

# Faith Perseveres

Sunday, October 1, 2023

## INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Life's greatest question is always: Why do bad things happen? Trials are a part of the human experience.
- ⇒ God's Word doesn't deny this reality. Instead, it reveals that trials and temptations can actually be for our good! God intends for trials and temptations to deepen our faith.
- ⇒ Today's text is James 1:2-18. The key word in the Greek is "*peira*" and is translated into English as trials, tempt, tempted.
- ⇒ Here is today's lesson: Sometimes trials come from the outside; sometimes they come from the inside. How we respond has everything to do with our faith.

## OUTLINE:

1. God is sovereign over our trials (vs. 2-12).
  - a. The words of verse 2 are shocking! How are we supposed to have joy in the midst of difficult tests and trials?
  - b. The answer is founded in the truth that our trials are never out of God's control and God will use them to accomplish His perfect plan for your life.
    - i. Remember who James is writing to! Jewish converts who are suffering brutal persecution from the Romans.
    - ii. James begins his letter immediately instructing these suffering people to take joy.
    - iii. Notice this is an imperative – a command – a verb that addresses how we are to think.
  - c. The key is to understand that trials are not joyful in themselves. They are joyful when we realize they are under God's personal authority.
  - d. James then provides four reasons we can rejoice in the midst of our trials.
    - i. We learn to grow in God's likeness. Verses 3-4 tells us that our trials produce patience, or endurance, which leads to spiritual maturity.
      1. One day you will stand before God, and His goal from now until then is to prepare you for that day!
      2. God's goal for our lives includes maturity in Him and growth in His likeness.
      3. Trials are joy when Christlikeness is our goal.
      4. This point challenges how we think about life and success, and requires a radically God-centered perspective on life.
    - ii. We learn to trust His wisdom.
      1. Verse 5 strongly implies we are missing something! James commands us to "ask of God."
      2. Our wisdom is limited in our knowledge, perspective and experience, whereas God's is not.
      3. In the middle of tough times, trust the wisdom of God.

- iii. We learn to rely on His resources (vs. 9-11).
      - 1. Trials have a remarkable leveling effect!
      - 2. James instructs the poor: Boast in your rich status as God’s child.
      - 3. James warns the rich: Money can’t solve all problems!
    - iv. We learn to live for His reward (vs. 12).
      - 1. At the end of our trials from this life, God meets us with eternal life.
      - 2. As you are running your race, remember you reward!
      - 3. Cross reference with 2 Corinthians 4:17 (if time).
  - 2. We are responsible in our temptations (vs. 13-15).
    - a. God will test us for our good. But that doesn’t mean God will ever tempt us to turn from Him. We are responsible for our temptations.
    - b. There are two valuable lessons in these verses regarding sin.
      - i. The origin of sin. God is sinless (13); we are sinful (14). We have no one else to blame.
      - ii. The anatomy of sin (14-15). Notice the progression: deception to desire to disobedience to death.
  - 3. God is faithful for our salvation (vs. 16-18).
    - a. Verse 16 could be read like this, “God is faithful! Don’t believe temptation’s lies!”
    - b. Notice what these verses remind us about God:
      - i. His goodness is unchanging (vs. 17). God is never in a bad mood. He is always perfectly good in every way.
      - ii. His goodness is undeserved (vs. 18). The verse says He gave us birth through “the word of truth.” God has given us new life based on His grace. That is the Gospel! It is because of God’s undeserved goodness toward us.
      - iii. His goodness is unending (vs. 18). We are the “firstfruits of His creatures.” This picture carries the idea of a foretaste of that which is to come. God’s goodness to us is only a preview of the day to come when He will make all things new.

SUMMARY: Christian, take joy! God has saved us from our sin. And if He has saved us from our sin, then we can know beyond the shadow of doubt that He will see us through our sorrow!

#### DISCUSS:

- ⇒ How do we make thinking biblically about this topic a habit in our lives? Get specific in describing what you should do.
- ⇒ Encourage them to keep working on memorizing the key verse from chapter 1 – James 1:22.