

“HANDLING LIFE’S TOUGH TIMES: PART 2”

James 1:5-12

Perhaps you’ve heard this statement—**“When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade!”** The basic philosophy is sound. In fact, it is biblical.

That’s the message James, the brother of the Lord Jesus and the spiritual leader of the church in Jerusalem, delivered to Jewish Christians who had been driven out of Jerusalem because of persecution (Acts 8:1). They left behind their homes, their jobs, and everything they had spent a lifetime building. They were hated by both Jews and Gentiles because of their bold faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. James introduced his letter by highlighting how they could face tough times with dignity and integrity.

Every one of us has faced tough times in the past. Some of us are going through a tough time right now. **How you handle these tough times confirms the sincerity of your faith or it exposes the**

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hypocrisy of your faith. In the first 12 verses of James there are 6 commands that give us the framework for making lemonade when we are given lemons. The basic truth that flows out of this text is so encouraging . . .

YOU CAN BE AN OVERCOMER.

Last week we zeroed in on part 1 of the sermon, and covered verses 1-4. The outline was as follows . . .

1. THE BELIEVER'S PERSPECTIVE

James 1:1–2... 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.

2. THE BELIEVER'S PERFECTION

James 1:4... And let endurance *have its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

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Bill Buckley shared this thought with me the other day. In school we are taught a lesson and then given a test. In the kingdom of our Lord, He gives you a test /trial and then teaches you the lesson He wants you to learn. This is the process He uses to grow us spiritually. Remember this . . .

**Trials are a sign of God's
approval, not his disapproval.**

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Okay, last Sunday we examined the believer's perspective and the believer's perfection. Today, I want to focus your attention on three more blessings that God has granted to believers to enable them to be overcomers. Here's the first of those three . . .

3. THE BELIEVER'S PRAYER

Verse 5 presents the unquestioned sincerity of God who paves the way for our spiritual maturity. Verses 6-8 raise the question of our sincerity. Do we want

to go forward with God? Are committed to His perspective and to His plans for our future?

A.) The Request

James 1:5... But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Trials have a way of scrambling our perspective to the point that you can't see any good coming out of it!

“Let him ask God” — To request wisdom in the midst of a trial is precisely what God commands for believers who are perplexed by what they are going through.¹ James draws heavily from Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Listen to Jesus' words...

Matthew 7:7–11... “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **8** “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him

¹Kurt A. Richardson, vol. 36, *James*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1997), 64.

who knocks it will be opened. **9** "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? **10** "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? **11** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

"Who gives to all men generously"— James uses a term for "generously" that means "*sincere action.*" God's nature is to give! When we pray, He never says, "*Come back tomorrow when I have more time.*"

"Without reproach, and it will be given to him"— God will not only provide wisdom, but will do so generously, not grudgingly. The Creator God knows you intimately and loves you perfectly. He reaches out to you with this invitation . . .

"Draw near to Me, and ask Me to help you understand why this is happening and to give you perspective on what you are going through and to walk alongside you."

B.) The Requirement

James 1:6–8... But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

"But he must ask in faith" — We must approach God with faith in His character and His ability to give.

"Without any doubting" — This doubting is not about the existence of God but about what kind of God the believer serves and what God wants for our lives.

"For the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind" — Because of doubt the believer suffers the excruciating instability of a life torn by two loyalties.

James 1:7–8... For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

"For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord" — Persistent doubt nullifies faith.

“Being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”— Double-minded basically means two-souled. Although the doubter cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord, the devoted believer should expect to receive wisdom for the journey of life.

One day every person is going to stand before Almighty God, and God’s goal from now until then is to prepare you for that day.² Therefore, He is in the process of developing endurance and spiritual maturity in you. So, face your trial with the joy that comes from knowing that the Lord loves you and He will never leave you or forsake you. With His help:

YOU CAN BE AN OVERCOMER.

So far, we’ve noted the believer’s perspective, the believer’s perfection, and the believer’s prayer.

² David Platt, [Exalting Jesus in James](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 7.

Here’s the fourth thing you’ve got going for you in the midst of a trial . . .

4. THE BELIEVER’S PRACTICE

Okay, you’ve developed the right perspective. God is in the process of perfecting you, and you have prayed for wisdom. Now you must exercise your faith obediently. To make his point James focuses on the extremities of life . . .

A.) The Test of Poverty

James 1:9... **But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position.**

“But let the brother of humble circumstances”—

This is the poor, seemingly unimportant Christian brother. The poor are indeed humble because of the condition of their lives and by neglect on the part of the wealthy.

“Glory in his high position”— “Glory” is a present tense command in the Greek language. By faith, the poor person must look beyond their circumstances

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to the unlimited blessings they have in the Lord Jesus . . .

"Riches of His goodness" Ro. 2:4

"Riches of His grace" Eph. 1:7

"Riches of His glory" Eph. 3:16

If you are struggling financially, you can glory in the fact that your circumstances are teaching you to *trust the Lord and you are highly blessed!*

(B.) The Test of Plenty

James 1:10... **and the rich man *is to glory in his humiliation*, because like flowering grass he will pass away.**

"And let the rich man glory in his humiliation"—

The great peril of riches is that they tend to produce a false sense of security. In their mind, they feel as if they have the resources to cope with anything and

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to buy themselves out of any situation they may wish to avoid.³

“Because like flowering grass he will pass away”—

Look at verse 11 . . .

James 1:11... For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

If you have plenty, be careful. You too will experience trials, and they will remind you that money can't solve your problems. All the stuff you accumulate will not heal your wounds or result in lasting satisfaction.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and let Him exalt you whenever and however He chooses. Practice your faith!

³*The Letters of James and Peter*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1976), 47.

5. THE BELIEVER’S PROMISE

Is it worth it to endure the minor and major trials of this life?

James 1:12... Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

James lays out two wonderful rewards...

A.) The Character

“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial”—

This word “*blessed*” describes the person who has found life’s deepest fulfillment. This satisfaction comes from his relationship with God, not favorable circumstances. Take note of the fact that this special character of life is given to those who “persevere under trial!”

“For once he has been approved”— God is at work in you the whole time you are enduring a trial. James is literally shouting—“*Live to please the Lord not yourself!*”

B.) The Crown

Perseverance comes with great blessing in this life and in the next life.

"He will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" — The crown of life is the Lord's gift to those who have chosen to endure their trials because of their love for Jesus!

This crown pictures the laurel wreath that would be put on an athlete's head at the end of a race he won (Moo, *James*, 70). It is the crown of eternal life and all that includes! This is why we should consider it all joy as we encounter various trials throughout our lifetime!

CONCLUSION

Are you going through a trial right now? I want to invite you to come to the altar and cry out to the Lord . . .

- The right (perspective)—*STUDENT not VICTIM*
- Endurance and spiritual maturity (perfection)
- Pray for wisdom (prayer)

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- **Live by faith (practice)**
- **Perseverance and love for the Lord (promise)**

You may leave here today without it being well with your circumstances, but it CAN be well with your soul!

Some of you are trying to work your way through a trial without having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to His invitation—**“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest!” (Matt. 11:28)** Come to Christ in repentance and faith.

Personally, I wouldn’t want to go through tough times without having the support of a church family. I invite you to join CFBC this morning.

YOU CAN BE AN OVERCOMER.