



JAMES 1:1-4

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

2 Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness /perseverance 4 Let steadfastness/perseverance finish its work, and have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

JAMES 1:12

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

NOTE TO LEADERS

1. Next water baptism: 6 November. There will be a teaching time after all 3 services on Sunday, 30 October.
2. Next baby dedication: 13 November. There will be a teaching time after all 2 services on 6 November.

START TALKING

1. What were you challenged by in Sunday's Sunday's message?
2. What is your natural response when you face a trial: "flight", "fight", or "freeze"?

START THINKING

1. Read James 1:2-4. What kind of attitude should Christians have when facing trials? What reason does James give for maintaining this attitude? How easy do you find it hard to maintain an attitude of joy when things are difficult?
2. On Sunday, Steph said that the devil causes trouble because he hates us, but the Lord allows it because He loves us (i.e. God tests us; the devil tempts us). What is the difference between a "trial" and a "temptation"?
3. Read James 1:12. What promise encourages us to have joy among the trials

START SHARING

1. Based on Sunday's message, what trials are you currently facing that need to be approached differently? What is one thing that you need to put into immediate action?
2. Reflect on a recent time when you've experienced some kind of trial or suffering. Did you respond in the way James instructs? How can you strategically prepare to respond better the next time these situations arise?

START PRAYING

Use this as a time for people to really share and receive prayer for what is going on in their lives. Discourage people from primarily sharing prayer requests for other people (e.g. "please pray for my grandmother's uncle"). Instead, encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.

START DOING

1. This week, take some time to write about your struggles - don't hold back, complain all you want. But then go back to what you wrote the next day and make some notes about how God might be making you "mature and complete."
2. Memorise James 1:2-4. This will be a powerful support to you in your toughest times.

This Sunday, we started a new six-week series on the book of James. Steph Bester shared a challenging message with us titled "Spiritual Recovery".

James was the brother of Jesus and the leader of the church in Jerusalem. He died in 62 AD, which was approximately 29 years after Jesus died. There was a 2-month period where there was no Roman governor, and the Jewish leaders took the chance to seize James. They took him up to the pinnacle of the temple and said he must blaspheme Jesus. James didn't; instead, he said he saw the Son of Man coming on the clouds in glory. The Jewish leaders threw him off the pinnacle of the temple, but James didn't die immediately, so they stoned him. As they were stoning him, he started praying for the people, saying, "Father forgive them because they know not what they are doing". The crowd shouted, "James the Just is praying for us!" Finally, someone took a wooden club and hit his head, killing him. When the Christians came to take his body away, they were astonished because it was the first time they had seen his knees. His knees looked like those of a camel because of all the time he had spent on his knees praying.

The book of James was written to the first-generation followers of Jesus, who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean because of persecution. Throughout history, each generation has been challenged with the same issues (we all tend to become proud and critical), and it will continue, so the letter of James is of great value to any believer seeking to follow Christ. The book of James is often called the "Proverbs" of the New Testament; it is full of wisdom, it has limited theology and a call to take action.

The book of James opens with this: *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.*

*2 Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces **steadfastness/perseverance** 4 Let **steadfastness/perseverance** finish its work, and have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.* James 1:1-4.

(NOTE: Some translations use the word steadfastness, while others use perseverance. **Steadfastness** = The quality of being absolutely firm and unwavering.....in this context, firm and unwavering in our trust in God. In who He is, In his Word and promises. **Perseverance** = Persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.)

James doesn't say "if" trouble comes our way but "whenever" it does. He assumes that we will have troubles and that it's possible to grow from them. James tells us to turn our hardships into times of learning and growing because tough times can teach us perseverance/steadfastness.

When we face troubles, we tend to ask if they're from God or the devil. Some troubles are of our own making, e.g. when we make poor decisions or when we pursue and place our attention on things outside God's will. King David had a great revelation of this. He would often pray to the Lord and say things like, "search me, Lord, see if there is anything in me that is not aligned with you, and help correct me..." (The Passion Translation says, see if there is anything in me that leads to the path of pain and correct me...)

Hebrews 12:5-12 speaks of discipline: *5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,*

6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." " [a]

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! 10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces

a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

Some of the challenges we face are because of the decisions that others make. We are part of a broken world and broken system; Jesus said to His followers that in this world, we will face many troubles (John 16:33).

The devil causes trouble (i.e. through temptation) because he hates us, but the Lord allows it (i.e. He tests us) because He loves us. God tests us; the devil tempts us. In other words, the devil sends trials to damage us, and God allows the trials because they strengthen us. We can resist temptation by turning to God for strength and choosing to obey His word.

It is interesting how James could have opened with anything in his letter, but he chose to open with the most important thing: trust God and trust that all the challenges you face as His children because they have a purpose in growing and perfecting our faith. God wants to make us mature and complete, not keep us from all pain. Instead of complaining about our struggles, we should see them as opportunities for growth.

Here is the crux of the scripture: The joy is certainly not in the trial itself. The Joy is in knowing and understanding that God is busy with His work in us when we face trials. The Joy is not in the trial but in what God is doing with the trial.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is the Author and the Perfector of our faith. He uses trials and challenges to perfect our faith. And in 1 Corinthians 10:13, we read that every trial is bearable, God is faithful, and He will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to deal with the challenges. (This will look different for each person).

Much of our prayer lives are aligned with our success and comfort. We think God is interested in our dreams and ideas - and of course, as our Father, He is - but he is far more interested in our Faith, our character, and that we place our trust in Him and not anything else. Why? Because the truth is that most of our dreams and desires will die with us, but our Faith, character, trust in the Lord, our hearts, and complete submission to God are of eternal value to us.

There is an inconvenient truth: If our hearts belong to God and we face a trial, it pushes us deeper into His embrace and deeper into His arms. If our hearts belong to something other than God (or if we have a wrong picture of God), we start blaming and questioning God. Blaming and questioning God is a sign of more spiritual growth and maturing ahead of us.

God is focused on our Crown of Life that will last for all eternity. *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.* James 1:12.

So when we face trials, we should:

1. Pray for wisdom
2. Praise and worship
3. Have a vision of what the crown of life will look like for us one day