

Faith Without Works is Useless

An Expository “Journey” Through the Epistle of James

2- Trials; Faith; Endurance; Joy; and the Glory of God

December 13, 2020

James 1:1-4

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

To the Glory of God

Now there is a great need in our day to define just what God, through Christ, has saved us *FROM*; and what He has saved us- *UNTO*. For example, Robert Schuler said that Jesus saves us from “low expectations”¹. He went on to say,

“... to be born again means that we must be changed from a negative to a positive Self-image”.²

... so, is that true? Others teach that Jesus saved us from “Poverty”; or “Physical Disease”; or from not being able to fulfill our Dreams and Ambitions.

So, in *their* Teaching, we see a Jesus, Who is really nothing more than a “Divine Tool” that we can learn how to *use*- to further our own Cause. To them- Jesus is a “Means” or a “Mechanism” that will help us to accomplish or achieve what *we* want; what *we* crave; or what *we* desire- with little or no regard for God or His Word and Will. And, in *that* Man-made theology- *anything* that keeps us from achieving what we can imagine in our hearts- is “from the devil” and should be “bound” or “cast out” or “overcome”. And so, basically, “Christianity”, as defined

¹ Robert Schuler; *Self-Esteem*; page 67

² Ibid; page 68

by these modern pied pipers- is really nothing more than a way I can fulfill all my dreams. Is it any wonder why Pride, Arrogance, and Self-centeredness is at an all-time high in our day?

Now please allow me to be as gentle as I know how- and say to you that this View is blasphemy. It is right out of the pit of Hell and is Evil. It is as unbiblical as it can be; and has no place in the Church of Jesus. Teaching like that displays a gross lack of understanding about what the main Problem with Man really is; and what the Life; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus actually accomplished.

Right after Mary had told him that her pregnancy was “of the Lord”- during the night, as Joseph was sleeping- the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him,

Matthew 1:20b&21

... **“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”**

... so, God took on flesh and became Man; God *inserted* Himself into His Creation; Jesus came into this earth; He was born of a Virgin to “save”; or to “rescue”; to “deliver”; or to “heal” *His* people; *God’s* people; those chosen by God for Salvation- ***from their Sins***. *That* is why Jesus lived and died and rose again- to save us FROM our Sins.

Now, on the surface, the phrase, “*Jesus came to save us from our Sins*”- doesn’t make any sense- unless you already know what it means. To be “*saved from Sin*” means: we are saved; or rescued; or delivered from the Wrath of God that He intends to pour out on people *because* of their Sins- which is Hell. So, Salvation rescues us from God’s eternal Wrath. And that means that Jesus- God the Son- came to rescue us from God the Father’s intent to damn us; and to enact horrific Punishment against us- because of our Sins. So, in a nutshell- God, in human flesh, Jesus Christ, saves us from- God. So, that is what Salvation saves us FROM.

But what does Salvation save us *UNTO*? Salvation keeps us safe from the Wrath of God. But what does Salvation allow us to “do”- that we CANNOT do- unless we are saved? Well, in James’ day, it certainly wasn’t being rich- because in **James 2:6&7**, the half-brother of Jesus infallibly wrote,

Is it not the rich who oppress you [the saved] and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

The Bible teaches that Salvation *rescues* us; or *delivers* us from *loving* Darkness (**John 3:19**) and of being deceived that things that have been made; or things that are passing away have the ability to give us the fullness of Joy- and are thus- worthy of our Love, Devotion, and Worship. So, Salvation *frees* us to love God. Because only saved people can love God. Lost people have neither the *inclination* nor the *ability* to love God. So, satan robs lost people of having the Gift of being able to *love* what is the most loveable Being in the Universe. It frees us to be able to *admire* what is most beautiful; and of being able to *celebrate* what is most glorious.

Salvation powerfully and wondrously *re-aligns* the affections of our hearts (by giving us a new heart) so that we see God- rather than anyone or anything else- as the Treasure of the Universe. And the reason God saves us to love Him- is so that we may *enjoy* God forever. And in enjoying God forever- we will achieve what we so desperately want and need- the fullness of our *own* Joy. So, in a nutshell- God saved us so we could be happy.

But because we are so materialistic and so Self-centered in our day- I have to clarify that Statement. Yes, we are saved so we may be happy- *eternally* happy. But not merely happy- but happy in Jesus. Joyful in Jesus. And that is what we are saved- UNTO. To find the fullness of our *own* Joy- in God being glorified through the Son. And this is what Jesus meant when He said in **John 15:11**:

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

... and the highest realm of Joy that belonged to Jesus- was when His Father was glorified. So, the ultimate Goal of Salvation is that we reach the highest level of *our own* Joy- when Jesus' Joy- in the Father being glorified- is in us!

But Sin stops that from happening. So, Sin should NOT be understood merely as people becoming mass murderers or pedophiles- because most people are *not* mass murderers or pedophiles. Most people are fairly nice- especially down here in the South. So, we have to understand that Sin occurs when we are happy; or when we are fully content; or completely satisfied- WITHOUT God and WITHOUT God being glorified. And this tells us that *the* single most serious Problem that we face in this life- is our Sins.

Now it is true that Mankind suffers from a *myriad* of Problems in this life. And among them are:

- Poverty
- Pain
- Disease

- Death
- War
- Crime
- Injustice

... and all of these are very serious and real Problems. And the Holy Bible tells us that every one of these things will be utterly destroyed when Jesus comes back. But until then- every one of these things will exist to some degree on the earth and in our lives.

But every single one of these earthly Problems, that we face in this life, are but *Symptoms* of an even *greater* Problem: Sin. So, these Symptoms all exist; and they flourish on the earth because of the wickedness and darkness of the human heart. In **Matthew 15:17-20**- Jesus said,

17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?

18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

... and that is why Government can't fix these Problems. But Salvation can. God Himself, through the Prophet said this from **Isaiah 59:2b**:

... your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

... so, based on what the Prophet Isaiah said- notice the three things that Sin has the Power to do:

1. Sin makes a *separation* between us and God
2. Sin has hidden God's Face from us
3. Sin causes God to not hear us

Now I suggest to you that most people are not concerned about these three things. At all. I would even guess that these three Issues don't consume much Prayer, Fasting, or Concern- even with the average Christian. Most people simply want to make more money. They want to get a better job; or

get their heater fixed; or to be healed from their physical ailments; or for their husband to treat them better.

But if that is true- then it means that most people have become *deceived* into thinking that if they could only find the Answers to those surface and shallow Symptoms³- they would be just fine. I would guess that most people *don't* sit up all night- concerned about the Separation that exists between them and God. Most people *don't* grieve that God's Face has been turned away from them. And most people are *not* burdened that God doesn't hear them.

So, *part* of what Sin does- is to blind us to two things:

1. What our real Problem is
2. What the Solution is to that Problem

And that blindness; that deception allows for satan to make an “exchange” in our minds as to why things are the way they are and how to fix them. So, Sin causes us to make a swap. Sin deceives us as to what is really important and allows us to talk about anything EXCEPT what our real Problem is.

So, Sin brings about what I call, the “*Woman- at- the – Well- Syndrome*”. Sin does to us what the “woman at the well” in **John 4** *tried* to do to Jesus. So, when the Lord confronted her with her Sin (Adultery)- she tried to change the subject; and discuss whether she should worship in Jerusalem or on top of a mountain.

But that had nothing to do with her main Problem. Sin had separated her from God. God's Face was hidden from her; and Sin had made it to where God was not listening to her. Yet, instead of falling on her face and crying out to God in contrite Repentance- she became a theologian- and deceived into believing that if she could only figure out the correct *location* to worship God- all would be fine. So, Sin not only dishonors God- but it makes us stupid and blind as well.

And so, *part* of what Salvation does- is to *unveil* our minds; and *re-set* our thoughts- so that we may understand what actually matters. Salvation allows us to be aware of what is vital and serious; and what the danger and threat is- that Sin brings to us. And this is indicative of what happens when there is a *genuine* “Move” of God's Spirit on an individual.

Now, many times, we define a “Revival”; or an “Awakening” as some Emotional High; or some Event that excites us; or that stimulates us; and helps us to feel better. Many people today actually try to schedule their Revivals in advance- as though we can orchestrate our own awakening at some point in the future.

³ I am not minimizing these Issues by calling them “surface” and “shallow”. I use those terms to simply put these important Issues into perspective when weighed against eternal Issues.

But, in reality- a true Revival; a genuine Move of God's Spirit; or an Awakening- is a sovereign Act of God- where God the Holy Spirit comes near to us; and changes us- so that we begin to love what God loves; and hate what God hates. And that is my own definition of a true Revival:

A sovereign Move of God's Spirit whereby God's people begin to love what God loves and hate what God hates.

... and so, I would suggest to you that unless we begin to love what God loves and unless we hate what God hates- we are NOT in Revival- no matter how excited we might be.

And one of the most common characteristics of a true Revival is a profound hatred of Sin; and a new-found love of Righteousness. So, as we study the various times throughout History where God has sovereignly moved on His people in a spectacular way- what seems to stand out the most- is NOT physical healing; or financial prosperity; or even a deliverance from wicked rulers- but a deep and wondrous *re-discovery* of the "Fear of the Lord"- a profound reverential Respect of God and His Holiness and a dread against living (or believing) in opposition to Him. And that is because our biggest Problem is- Sin.

So, we need to be reminded that for God to help us with the *Symptoms* of our Sin and yet not deal with the root Cause of all those Symptoms- would make God to be cruel. If God moved powerfully and miraculously to help us with every single one of the Symptoms of our Sin- yet left us in our Sin- that would, in fact, be a form of Divine Judgement. And that would not be Good or helpful for us in an eternal sense- at all.

So, if God would be Good to us- He will reveal to us what is in our lives (*wrong* living); and what is in our minds and hearts (*wrong* believing) that *insults* Him; and that *belittles* Him; and that does not bring Him Glory. And that is what James is speaking to us in the Passage before us this morning.

James teaches here that our Trials are the Pathway to our Joy in Jesus. Trials expose Sin in us- so that we may hate the Sin and starve it and kill it- so we may enjoy a closer relationship with God. And that is why James tells us to "Consider it all JOY when we encounter various Trials." But how does that work? Our Trials are designed to give us Endurance. And James said *knowing* that- is what fuels our Joy. And having Endurance will result in us being complete and lacking nothing!

And so, all through this amazing Epistle- the Pastor of the Church at Jerusalem will help us to remember what we have been saved FROM and what we are saved- UNTO. So, one way to look at the **Epistle of James** is to see it as various Tests of Behavior (Orthopraxy) that will help us to see if we are, in fact,

saved; and if we are, in fact, delighting ourselves in the Lord. So, **James** teaches us what being saved looks like.

Now James begins his Letter or his Epistle by telling us who he is and to whom he is writing. So, first, let's see who James is:

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

So, here, the half-brother of Jesus tells us that he is a “**bond-servant**” of both God the Father and God the Son- the Lord Jesus Christ. And for James to not talk about the fact that Jesus was his half-brother; or that he was the Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem- and for him to identify himself simply as a “bond-slave” shows us his great Humility. He didn't play on his pedigree- even though he could.

But this term means that James is a slave *on purpose*. You see, most of the time, slaves didn't have a choice. Most of the time- people are slaves because of either War or Birth. The overwhelming majority of the time a person is in Slavery is because their nation was overrun by another nation and they have been forcefully taken, against their will, and made a slave; or else they were born into the Slavery of their parents.

But a “bond-slave” is a person, who is either already free or someone who has been offered his Freedom and who has *voluntarily* chosen to either enter into Slavery or to remain a slave. And in **Exodus 21:1-6** God, through Moses, made provision for this.

1 "Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them:

2 "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment.

3 "If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him.

4 "If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone.

5 "But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,'

6 then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

So, to be a “bond-servant” or a “bond-slave” of Jesus is to say, “*I love my Master!*” It is to *renounce* the “freedom” of doing what is right in our own eyes; and it is to live our lives for no other Purpose than to bring God the Glory He is due. Being a “bond-slave” of Jesus is to feel the sting of that awl as it pierces our ears- to mark us as belonging *exclusively* to the Lord; and it is to devote ourselves to God’s Way and God’s Will- *permanently*- with Delight! So, that’s who James wanted to be known as. But now look at who James wrote this Epistle to:
... To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad...

Now right off the bat, we have a problem. The reference to the 12 Tribes here is connected to the Jewish people, who were the descendants of the sons of Jacob- who was called, “Israel”. And when they violently crushed the inhabitants of the land (at God’s Command) and engaged in the holocaust of the pagans⁴ (at God’s Command)- they divided up the Land of Israel by the twelve Tribes. Later on (because of Sin)- Israel divided into two Kingdoms. And ten of the Tribes formed the “northern Kingdom” called, “Israel” and two Tribes formed the “southern Kingdom”, called, “Judah”.

Now at some point in the 8th Century BC (because of Sin)- God sovereignly raised up the wicked Empire of Assyria to come and *humiliate* the ten northern Tribes and disperse them into the pagan nations of the world. It was during this time that many Jews *intermarried* with the pagan Assyrians and became the despised “Samaritans” (more Sin). And during the earthly Ministry of Jesus- there was great hostility between the Samaritans and the Jews (more Sin).

Around 586 BC (again because of Sin)- God raised up the evil Empire of the Babylonians to come and take the two southern Tribes into Captivity for 70 years. And that was during the lifetime of Daniel.

And that Division continued on into the earthly Ministry of Jesus. And so, in James’ day- the nation Israel consisted of the *northern* area- basically known as “Galilee”; the *southern* area- known as “Judaea”- with “Samaria” in the middle.

The point is that ever since the Assyrian conquest of the northern Kingdom almost 800 hundred years before James wrote this Epistle- nobody had any idea what happened to the ten northern Tribes. We still don’t. Now, throughout the Centuries, there have always been crazy people, who teach strange and ridiculous things about who the ten Tribes are and what happened to them. And weird Cults like the Mormons and others lay claim to actually *be* the descendants of the ten northern Tribes. I actually met a man, who said he was a descendant of one of the Levitical Priests of the ten Tribes. And when I had the audacity to ask for proof-

⁴ One test of an individual’s Trust in God- is in how he defends God’s Command to Joshua to slaughter man, woman, and child of the pagans in the land that God had given the Jew.

he handed me a copy of his Bible. Some people in our day believe and teach that *all* saved people are descendants of these ten northern Tribes.

But aside from the kooks- nobody knows. So, then what was James talking about? Some suggest that James was writing to only Jews (saved or lost) and that Gentiles (saved or lost) don't even need to read this Epistle. The great Reformer, Martin Luther believed that and so, he didn't like this Book- primarily because it was so "Jewish" in nature and Luther wanted it removed from the public schools of Germany.

But it very well *could* have been that James was simply addressing the *totality* of believers (the Church)- using a spiritual metaphor here. Paul did that all the time- referring to genuine believers as "spiritually" being known as "**Jews**" in **Romans 2:28&29** and "**the Israel of God**" in **Galatians 6:16**.

Now it is true that the Assyrians dispersed the Jews they took as captives- but that happened almost 800 years earlier. So, what would have been the significance of talking about that in *this* Epistle? It wouldn't have encouraged the Jews, who had trusted in Jesus, because through centuries of intermarriage and War and Captivity- the average Jew of James' day had no idea about his own Genealogy.

We must remember that James was the Pastor of the Church at Jerusalem. And what was going on at the time that James actually wrote this Epistle- was great Persecution against the Church- by both the Jews and the pagan Romans. And James would have been very familiar with *that*.

Also, this is some 20 years *before* Nero set fire to Rome and blamed the Christians and forced them to go into the pagan nations of the world- which the Apostle Peter addressed. So, James is NOT talking about that.

So, I conclude that James was merely using a spiritual metaphor here and wrote this Epistle to instruct ALL genuinely saved Jews- who were in the majority in the Church of Jesus during James' time. But, because his Teaching here is about what Salvation looks like from the *outside* (Orthopraxy)- in other words, the fruit that saved people should bear- this Book is very useful for *all* genuine believers- even us.

Now, because the Church was under very harsh Persecution- James begins this Epistle by teaching us this Divine Truth:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Now this Passage and many, many others help us to formulate a biblical "Doctrine of Suffering" or a scriptural "Theology of Suffering" or help us to

formulate what “Orthodoxy” looks like concerning our Trials. Another way of understanding this is to say that James teaches us here what we are to believe about what Trials are; and how we should relate to our Trials as believers. And there are several key words in this Passage that we need to focus on:

- Joy
- Trials
- The Testing of our Faith
- Endurance
- Perfect Result
- Perfect and Complete

Now, God has dealt with me to bring the Biblical Reality of Suffering to this Church in great detail. With many Sermons and other Teachings- God has been Good to expose us to what He has infallibly spoken in sacred writ concerning the very *common* but very *confusing* Issue of “*Why God’s people suffer.*” So, you may want to refer to those Sermons and Teachings and Radio Broadcasts to understand this Issue better.

Because I’m not going to get into the Issue of Suffering in too much detail in our “journey” through the **Epistle of James**. But I am going to give a Summary of the Issue. Suffice it to say that Suffering is one of the most *common* topics in the Bible. And yet, in spite of that- the average member of the average Church today knows very little about Why God’s people suffer. And that is a shame.

Now, right out of the box, all people- both saved and lost people suffer- to some extent. God cursed this world- many thousands of years ago. So, the entire world is broken and operates underneath the Curse of God. So, the amazing thing is NOT that sometimes there are hurricanes or the extinction of a species of animals. The amazing thing is why *anything* ever works out at all- in a broken world that operates underneath the Divine Curse of its Creator.

But as a result of being cursed by God- the created Universe, as we know it- is only temporary. In **Hebrews 1:10-12**, the writer discussed how *temporary* both the earth and the heavens are- by quoting from **Psalms 102:26** and said,

10 And, "YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;
11 THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT,

12 AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END."

... so, there is some Truth to the fact that the decaying of the earth is real. In fact, it is *measurable*. But that decay is NOT caused by internal combustion engines or plastic bags or political Conservatives. And therefore, the decaying of the earth will NOT be stopped by electric cars or windmills or political Liberals.

The decay of the earth was originally caused by Sin. And we need to know that this decay is NOT fixable. It can't be stopped or reversed. The earth is cursed and we can't "uncurse" it. And that means that neither the Heavens nor the Earth are permanent. So, there is coming a day in which both the Heavens and the Earth will be replaced. So, the decay of the earth will continue until God destroys the earth with Fire and replaces it with a new one.

So, to *some* extent, Human Suffering is the result of living in a broken and decaying world. And so, the Problems associated with that decay will only get worse- as we near the Coming of the Lord in His *second* Advent. Yet even though that is true- part of understanding about the Sovereignty of God is the knowledge that our Suffering is neither Random nor is it meaningless. The Suffering of believers has been *specifically* designed by God; and *always* has a very wise Purpose and a very good Meaning.

Now, underneath the overall Heading of "Suffering" are things like:

- ✓ Trials
- ✓ Tests
- ✓ Tumults
- ✓ Afflictions
- ✓ Pain
- ✓ Disease/Sickness
- ✓ Persecution

... and God uses all of it to purify His people. Perhaps the *clearest* Teaching that explains the Purpose as to why saved people suffer- is found in **Hebrews 12:4-13**- so let's read that Passage together:

4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, **"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;**

6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

So, the main Reason behind why God allows Suffering to come to His people is found in verse 10 that says,

... He [God] *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

So, even though we may be genuinely saved- all of our thoughts and all of our actions have not yet become godly. Saved people still have ungodly- even evil thoughts. And even though we would like to think that we stopped sinning the moment we were saved- we didn't. And God *could* have simply left us to ourselves. But part of what it means to be loved by God- is that God is not about to leave us the way we are- but He is determined to *change* us- until we are able to share in God's very Own Personal Holiness!

So, because we are not yet able or qualified to share in God's Holiness- we have a great need to be changed; to be purified; to be sanctified- or made to be Holy. And the main way God does that- is through the Agency of "Godly Discipline"- which includes things like:

- ❖ Wondrous Blessings
- ❖ Horrific Sufferings
- ❖ Encouragement
- ❖ Set- backs
- ❖ Trials
- ❖ Persecutions
- ❖ Afflictions
- ❖ Miracles

... so, God’s Discipline consists of two things:

1. Those things that God passively *allows* to come into our lives, (that we consider to be “Bad”)
2. Those things that God *actively* brings into our lives, (that we consider to be “Good”).

... and the Bible teaches that God powerful and sovereignly works both of those things TOGETHER to accomplish two Goals:

1. The greater “Good” of the Glory of God
2. The fullness of our Joy

Now many people believe that we have all sorts of Trials in this life. So, to them- we periodically have a “Trial of our Finances” or a “Trial of our Health”; or a “Trial of our Children”; or a Trial of our Possessions”. But the reality is that we only have one, single Trial- the “Proof of our Faith”. Here is what the Apostle Peter said about this from **1Peter 1:3-9**:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

7 so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Now, first of all, in verse 3- Peter says that God has sovereignly CAUSED us to be born again. And he goes on to say that God caused us to be born again unto a “living Hope”. And then Peter taught that God caused us to be born again to a living Hope THROUGH the Resurrection of Jesus.

And in verse 4- the Apostle said that God did all of that- so that we would obtain an Inheritance that has four Attributes to it. Our heavenly Inheritance is:

1. **Imperishable**
2. **Undefiled**
3. **Will not fade away**
4. **Reserved in heaven for you**

Next, Peter said that we are “**protected by the Power of God**”. But notice that we are NOT protected by the Power of God- period. No, Peter said that we are “protected by the Power of God- THROUGH FAITH.” But now look at what Peter said we are protected by the Power of God through Faith- FOR:

... for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Now keep in mind as you read this- that the people to whom Peter was writing were already saved. Now, normally this would not make much sense- until you read verse 6&7 that says:

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

So, even though these people were already saved- Peter is teaching that the Purpose behind *why* they are suffering- is so that their Faith may be “proven”. But

why does their Faith need to be proven? So, it will be real and deep and strong and lasting. But how will they know if their Faith has passed the test? When the “Proof of their Faith” results in Praise and Glory and Honor when Jesus appears. And how does God do that? Through various Trials.

And then in verse 8, Peter talks about the great rejoicing and the inexpressible Joy that the Proof of our Faith resulting in Praise and Glory and Honor at the appearing of Jesus- brings to us. And that would be enough. But then in verse 9 he says what this is really all about:

obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

So, the ultimate OUTCOME; the final Goal of *why* our Faith must be proven and tried and tested by various Trials- is shown. When our Faith; when our Trust in Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done is made sure and strong and real and deep and powerful and lasting- and joyful- then we then will obtain the final Outcome- the saving of our souls.

Now James uses a word in this amazing process of “Holification” that Peter doesn’t mention: “Endurance”- even though Peter alluded to it. But we must be careful that we don’t confuse what James is saying. The Pastor of the Jerusalem Church is NOT teaching that going through our Trials is an endurance contest. Neither James nor Peter teach that we are to merely *endure* or “outlast” our Sufferings.

No, James is saying that Endurance or Perseverance is the natural and normal *result* or the fruit- of us having our Faith proven to be real and strong and vibrant and lasting- by the various Trials that God has allowed us to go through. In other words, we will know that we are graduating from “one realm of glory to the next” (**2Corinthians 3:18**)

when the Fruit we begin to bear is: *Joyful* Endurance or Perseverance. So, the Goal of God is NOT simply that we endure- but that we endure- WITH JOY!

In verse 4, James calls Endurance the “**perfect result**” of our Trials. So, if we manifest or display or show something else besides Endurance- then we are NOT being properly “trained” by the Discipline of the Lord- like the writer of **Hebrews** told us.

Now notice that James calls the “**various Trials**” of verse 2- the “**testing of our Faith**” in verse 3. So, that is what ALL Trials really are: the testing of our Faith. In other words, do we really believe in Jesus; and in what Jesus said and did- or is that something we just nod our heads about on Sunday morning?

So, Trials are God’s Way of being Good to us- to bring us into the fullness of Joy- by proving or making real and powerful and deep and lasting- the Faith that He sovereignly gave us. So, God will make sure that the Good Work He *began* in

us- through the Miracle of the New Birth and in our Justification- will be proven to be able to bring us Joy- and to bring Praise and Glory and Honor to Jesus when He comes back- by our Faith being proven to be true.

Now I want to show you something that James said that will bring great Comfort to you. Look again at the very first word of verse 3:

“Knowing”

So, the *basis* of the Joy that James says we are supposed to have when we encounter various Trials- is in the fact that we “know” something. We have become *aware* of something; and have become *convinced* or *persuaded* about a Divine Truth- that lost people simply don’t know. But to “know” something is to NOT “guess” or “hope” or to even “believe” in it. So, what starts out in faith- *believing*- is combined with “personal experience”- and ends up in “Knowledge”- rock- solid, unmovable, unshakable Knowledge. And this is taught all through the Bible- but most strongly by the Apostle Paul- who, through his intense Suffering could say,

Romans 8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

... this was NOT something that Paul hoped for; or prayed about; or even believed. No, Paul said here that saved people KNOW this.

And that means that the “**various Trials**” that James talks about here is NOT some endurance contest- to see who can *pretend* they are having Joy- while others simply tell the Truth and say that the Trials they are suffering are horrible and they wish they would end. God is NOT commanding us to have Joy when we are getting the stew beaten out of us- and then laughing at us when we simply can’t do that. And this Command to have Joy in the midst of Trials is also NOT about us being stoic or tough or strong or any of that. God is not glorified by us artificially putting on a plastic, politician’s smile- when we are weeping on the inside. So, why should we “**consider it all Joy**” when we encounter various Trials”? Look again at verses 3&4:

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

... so, the Joy that James talks about in verse 2 is the result of us “knowing” something. Now we have already made the connection between the “**various Trials**” of verse 2 and the “**testing of your Faith**” of verse 3. So, we have established that the various Trials that we face in this life are all really the same: they are a Test of our Faith. So, now James is teaching here that these Tests; these Trials produce something that he calls, “Endurance”. And it is KNOWING that the testing of our Faith produces Endurance- that is the *basis* of our Joy.

Now the word that was translated here in to English as “**Endurance**” is a Greek word (*hupomonee*; Strongs #5281) that means: *Steadfastness; Constancy; Sustaining and an Endurance*. So, James is teaching that the various Trials that God allows to come our way- *test* our Faith; they *prove* our Faith- so that our Faith will be real and genuine and deep and abiding and strong. And those Trials and Tests produce a Steadfastness in us. They produce a Constancy or a Sustaining or an Endurance in us. And that Endurance produces a Joy in us.

Now what is interesting is that the way James says this- is that our ability to be Steadfast in our Faith; our ability to be Constant and to be Sustained in our Faith; our ability to Endure- is directly brought about by and through us going through our Trials. In other words, without these Trials- we would NOT be Steadfast in our Faith; and thus, we would NOT have our Joy.

So, they are all connected. In order to have Joy- we must have the Quality of being able to endure through the various Trials that we face. And in order for us to do that- our Faith MUST be tested. Another way of understanding this is to say that the reason we have Joy- is because we have been given the ability to endure. And the reason we endure; the reason we are steadfast in our Faith; the reason the Trials of life do NOT overcome us- is because our Faith has been tested.

So, without the Trials- we would NOT be Steadfast. Without the Trials- we would NOT be Constant or Sustained in our Faith. And without the Trials- we would NOT be able to endure. And without enduring- we would not have Joy. So, we don't endure “in spite of” our Trials but “because” of them. In other words, Joy comes by way of Endurance. And Endurance comes to us- BECAUSE of our Trials. And so, without Trials- we would not have Endurance. So, this is what James is teaching:

Trials are the vehicle through which God gives us the Gift of Endurance. And
through Endurance- we have Joy

In other words, without the Trials- our Faith would *not* be tested. And without our Faith being tested- we would *not* possess the ability to endure. And if we don't endure- we won't have Joy. But to *guarantee* that ALL genuinely saved people do

glorify God- in, by, and through enjoying Him forever- God did all that He did in saving our souls.

But there is another aspect of this that we need to consider. If we would falter or fail and not endure- our Salvation would NOT last. So, how does God *guarantee* that those He saved will *remain* saved?

This explains a very puzzling statement by the brother of James⁵- the other half-brother of Jesus, the man named, “Judas” (Judah), whose name was later changed to, “Jude” when he wrote,

Jude 21

keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

... but then he also wrote:

Jude 24

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

So, which one is it? Do we “**Keep ourselves**” (verse 21)? Or does God “**keep us**” (verse 24)? Does God sovereignly “**keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy**” or do we, “**keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.**” Verse 21 says that we are to keep *ourselves*; while in verse 24, the brother of James tells us that God will sovereignly keep us.

Now I struggled with these two Passages for many years- always trying to figure out which one dominated the other- until I realized that it wasn’t “either-or”- but “both-and”.

So, the way we should see this is the “Way” or the “Means” by which God keeps us- is by us keeping ourselves. Now that isn’t “circle-reasoning” because we could also look at it from the other direction. The Way that we keep ourselves- is by God sovereignly keeping us. And God keeps us by and through the Means of the joyful testing our Faith- until we have the Gift of Endurance. Another way of looking at this is how Paul described it from **Philippians 2:12**:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear

⁵ We know that both Jude (Judas) and James (Jacob) were half-brothers to Jesus. And we also know that neither one was an Apostle. But it is possible that these two men were also half-brothers to each other as well.

and trembling;

... here, the Apostle tells us to: **“Work out your Salvation with fear and trembling”**. Okay, that is something *we* are supposed to do. But then look at what he said in the very next verse:

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Wait! Am I supposed to **“Work out my own Salvation”** or is it God, **“Who works in me?”** Which one is it? It is both. It isn't “either-or”; it is “both-and”. I “work out my own Salvation” precisely because “God is at work in me”. Or, “God is at work in me”- to *guarantee* that I will “work out my own Salvation.”

So, yes, we are safe in Jesus and yes, God will sovereignly keep us saved. But the Way in which God sovereignly keeps us saved- is by allowing us to go through various Trials- which are tests of our Faith- so that we will have the ability to endure- with Joy!

So, all saved people will endure. And all saved people will endure with Joy! And we will endure or persevere until we come to our time of death or we are instantly changed at the Second Coming (**1Corinthians 15:51&52**). But we will NOT endure *morosely*; or *stoically*. This is NOT about gritting our teeth and *outlasting* the Trial. The Bible doesn't teach that- anywhere. Rather James teaches that we will endure- WITH JOY! And the Means that God has chosen to help us endure with Joy- is by allowing us to experience various Trials- which test or prove our Faith- which produces Endurance- which brings to us that great Joy.

And finally, then James said,

And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

... which is almost identical to what Jude wrote:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

... there is that sticky word again: JOY! So, God's Goal is NOT to merely keep us from stumbling. It is NOT to merely make us stand in the Presence of God's Glory- blameless. And it is NOT merely that we endure. No, the Main Goal is that God will empower us to do all of that- until we can have that great Joy!

Because it is us having Joy- in following and obeying Jesus; it is that we have Joy- when we encounter various Trials; it is us having Joy in Jesus- that glorifies God the most. And us delighting in Jesus- is the “**perfect result**” that James is talking about that causes us to be complete and lack nothing!

So, James teaches that what helps us to have that Joy in our Trials- is that God has been Good to give us the Knowledge that our Trials produce a godly Endurance. And as we allow Endurance to have its perfect Work in us- we will arrive at the fullness of Joy that Jesus promised- and God will be glorified!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.