

A. Introduction — Text: 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.

1. Purpose:

2. Pressure Treated Lumber

3. Pressure Treated People

B. “Consider it all joy”

James 1:2

1. What a Lofty and Bold Statement!^A

a. a command that unbelievers would question

b. not just a smile on one’s face

c. what makes it possible?

2. The Nature of These Difficulties^B

a. temptation or trial?

b. the proper attitude toward temptation is ...

c. how do these difficulties appear to us?

^A Acts 5:40-41, 26:24, Romans 8:28

^B Matthew 6:13, Luke 22:40

C. God Has a Purpose

James 1:3

1. Something You Should Already Know^C

- a. following Jesus means entering ...
- b. Jesus warned that discipleship would ...

2. To Reveal 24-Carat Faith^D

- a. trials are aimed at our ...
- b. they show whether it will ...

3. Testing that Is Productive^E

- a. when faith is approved, it produces ...
- b. other terms for this are ...

D. God’s Purpose Is Mature Believers

James 1:4

1. Endurance Has Its Own Purpose

- a. what sort of result is to be expected?
- b. who sets this into motion?

2. Maturing the Believer in Christ^F

- a. a Christian’s ‘perfection’ is not absolute but that he ...
- b. a Christian’s ‘completeness’ is for his life to show ...
- c. to lack in nothing also means not to ...

E. Conclusion – How will I respond to the next trial that I face?

^C Matthew 5:11-12, Mark 8:34-35, John 16:33

^D 1 Peter 1:7

^E Ephesians 6:13

^F Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 1:28

A. Introduction

1. Text, James 1:2-4: '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.'
2. Purpose:
 - a. last week we said that the purpose of this book, the answer to the question, "Why was it written?", is found in that one word that closes verse 1: Greetings; which literally means, 'Rejoice; Take Joy!'
 - b. our text today addresses a particular aspect of taking joy
 - (A) Christians frequently ask this question
 - (B) "Why does God permit such difficulties in my life?"
 - (C) James' purpose and ours is to give the answer to this question
3. Pressure-Treated Lumber
 - a. a few months ago I replaced the wood in the balcony at the back of our house
 - b. we moved in almost 30 years ago, and it looked old then – it looked as if it were part of the original building ... some 45 years ago
 - c. it was built of cedar; a light wood, resistant to weather, but even so it had begun to rot; so the floor was unsafe, due for replacement
 - d. so I used pressure-treated lumber, because I prefer wood to plastic
 - e. the pressure-treating forces chemicals into the wood that will inhibit rotting – but also that harden the wood and make it stronger
 - f. applying heat, chemical and pressure to wood to make it last is an ancient art – it was known in Alexander the Great's time; even before that, spears were strengthened by heating in fire and pounding them
 - g. I shall be interested if it lasts longer than the cedar, but hope I am not around to find out!

4. Pressure-Treated People

- a. we complain when we are subjected to stress – 'I just can't take it'
- b. but God, who knows our framework because He designed us, uses stress and pressure and difficulty to strengthen and to preserve us
- c. that summarizes what our text says today; now the detail ...

B. 'Consider it All Joy'

James 1:2

1. What a Lofty and Bold Statement!

- a. are we indeed expected to obey this command in the face of trials?
- b. surely this is beyond the reach of man's ability!
- c. for the natural man – the person without Jesus Christ – this is surely a piece of consummate folly, a stumbling-block to faith
- d. counting the meeting of trials as all joy is much, much more
 - (A) than to be stoically silent about them
 - (B) than to use them as a vehicle of prayer
 - (C) even more than to be grateful – and usually we express it in such terms as, 'well, it could be worse'
 - (D) but rather to evaluate trials as a reason for rejoicing as the apostles did in Acts 5:40-41, 'And to him (i.e., the Pharisee, Gamaliel) they (i.e., the Jewish rulers) agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.'
- e. because James is not commanding us to have a surface joy
 - (A) not some counterfeit joy of putting on a happy face
 - (B) but this is to be all joy, that is, joy through and through
- f. no wonder the natural man looks at this with the attitude of a Festus who shouted at Paul, 'Paul, you are out of your mind!' (Acts 26:24) – 'you Christians are crazy to be so joyful in such suffering!'
- g. but Christian is able to do so; why?
- h. because, by faith, he or she is able to accept that God has a purpose in this for their own good, knowing '... that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called

according to His purpose.' (Romans 8:28)

i. before looking at the purpose of God, let us first consider ...

2. The Nature of These Difficulties – '... encounter various trials'

a. the Greek word used can be translated 'tests, trials or temptations'

b. the AV uses 'divers temptations' which may be because

(A) later in the chapter the word is used in this sense, or,

(B) since an obsolete English meaning of 'temptation' is 'trial, test'^{2}.

c. but what is in view here are not temptations to sin, but rather external trials and difficulties – albeit that these can lead to temptation to sin, and specifically to the sin of disbelieving or doubting God

d. the Bible is clear that we are not to take joy in temptations to sin

(A) Jesus enjoins us to pray, 'do not lead us into temptation', Mat 6:13

(B) and to the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, He said 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' (Luke 22:40)

e. these are difficulties or trials which may encounter going through life

(A) the Greek can be literally rendered, 'fall into the midst'

(B) the picture of us being surrounded by such trials

(C) we look one way, a difficulty; another, a trial; in every direction

(D) literally, it is to encounter variegated trials

(1) some of you may know of various plants such as the weigela, a shrub with variegated or many-coloured leaves and flowers

(2) these trials come each day dressed in different colours, but underneath they are still difficulties

(E) does this seem familiar to you?

(F) it certainly was the case to these Jewish Christians along with the Gentile converts who then made up the church of Jesus Christ

(1) as Jews, particularly, they had been persecuted and scattered – thrust out of Rome

(2) as Christians, particularly, they had been persecuted and scattered – thrust out of Jerusalem

(3) they were despised by the pagans as Jews – as atheists since they had no visible gods of wood and stone to worship

(4) they were despised by their Jewish relatives, as those who had left Judaism to follow this sect of Jesus the Nazarene

f. one prayer focus we have today is for the persecuted Christian church

g. *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ...*

C. God Has a Purpose

James 1:3

1. Something You Should Already Know – ‘*knowing ...*’

a. Jesus never made any secret of the fact that to follow Him was to enter into a danger zone, but that it was worthwhile to do so

b. at the end of the beatitudes, He said, ‘*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*’ (Matthew 5:11-12)

c. at another time He said to the crowd, ‘*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.*’ (Mark 8:34-35)

d. and on the eve of His crucifixion, these words, ‘*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*’ (John 16:33)

e. was this hidden from these believers? no; our preaching of the gospel, like that of Jesus Christ, should make very clear discipleship will cost

2. To Reveal 24-Carat Faith – ‘*... that the testing of your faith ...*’

a. the thrust of these trials is primarily aimed at our faith

b. when I repaired that balcony on the back of our house, I was replacing the light cedar with the heavier, pressure-treated lumber. Now this balcony was fastened to the wall, a proper bearing wall of brick. But what about the bolts holding it? These had been there perhaps 45 years. They were rusted. So I replaced them. But had they originally put in enough bolts? I looked up tables of tensile and shear strength standards for these bolts. These standards are determined by putting stress on bolts of to see what they could hold.

- c. faith is the bolt holding the believer to God – what stress will it take?
- d. trials are God’s way of testing in order to show that faith will hold
- e. ‘testing’ is a Greek word, also used in the same sense in 1 Peter 1:7, ‘so that the proof (i.e. testing) 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ;’
- f. and the same word has been found in documents in reference to gold, as being ‘proven or standard’ gold – 24-Carat gold
- g. trials show that our faith is genuine; trials are one way of assuring us that our faith is up to God’s standard when we look back upon them

3. Testing that Is Productive – ‘... testing ... produces endurance’

- a. the Greek word can be translated ‘endurance, patience, fortitude, perseverance’ and, the one I like best, ‘steadfastness.’ – so also in v 4
- b. while the word implies a patience and a submission, it does not imply passivity, but rather an active involvement of the Christian
- c. trials, by proving our faith to be of 24-carat quality, provides that character which is able to respond positively to the command of Ephesians 6:13, ‘Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.’ – there is a verse hat is full of the Christian’s active involvement
- d. but even steadfastness, as importance as it may be; even perseverance, the carrying out of our faith to the end in every sense of the word, is but one step in the progression of God’s purpose in our lives
- e. knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. – from which we go on to see that ...

D. God’s Purpose Is Mature Believers

James 1:4

1. Endurance Has Its Own Purpose – and let endurance have its perfect result

- a. now, in the English it is not clear – the permissive form of the verb ‘to have’ is used: ‘and let have’ – but in the Greek it is a command in the third person, not a mere permission, but a directive
- b. God has started a process in the believer’s life
- c. that process is initiated by divinely appointed trials into the midst of which the Christian falls – things

- that God is working together
 - d. as they do their work
 - (A) approving the believer's faith as 24-carat faith
 - (B) developing in the believer the patience, endurance, fortitude – in short, steadfastness – that is required to run the Christian race
 - e. God then commands the steadfastness that results to accomplish the next step in your life and in mine
 - f. for it in turn to have its perfect result, finish its work ...
2. Maturing the Believer in Christ – *that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*
- a. the objective here is expressed in three terms
 - b. but really, each is just one side of the same triangle
 - c. a purpose which Paul expresses in Ephesians 4:13 in these words: '*until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature (or, perfect) man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*
 - d. as well as in Colossians 1:28, '*We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (or, perfect) in Christ.*'
 - e. that word, translated '*perfect*' in the AV, has a fundamental meaning of achieving the end corresponding the nature of a being or object
 - (A) for a thing – such as the universe – it means conforming in its operation to the laws that God established for it at creation
 - (B) for God that means He exists exactly in conformity to His nature as God: without fault, without defect; eternal, unchanging, so on
 - (C) for man that means his being in conformity to His created nature, in particular with respect to his relationship to his Creator
 - (D) though this is somewhat simplistic, it is this sense that Christians are called upon to be perfect as God is perfect
 - (E) this word in this application to the believer is better translated as '*mature*' – a word which like these verses involves a progression, rather than the arrival at the destination
 - f. the second side of the triangle, is to be complete

- (A) not one of its parts is missing
- (B) it was a word that was applied by Jewish writers to the sacrificial system: according to the OT, both the priest and the sacrifice had to be complete and not defective in any way
- (C) through Christian eyes we see that was because these foretold the Christ who was to be perfect, both as High Priest and as sacrifice
- (D) for the Christian this implies which is not deficient in any of the Christian graces and practices, such as prayer or service
- g. the third side of the triangle, is to be lacking in nothing
 - (A) literally, 'not to be left behind; not to fall short; not to be inferior'
 - (B) we still have some pencil marks on the door posts going into our kitchen; they are the heights of various of our children as they grew up – we expected them to reach a certain height as they reached a certain age (approximately of course)
 - (C) these were one of our sets of marks of their progress
 - (D) and so it is with the believer: God has a set of marks for us to reach as we grow as Christians
- h. **And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

E. Conclusion

1. so the Christian is, looking at their immersion into trials, trials that would seem to overwhelm, is able to evaluate them as a cause of rejoicing, for they are concrete evidence that God is working in the Christian to make him to be all God wants him to be – may God's Holy Spirit, the Comforter, make this reality obvious to you and to me the next time we face a black time.
2. our closing hymn, *All Your Anxiety*, is a reminder of what we should do the next time this happens to us

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM - Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC - The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan - Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
- EGT - The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
- Lange - Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
- NICNT - The New International Commentary on the New Testament , *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 - ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
- TYN - Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
- Kerux - The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. Oxford English Dictionary, 1931, meaning 2.