right attitude. I want to have a right understanding, and I want to have a submissive will. But I lack the wisdom and the power to remain joyous and to endure and to mature

through this. I am struggling to keep my heart fixed on the cause for joy. I am struggling to understand this and I'm struggling to be permissive.

I need some help. What do I do? Well, what you really need is one thing, you need wisdom. You need wisdom for a trial. You need to understand it. You need practical insight needed to face the issues of life. You'll not be able to maintain a joyous attitude and an understanding mind and a submissive will unless God gives you more than just your human faculties to worth with. And so this is where you come to verse 5, "If any of you lack," what? Wisdom. If any of you lack wisdom." Wisdom is always at a premium, but especially when you are going through a trial. Wanting to understand, wanting to know how to be joyous. Wanting to be willing to endure the trial for the holy purposes of God demands wisdom.

And you are not going to find in your human reasoning all the answers. Wisdom to James and to any Jewish reader and any Jew of that time was the understanding needed to live life to the glory of God. Wisdom was functioning in obedience to the will and the word of God. It began with fearing God and then moved to obeying God. And when we go through a test and we to through a trial, we need wisdom. Any believer is going to feel week. He's going to feel the need for strength and resources. He's going to look for something to hold on to in the midst of the trial. And where does he go, he goes to God and he asks for wisdom. That's the promise. If any lack wisdom, let him what? Let him ask of God. Let him ask of God.

The search for wisdom is man's supreme search. For those of us who know and love the Lord he provides that wisdom. I think about Proverbs 3:5 to 7, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understating." What a great statement. When you are going through a trial, when you are going through difficulty, don't lean on your own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. "In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes." Don't look to yourself for answers. Ask God for divine wisdom.

So, we could say safely here, trials have a way of enhancing your prayer life, right? They drive you to your knees. They cause you to call on God for what you do not have and so desperately, desperately desire, so when you go through the trials of life, whatever they might be, it is the intention of God that you recognize the bankruptcy of human reason and the answers that you might get from other people and I think about Job who tried to get answers from everybody around him and everybody gave him the wrong answer. And the right answer is always available at the hand of God.

If we seek from him, to receive that. Look with me for a moment to Job 28. One of my favorite portions of scripture. This tremendous chapter. The first part of the chapter it talks about mining for precious metal and how men will go to incredible lengths to find wealth. They take it out of the earth and they go deeply into the ground and they go through all kinds of things to try to find wealth.

But in verse 12 it says, "And where shall wisdom be found?" Where does man go to get wisdom when he needs it. And where is the place of understanding? Man doesn't know it's price and neither is it found in the land of the living. It's not available. It isn't for sale and it doesn't have a price. The depth saith, it's not in me. Down deep in the earth he isn't going to find it. And the sea says, it's not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price of it. It cannot be valued with the gold of Opher, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire, the gold and the crystal cannot equal it. And the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,

neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? And where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living. And kept close from the fowls of the air.

True wisdom, the supernatural wisdom needed to understand the trials of life is not available in the world around us. Destruction and death say we have heard its fame with our ears. Destruction and death have heard about it. They know how to find it. They do not find it. And then verse 23, “God understands its way and he knows it’s place.” So, if you want wisdom who do you go too? You go to God.

And I don’t want to be simplistic, I just want to emphasize what the Bible is saying. You can go back to James 1 now. I want you to understand that what the scripture is saying is as simple as this beloved. When you go through a trial, the place to go is to God. That’s much more important than running to your friends for answers and getting into the same situation that Job got into. That’s much more important than signing up for appointments at some kind of counseling clinic before you have done anything to consider and consult the mind of God. I believe the promise of God in this verse is one of the greatest promises in all of the scripture, if not the single greatest promise to a believer living in this world. And that is if he needs wisdom, God gives it to him.

I mean, what more is there than that? What more could we want than the divine insight to understand and respond properly to every trial of life. God gives wisdom. Now, what kind of wisdom are we talking about? We are not talking about philosophical speculation. We are talking about doing the right thing. We are talking about understanding what’s happening with the mind of God. We are talking about what James discusses in more detail in chapter 3 verse 17, the wisdom that is from above that is pure and peaceable.

This is right conduct in all of life’s matters. That’s what we’re talking about. And that’s the kind of wisdom that comes from God and somewhere along the line, you know, we need to get back to this. When Christians go through troubles nowadays, the first response is usually to run to some other human resource, but it says here, if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Let him ask of God. What are you asking for? You are asking for an understanding that will allow you to be joyous and submissive. You are asking for what is the right thing to do. And it would be my great prayer that in the midst of all the troubles that people seem to have that they would learn that trouble is intended to drive them not to men, but to God. To find in him the only source of true wisdom. The path of a right response.

Now, look back at verse 5 again, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Let him ask of God.” That is an imperative. That is not optional. That is mandatory. That is a command. That is as much a command to prayer as pray without ceasing is. That is as much as a command to prayer as what we have been learning in 1 Timothy 2 about holy men lifting up holy hands in prayer. That is a command for us to pray. Trials are intended to drive us in dependency on God, to him.

To make us realize we have no human resources, we are left only with an invisible means of support. The true believer then in the test is going to know he needs wisdom and cry out to God. He almost cannot be restrained from crying out to God. But we need to do that so much more. At the end of verse 16 of James 5, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” And then the illustration of Elijah, who was a man subject to like passions as we are, he prayed earnestly that it might no rain. It rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. He prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her food. God answers prayer. God responds.

Go back to verse 5 again of chapter 1. And what do we see, if any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, that is a command for us to pray, let trouble drive you to God. Let trouble drive you to prayer and may I suggest this to you, if you are going through some deep trouble in your life and it has not enriched your prayer life and it has not driven you to the throne of grace, then maybe the trouble will keep going on until you finally wake up and begin to do that.

The source of wisdom is there if we will go there. And what are we going to find when we arrive? Look at verse 5, "let him ask of God who gives to all liberally. Who gives to all liberally." We have a generous and gracious God who desires to pour out to us those things, which we desire. And proverbs 2, the writer says, "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thy heart to understanding." How am I going to get that?

Yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding. "If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom. And out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding." God has it available and God wants to give it to the seeking heart. But there is a sense in which he holds it back until you come and ask for it, demonstrating your love, your trust and your dependence on him.

In Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you saith the Lord, thoughts of peace not of evil. To give you an expected end." In other words, to give you that which is beneficial. "Then shall you call on me and you shall go and pray unto me and I will hearken unto you and you shall seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found by you saith the Lord." Now the word liberally is a marvelous word, *haplōs*, it means unconditionally. It means without bargaining. It means freely and generously. It's reminiscent of Matthew 7, and you are very familiar, I know, with Matthew 7, particularly with verses 7 through 11. We have all claimed it at one time or another.

"Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks findeth, and to him that knocks it will be opened. And what man is there of you if whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him." The promise is there.

When you go through a trouble, when you go through difficulty, when you go through trial, go to God in prayer. He doesn't barging. He doesn't lay out conditions. He gives freely and generously the wisdom you need to understand and respond properly to that trial. Then he also adds, verse 5, "And upbraideth not." Now, that's an old word and what it basically means, he holds back nothing. He gives liberally, generously without reservation. It is a negative form of the previous statement. He is, it says later in chapter 1 in verse 17, he is the giver of every good and perfect gift. And there is no variableness neither shadow of turning with him.

He gives and he gives and he gives, that's his nature, as a giving God. He gives sincerely. He gives without hesitation. He gives without mental reservation. He's not giving reluctantly. That's what it means. He isn't saying, well, I shouldn't be doing this, but boy, I am going to do it, but I hope you

appreciate it. He isn't playing games about your unworthiness. He isn't reminding you about how undeserving you are. He is good and he is giving and he just keeps giving.

Holding back nothing. If you lack wisdom, you are commanded to ask God who gives to all men freely and liberally, holds back nothing, and when you ask, the end of verse 5, "It shall be given him," it says. No wisdom, beloved, and this is a promise. No wisdom needed for the believers perseverance through a trial is ever withheld from that believer who asks.

Isn't that a wonderful promise? I hope you got that. No wisdom needed for a believers perseverance through a trial is ever withheld from a believer who asks. Sometimes we don't ask, we do everything but ask God. Sometimes we ought to be found on our knees crying out from our hearts for God to give us his direction. I love what it says in Psalm 81:10. You'll remember this, perhaps. "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt," here it comes, "Open thy mouth wide, and will fill it." Isn't that a wonderful promise? God wants to provide every needed resource for a believer in the midst of trial. Now what this means, as I've been saying, is that we persevere through prayer. We endure through dependent prayer. Casting ourselves on God.

In Mark 14:38, it says, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into trial, *peirasmos*, watch and pray." So that you don't fall into *peirasmos* and then once you are in it, if you do fall into a trial, make sure it never turns into a temptation by throwing yourself dependently upon God. We endure through prayer. If we ask God. But would you notice, please in verse 6, there is a condition for the kind of asking. "But let him ask in faith," in other words, believing, confident prayer. Genuine trust. Now, having described the willing father, James now turns to the waiting child, if there is a lack of wisdom, it's not the fault of God. If you don't understand your trial, if you are pining away and you don't understand why your wife died or your husband died or somebody got a disease or you don't know why you have been smitten with an economic problem or a financial problem or a housing problem or car trouble or a job problems or anxiety in your heart.

If you are going through trials and you can't understand why, then the simple reason initially is, you haven't asked God to give you wisdom. You haven't sought him with all your heart. And if you have asked and still don't know, then you have not asked with true faith. You perhaps have prayed somewhat insincerely, maybe a little bit like the fourth chapter of James, where you pray to consume things on your own lusts.

You are not really asking in honest faith, believing with all your heart that God can and will answer. Maybe you are praying the very opposite of the way that men are told to pray in 1 Timothy 2:8, who are to pray, "Lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting." And you are doubting whether God can help. You are disputing, or maybe the word could also mean it's *diakrinomai*, has the idea of wavering. Let him ask in faith nothing wavering. That word wavering means to doubt to dispute, or to debate. There are some people who just doubt that God can give them an answer. There are other people who just want to argue with God about why he did what he did. And so their prayers are nothing but a fight. But you are not to doubt the available supply of God. You are not to doubt the available power of God. And you are not to doubt the purpose and the will of God.

You are not to debate whether God did what he should have done or not. If something in your life doesn't go right, that's no cause for debate or dispute with God, telling God he should have done it your way. Unwavering faith simply believes that God is sovereign, believes that God is loving and believes that God will supply everything that is needed for understanding the trial and goes in prayer

to God. Beloved, isn't it typical pattern that we go through a trial and instead of going right to the Lord and laying it his feet without any doubt, knowing he can solve it, he can give us the wisdom without any debate or dispute with what he has done, we just set it there and continually beseech him for wisdom, that's what we ought to do, but that is rarely what we do, sadly. In Matthew 21, just to call your attention to a couple of verses that I think are important in relation to this, "Jesus answered and said unto them, verily I say unto you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also, if you say to this mountain be though removed and be cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatever you shall ask in prayer believing you shall receive." There Jesus essentially says the same thing, qualified faith moves the muscles of omnipotence.

Now, that is not a blank check. You are not going to receive what you ask to consume on your lusts. You are not going to receive what you ask unless it's in the will of God. You are not going to receive what you ask unless it brings glory to God the father, as John 14:13 and 14 say. The praying disciple though, using the power of faith, will see God work suddenly and dramatically as Jesus did. And he will root up mountains. And that, by the way is aliterally metaphor for something difficult. It was used by our Lord as a figure of speech, not referring to a literal mountain. And mustard seed faith is faith that starts small and gets very big, a mustard seed was the smallest of agricultural seeds and it became this great big huge tree, bush like tree. And what he was saying here is, if you have faith that starts small, but perseveres and grows large, you are going to see great movements of God in response to your prayer. Persistent, every increasing trust in God, lined up with God's will is potent and brings the wisdom needed for every trial. What a promise. Whatever the trial is, you are to have a believing heart. Believing that God allowed it for his purpose and it's right. Believing that he will give you wisdom to endure it and be better than you ever could have been if you had not endured that trial. But notice the converse side of this in verse 7. "For let not that man think that he shall," oh, back to verse 6. We almost skipped that one. Verse 6, "He that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." The wavering person who goes to God and doesn't really believe that God can provide the wisdom and vacillates is like the surging, billowing, restless sea moving back and forth with its endless tides, never able to settle. Like that one tossed to and fro and blown around. Like those of Joshua's day, you remember who halted between two opinions. Like those of Elijah's day who couldn't decide whether Jehovah was God or Baal was god. Like those of Paul's day who were sacrificing to demons and then going to the Lord 's Table. Those people who want God, but want something else and vacillate back and forth. Those lukewarm people who the Lord will spew out of his mouth because they are neither hot nor cold. That wavering person who doesn't go to God and hold on in confident trust, is like the surging sea in verse 7 then says, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." There is no sense, I should say in such a person supposing he will receive anything from the Lord. The one who doubts God, the one who debates God, the one who wavers in his trust and isn't solidly committed to the Lord, isn't going to receive anything. That person, that man, as it says in the authorized, characterizes an unbeliever, it could also characterize a weak doubtful Christian who is acting like an unbeliever. And it's really sad to see that.

A person who comes to the church and is a sham Christian, isn't for real. They get into a trial and they start to doubt and they dispute with God and they get angry with God and they leave, but very often and in many ways is equally tragic is a Christian who is a weak Christian. They go through severe trial and instead of having a joyous attitude, an understanding mind, a submissive will and a believing heart, they vacillate and they flip flop and they are sort of an emotional basket case and they can't trust God and they don't seem to be able to pray and ask for wisdom from God. They literally are unwilling to cash in the resources that God has provided in their spiritual account. And they receive nothing. And so they may go on and on and on in the misery of that trial. Never knowing

the resolution immediately available to them through faithful persistent trusting prayer in God.

And verse 8 sums it up. Such a double minded man who vacillates back and forth not knowing whether to trust God or abandon God is unstable in all his ways. A double-minded man, a sinful man, or woman. In fact, in James 4:8, cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded. A double-minded person is really a hypocrite. The person who says, oh, I believe in God, but when the trial comes, they don't know what to do. They maybe want to trust God, but they don't trust God and they vacillate as he says here. In that case, they will receive nothing. In fact, they will be unstable in all their ways.

Double minded is *dipsuchos* the "*di*" at the beginning is two and the word *suchos* is the word for soul, two souled, two minds. A soul divided between God and the world. Trusting and not trusting, believing and not believing. A friend of the Lord and a friend of the world. And you remember what James 4:4 says, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God." Loving the world and trying to love God at the same time and John says, it's impossible to do that. John Bunyan in the classic *Pilgrim's Progress* called him Mr. Facing-Both-Ways.

Psalm 12:2 speaks of a double heart, which the Lord will judge. Deuteronomy 6:5 speaks of a single heart when it says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and might." This is the undecided person. And I believe is most markedly the unbeliever. But sad to say, sometimes, even Christians are so unable to grasp the sovereignty of God, to trust God, to set their doubts aside, to accept the wisdom that God eagerly, liberally provides when they ask.

And such a two souled, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways is unstable in all areas of life. Not some, but all. He can't stand the trials of life because he doesn't have enough faith in God. He doesn't have enough faith in God to go and seek for the wisdom he desperately needed. And this doubter is condemned in this epistle. He has no true trust, no true loyalty. His whole life is one of vacillation. He is unstable. That means unsettled. It is used in 1 Corinthians 14:33. God is not the author of confusion. He is confused. He is a chaotic. I think it's also used in James 3, it's translated in verse 8, unruly.

Unruly. A person who is unsettled. Vacillating. So verses 5 through 8 are very simple, let me sum them up. When you go into a trial, the way to endure that trial is to receive from God divine wisdom. To go to God and have the confidence that he gives freely and never debates and never argues and never holds back anything but gives exactly what you need to endure that trial. But the condition is that your faith be real. That it be unwavering faith, not like the troubled sea. Because if you have vacillating faith that trusts and doesn't trust, that believes and doesn't believe. You are caught in the middle and you will not receive anything. In fact, such double mindedness will make you unstable in every area of life.

True stability in life comes to those who trust God in the midst of any trial. Any trial. So, a believing heart that genuinely believes is essential in persevering. And then finally, a humble spirit. A humble spirit. This discussion is very, very rich. Verse 9, "let the brother of low degree rejoice." Stop there for a moment. This is another command, a mandatory rejoicing. "Let the brother of low degree," What does that mean? The poor man. The economically deprived, the poor Christian, low on the economic scale. The guy who doesn't have much. And you know these scattered believers to whom James wrote, "Twelve tribes scattered abroad," verse 1 says. Were victims of persecution. They were victims of dispossession, of deprivation, of racism, of bigotry. Poverty among those who were dispersed was common. Many of them were very poor.

They had very little. And the word here that is translated low degree is used in the Septuagint which is the Old Testament in Greek to translate the word poor, *topeinos*, poor. Let the poor people rejoice. What does that mean? That word is a very rich word, it means to boast of a privilege or a possession. Let them boast. Let the poor people boast. Here is the joy of legitimate pride. He may have nothing in the world to rejoice about.

He may have nothing in the world that he possesses, but let him rejoice, let him exalt. It is privilege and what is it? That he is what? Exalted. He is exalted in what way? Spiritually. He maybe the filth and the off scouring of the world, but he can rejoice because his standing before God is that of exaltation. So he says, if you have nothing in this life, if you have been deprived so that you find yourself at the lowest level, you have cause to rejoice, because spiritually, you are exalted. He may be hungry, but he has the bread of life. He maybe thirsty, but he has the water of life. He may be poor, but he has eternal riches. He may be cast aside by men, but he has been received by God. He may have no home here, but he has a glorious home in the life to come. So he says, you poor folks rejoice that you have received divine attention. And that your trials are making you perfect and that is to exalt you in the spiritual dimension. When God takes away, he takes away to make you spiritually mature. When he makes you spiritually mature, that's an exaltation. So the person who is deprived can accept his deprivation, accept his trials, because of the hope that God is exalting him through those in the spiritual dimension and ultimately brining him to future glory. Ultimately lifting him up to when he receives all the inheritance promised to the saints that love God. Some days, says Peter, he will receive an inheritance that will cause him to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. So we can rejoice in any trial. We can rejoice in any deprivation.

Because, God has chosen us to an exalted position in his kingdom and Paul said the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the joy that shall be ours in that day, Romans 8:17 and following, talks about that. True riches are ours. So, poverty is a short live trial. It doesn't last every long. And those of us who endure those kinds of trials of which poverty would be one, can look ahead to a glorious time of exaltation. To sum it up it says this, don't look to draw your joy out of your worldly circumstances and you won't be disappointed if you don't have anything. Draw your joy out of your spiritual exaltation.

Out of God's saving you and moving you towards Christlikeness and someday putting you in his presence, and on the other hand, look at verse 10. "And the rich, in that he is made low." That is, let him rejoice, the same verb should be applied, "Let him exalt, let him make it his boast that he is made low." The rich brother here, we are talking about, the rich Christian, the one who seems to have it all going. And so many trials of life are related to poverty, but the rich person who seems to have it all in place, let him rejoice, not in his riches, but in his being made low, his humiliation.

Because when a rich person goes through a trial, he begins to realize realistically that all that he possess can't buy the real things of life. The wealthy Christian should rejoice that when he goes through trials he has to face the bankruptcy of worldly riches and depend on the gifts and the grace of God. So the humble person, rejoices in the provision of God and the wealthy person rejoices in the provision of God the same way.

The person who has nothing rejoices in what God provides, the person who has everything and realizes it can't buy what he needs, also rejoices in what God has provided. The poor Christian can also, as a footnote, rejoice that he is associated with rich ones and the rich Christian can rejoice in

the privilege, the self-denying privilege of being identified with Christ and poor believers. Why? Because we are all humbled at the same level at in a trial and we all have to lean on God, right? That's the point. Money doesn't buy people out of their problems. Their real trials. Oh, it may solve your economic problem, but you'll get a rash of other ones that it won't be able to solve. So the point here is, whether poor or rich, trials come into live to humble us and true humility, whether it possesses much of this worlds good or little, true humility says, my resources are in God.

The commentator, the great Lutheran commentator Lensky, I think has an interesting paragraph. He says, "Faith in Christ lifts the lowly brother beyond his trials to the great height of a position in the kingdom of Christ whereas God's child he is rich and may rejoice and boast. Faith in Christ does an equally blessed thing for the rich brother. It fills him with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of lowliness and true Christian humility. As the poor brother forgets all his earthy poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthy riches and the two are equals by faith in Christ."

That's right, and I believe that equality is driven home through trials. When you lose a daughter or lose a son or lose a wife or lose a husband, doesn't matter how much money you have, none of it is going to buy your way out of that trial. None of it. There is the equalizer. Trials bring us to the same level of dependency on God and thus bring us humbly to the same level with each other. So, we do not preoccupy ourselves with earthly things and in the church, we do not exalt those who have much as over against those who have little. Because, all our earthly possessions are inadequate to buy us what we need spiritually.

Now, James seems to have a particular concern to really hit the rich people. He does it in chapter 1 and he keeps doing it all the way through as we shall see, but he says, notice back in verse 10, the rich should be happy that he's made low, because when he's made low, see, he realizes the true riches are other worldly not here. As the flower of the grass, he shall pass away. Rich people in general, he's not speaking particularly of a rich Christian, but rich men in general are going to pass away, just like the flower of the grass. In Israel, there are three very common flowers, the anemone, the cyclamen, and the lily. And they can flourish and you can see the beauty of their color in February and they are burned to a cinder by May. It's not unlikely, frankly, the hills of southern California where they blossom and you go out of town for a week and come back and it's a desert again.

And that's what he's seeing here. There is a true spirit of humility that says, I don't put my trust in these things which pass so fast, which burn up so readily. And the poet in James expands his illustration even further in verse 11. "For the sun is no sooner risen with the burning heat, but it withereth with the grass and it's flower falleth and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth. So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." The form of the Greek language here is anomic and that expresses what usually occurs. The thought is drawn out of Isaiah 40 verses 6 through 8, borrowed from Isaiah the prophet. He says, "The burning sun," or literally, the burning heat, it could refer to the scorching wind we know as a sirocco, blasting it comes and it just devastates all the flowers in its path, that hot blasting wind. That's going to be as it shall be in the future in the fate of rich men. The blasting heat and wind of the fury of death, the judgment of God will burn everything to a cinder, so the rich man should rejoice in his trouble because his trouble divorced him from dependency on his resources and all of his resources will perish anyway. And he can rejoice. And when it's all burned up, he will have the true riches, just like the poor man does. So, what is necessary? What kind of attitude are we to have, to face trials? A joyous attitude, an understanding mind? A submissive will, a believing heart. And a humble spirit that trusts not in our possessions, but in the provision of God.

Now in conclusion, let's go back to where we started. The first test of living faith is the test of trials. Perseverance in trials marks genuine believers. It marks genuine believers. And you need to look at them in your own life and the life of others to determine and discern who is for real. So very, very important. And as we go through these trials, the Lord is stripping us of our worldly dependencies and drawing us to himself, showing us the character of our faith and perfecting us to Christlikeness. What a glorious thought. The sailors used to say, the cross winds are the safest for entering the harbor. Makes sense, doesn't it? Have you ever sailed? Have you ever tried to enter a harbor with a headwind? Very difficult. Have you ever entered a harbor with a tailwind and found yourself 40 feet up on the beach? The sailors are right, the cross winds are the safest for entering the harbor.

George Whitfield said, "All trials are for two purposes, that we maybe better acquainted with our own wicked hearts, and that we maybe better acquainted with our own beloved savior." That's right, that's what they're for. Cardinal Richelieu died in 1642, he once said this, I quote, "A virtuous and well-disposed person is like good metal, the more he is fired, the more he is refined. The more he opposed the more he is approved. Wrongs may well try him and touch him, but they cannot imprint on him any false stamp." It's true.

I was reading as I so often like to do, some ancient writers this week and I found just a beautiful thought from Joseph Church back in the 17th century he said this, "Sufferings are but as little chips off the cross of Christ. Sufferings are but as little chips off the cross of Christ." He who suffered so much for us and we have the privilege of suffering in a small way in behalf of him.

I want to close with a poem to just kind of put the thought in your mind that comes from Ella Wheeler Wilcox written back in about 1880. She says this, "I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea come drifting home with broken masts and sails. I shall believe the hand, which never fails. From seeming evil worketh good to me, and though I weep because those sails are battered, still will I cry while my best hopes lie shattered, I trust in thee. I will not doubt though all my prayers returned unanswered from the still white realm above. I shall believe it is an all-wise love, which has refused those things for which I yearn and though at times I cannot keep from grieving, yet the pure ardor of my fixed believing undimmed shall burn. I will not doubt though sorrows fall like rain and troubles swarm like bees about a hive, I shall believe the heights for which I strive are only reached by anguish and by pain. And though I groan and tremble with my crosses, I yet shall see through my severest losses, the greater gain. I will not doubt well anchored in the faith like some staunch ship my soul braves every gale so strong it's courage that it will not fail to breast the mighty unknown sea of death, oh may I cry when body parts with spirit. I do not doubt, so listening worlds my hear it with my last breath." That's the way to face life and that's the way to face death.

Unwavering. In every sense, and God provides that for us as we persevere in the way that James has taught us. Let's bow together in prayer. Listen carefully, Thomas Watson said one time, "Whatever trouble in this life the child of God meets with, it is all the hell he shall ever have." That's true. Whatever difficulty we have in this life is all the hell we will ever know, for we are promised eternal heaven. And so we can endure, as those whose faith is real. One old puritan writer expressed an attitude in the midst of all trials that is so desirable for the child of God, let me share it with you as you think, he wrote this, "Here is a notable difference between the Godly and the wicked. It comes in the suffering of trials. The wicked, the more the Lord lays his hand on them, the more they murmur and rebel against God. The faithful, when they feel themselves overwhelmed with sin, turmoiled with the conflicts of Satan, when they feel the anger of God offended with them, they fling

themselves into the arms of God’s mercy and they catch hold of the hand of God that is buffeting them and they kiss it.”

Father, we know there are times when your hand buffets us. And if we really understood what you were doing, we would kiss that hand. We do not doubt, we do not dispute. We do not debate. We long, oh Lord, to accept the trials that produce Christlikeness. That revel the character of our faith as genuine or false. The trials that humble us that wean us from the world, that call us to eternal hope, that show us what we really love. That teach us to value your blessing. That teach us how to help others. That develop in us greater usefulness, that chasten us into purity. Lord, we thank you for such trials. And we would count it all joy. And we would understand and we would submit and we would believe in prayer for wisdom, and we would humble ourselves to learn the lesson of dependence on you, not on human resources. So, accomplish your good and holy purpose through all the trials of life, and we rest in this prayer, in the confidence that there is no trial that is come to us that we are unable to bear.

But you are faithful, to never allow us to be tried above what we are able, but will with the trial will always give us a way of escape, that we may be able to endure. And thus, prove to be your children. So, work your work in our hearts. Comfort us in our trial. Teach us prayer and humble dependence, that we may out of these things become all you want us to be, for the Savior’s sake, Amen.

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