



James

How to Live the Christian Life!

Living with Trials

James 1:1-11

Message #1 of 12 – S658

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Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Living with Trials

James 1:1-11

Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 1**
- Today, we begin a new series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- The book of James may be the most practical book in the Bible
- It answers many of the questions of how to live this thing we call Christianity
- It's primary message is growing to maturity in our faith
- With an emphasis on doing what God's Word says **James 1:22**

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only...

- James is best known for his teaching that real faith works
- When our faith is real, it is visible through the good works that we do
- Through this study we are going to see how a man or woman of faith should respond to the things that come into our life
- And not just how to respond, but to do it in a way that glorifies God, blesses others, and grows our faith
- And we start this study looking at how God uses the difficult things that come into our life to grow us to maturity
- Trials will come into the lives of all believers
- And they come into our lives for lots of reasons
- But they all have the same goal – and it is a good goal
- If you are able to do so, please stand as we read today's text as a sign of reverence for the Word of God
- Read **James 1:1-11**
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Living with Trials**
- The letter by James is the first of what are called the General Epistles or letters
- Includes 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Jude
- Let's begin

- **James 1:1**
- James is believed to be the earliest letter written in the New Testament – mid 40s AD
- First thing we need to figure out is who this James is
- Several men bore the name of James
- James, the brother of John – the Sons of Thunder
- That James was martyred in about 44 AD, not likely
- Another apostle, James the Lesser – not much known, probably not
- Another James, the brother of Jesus, the younger son of Joseph and Mary is named frequently in the gospels as a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem
- Mostly likely this James is Jesus' half-brother – same mother, Mary – different fathers – Jesus = God the Father, by the Holy Spirit – James = Joseph
- The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is false – led to the heresy of Mary as co-redemptress
- Instead of identifying himself as the half-brother of Jesus – bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ
- This is radical because even though he grew up with Jesus, didn't believe that He was the Messiah
- It took the resurrection to convince James
- But once convinced, He gave His whole life to his Lord and Savior
- Addresses the letter to the 'twelve tribes...scattered abroad'
- Twelve tribes = Israel – at this time the Christian church almost 100% Jewish
- Written to believers of Jesus – written to us
- James knew that things were not all warm and fuzzy for the Christians scattered outside of Palestine
- **James 1:2-4**
- They were experiencing 'various trials' – probably not all of them but enough of them that he put this as the very first thing he addressed in his letter
- Bad things happen in the life of a believer
- And the evitable question is, 'Why is this happening to me?'

- There are three general varieties of trials
- First – **Cause and Effect** – this is the most obvious
- This is the trial we bring upon ourselves because of our own sin

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

- If you drive drunk, the trial might be crashing, losing license, losing job
- This also includes trials that come by other's sins
- Husband drives drunk, his trial will affect you also
- Second variety – **Spiritual Trial**
- This trial comes as a direct result of your faith in Jesus
- When you start following Jesus, you are out of step with the rest of the world – it will sometimes cost you something
- Pastor Saeed in prison 3+ years because he is a Christian **John 15:20**
Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.
- Third variety – **Spiritually Mysterious**
- The trial makes no logical sense
- The best example we have of this is Job – righteous man – great trials
- Even though God spoke to Job, never explained why the trial came
- These are the most difficult trials to endure
- But whatever variety of trial you are in – same goal by God

• **James 1:3**

- God is testing your faith – assayer pours acid on gold to determine it is genuine
- One of the things the acid does is burn away impurities
- It is not enough that we have faith, God wants our faith to be pure **1**

Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- One of the byproducts of having our faith purified through trials is patience
- And patience is critical if we desire to live this Christian life well

- **James 1:4**

- God's goal for your life is that you would be perfect, complete, lacking nothing
- Perfect does not mean sinless – means mature – grown up spiritually
- We have a lot of babies in the nursery
- But spiritually speaking we have more babies here in the sanctuary
- God wants us to grow up
- 'complete' has the idea of being 'whole' – similar to 'perfect' meaning finished
- Lacking nothing – not speaking about material things, spiritually lacking nothing
- Interesting, this is a description of Jesus as He walked on this earth
- Want you to notice at the beginning of verse 4 the word 'let'
- In essence James is saying, 'Let the trial purify your faith, teaching you to be patient, trusting God to make you like Jesus'
- And almost as if James knew they would ask him how to do that, he says

- **James 1:5**

- We need the wisdom of God to know how to live the Christian life
- Man doesn't have this wisdom – ask God for it – He is a generous God – Gave you His Son
- Then James tells us that we need something before we ask God for wisdom

- **James 1:6**

- Can't just ask God for something – must have faith without doubt

Hebrews 11:6

Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that *He is*, and *that He is* a rewarder of those who diligently seek *Him*.

- Jesus says a mustard seed of that kind of faith can move mountains
- And sometimes the trials in our lives feel like mountains
- Believe God and ask Him for the wisdom you need to let that trial purify your faith so that you can patiently wait for Him to make you like Jesus
- James then tells us that any other kind of faith doesn't work

- **James 1:7-8**

- God is generous and He is anxious to give us all we need to grow in our faith, and be able to walk this Christian life
- But He has to be our one source of hope, wisdom, and strength
- He has to be our joy and the source of our peace
- Trials can come from lots of different areas of life
- Can be health, can be relationships, can be persecution
- A very common one is finances
- And James addresses that one
- **James 1:9**
- ‘lowly’ = low in status or humble – poor Christians
- About the time that James is writing this letter, persecution is going on in Palestine by the Jews against Jews who accepted Christ
- Many of them ended fleeing Palestine
- And many of those lost almost everything when they left and had to start all over in life
- Much like what we see with the refugees coming out of Syria
- Don’t focus on your poverty, instead glory in your exaltation
- What exaltation? The exaltation you have in heaven
- You are a joint-heir with Christ, all that He has, you will share¹

Corinthians 3:21-23

Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

- Your lowly estate is temporary – your exaltation is eternal
 - Then a word to the wealthy
 - **James 1:10-11**
 - Just as the poor brother’s poverty is temporary, so is the rich person’s wealth – will not follow you to heaven
 - This is a warning against pride
 - Instead of focusing on your wealth, focus on Christ
 - Remember what He said about Himself **Matthew 11:29**
- Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**
- Whatever your trial is – it is not a mistake
 - God didn’t cause it, but He is going to use

- He is going to use everything that comes into your life to make you complete, to grow you in your faith
- But you have to let it happen, and if you don't know how – ask Him
- Before we close I want to draw your attention back to verse 2
- I skipped over something that is sometimes misunderstood
- **James 1:2**
- ‘count it all joy’ or ‘pure joy’ as some translations say
- Many of you know that I have been sick
- About five weeks ago I came down with what I thought was a head cold – but it was accompanied with fatigue
- Thought I might be getting pneumonia which I have had before
- The cold went away, but the fatigue hasn't
- A blood test came back normal
- I am having a hard time just doing normal stuff
- This is a trial – of the variety **Spiritually Mysterious**
- Since I was fatigued, I rested, but nothing changed
- So this week I decided to get back to work
- I taught the Wednesday Night Service, the Thursday Night Men's Study, and Friday night I taught a four-hour Leadership Group
- The fatigue is still there, but each time I stood up to teach, the Holy Spirit showed up to give me the strength to do what I wasn't able to
- God proved Himself faithful to me again
- And I am learning things about God and about myself, that I don't believe I could have learned any other way
- Now, don't get me wrong – I want this to go away
- Praying diligently for that and asking for prayer
- Have a doctor appointment tomorrow to determine what the next step is
- But as hard as this is, I rejoice in my God who is able **Romans 5:3-4**
And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- God is doing a work of perfecting me, and I am trying to let Him do it
- God is trying to do a work of perfection in you, will you let Him do it

- You don't have to enjoy the trial, but you can find joy that God is using it for His glory, the blessing of others, and for your growth in Christ
- To teach you how to live the Christian life better - Amen

- **Pray**

May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever.

Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21