

"True Faith Grows in Trials"

Part 6

James 1:2-12

Introduction: In the past several weeks we have been looking at James 1:2-12 and in this section James is instructing us as to how we are to face the trials of life. Today we are going to get back to this study but before we do there is something which we need to know as we face the trials and the storms of life.

There are people who teach that if we have a positive attitude or if we have enough faith we will never face any trials or storms. That is not true. The trials of life are workshops which God uses to remove the spiritual dross from our lives. Each trial we face comes upon us because God has permitted the trial to come. There is nothing which can come into our lives with God permitting it to happen.

The best example of this is seen in the life of Job. God had placed a hedge of protection around Job and Satan could only go as far as God permitted him to go.

Job 1:9-12

⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

¹⁰ Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

¹¹ But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

¹² And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; **only upon himself put not forth thine hand.** So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

In verse 12 we can see the distinct boundary which God established and Satan could not cross the boundary.

So the point I want you to see is that whatever comes upon us is all permitted by God and it is all used by God in the life of the believer to make us more like Jesus Christ.

Notice the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

² And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

*³ That no man should be moved by these afflictions: **for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.***

Here in these verses Paul makes it clear that believers have a path that has been appointed for us to walk and part of that path may include afflictions.

In our study of James we have been looking at how true faith grows in the midst of trials. This is found in James 1:2-12. In the midst of this section we have been looking at the words of James which contain several points of help as we face the trials of this life.

I will review these points in a moment but let me point out some things which James recorded about the trials of this life.

1. They will happen.

Notice James 1:2

The word "when" tells us that trials will come. He does not say "if".

2. They will be situations which we cannot control.

Notice James 1:2

The word "fall" helps us to see that some of the trials which come our way are situations which we cannot control.

Now let me quickly point out the help which James gives to us for when we face the trials.

I. Attitude and Focus

Notice James 1:2

When we face the trials of life we are to do so with joy because as children of God we know the end result.

Job 23:10

¹⁰ But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

II. Knowledge

Notice James 1:3

It is so important that we rest in the knowledge that God is doing a work in our lives. He has allowed the trial and He is in control of the trial.

III. Surrender

Notice James 1:4

We are not to fight against the trials of life but we are to surrender knowing that the trial is being used by God to refine us. I will remind you again that there is a sense in this verse that when we resist we hinder the work of God.

We must keep in mind that it is God's desire that people see Christ in us and that only happens when we surrender to the trials just as Jesus surrendered to the cross.

IV. Dependence

The other point which we talked about was dependence. When we face the trials of this life we are often faced with decisions which are connected to the trials.

Notice James 1:5

Now there is something here which I did not point out the last time we were together and that is **trials are designed to drive us to God**. That is seen right here in this verse. We are to go to God when we find ourselves facing a decision and we are to be completely dependent upon Him.

This verse tells us that God gives wisdom liberally which means He is generous with His wisdom. He also gives and does not "upbraid" which means He does not give with reproach. The idea is that God is more than willing to give us the wisdom which we need for the decisions of this life.

This verse contains one of the greatest promises we have as the children of God. James tells us that when we ask God for wisdom it will be given to us.

But there is a stipulation.

V. Faith

Notice James 1:6a

Here is the stipulation. When we are faced with a situation that requires a decision and we go to God for the wisdom which we need we must ask in faith. In other words we must ask and believe that He will give to us the wisdom which we ask for.

Let me put this into a real life situation to help you to understand what James is saying here.

When we are faced with a decision because of a trial that has come into our lives we are to go to God and believe that He will give to us the answer that we need. Now when we truly have faith that God will give to us the wisdom we then rest in Him and we wait for His answer. We do not run around seeking to find the answer elsewhere. We ask God and we wait for Him to give us the wisdom.

Many times the problem is that we do not wait. We act upon feeling or we follow the direction which comes from the world. We must wait. Someone once said the only thing worse than waiting is wishing that you had waited.

Let me show you an example of someone who did not wait but wished they would have.

Genesis 15:3-4

³ *And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.*

⁴ *And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

Abram was promised by God that he would father a son. Abram should have known to stay in the will of God and wait for God to work and allow Sarai to become pregnant.

Genesis 16:1-4a

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

² *And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.*

³ And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

⁴ And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived:

He and Sarai both refused to wait and Abram stepped out of the will of God when he took Hagar to be his second wife. The results were a son who would become the father of the Arab nations who would forever bring suffering to the people of Israel.

Patience is so important.

But there is more in this verse that we need to see.

Notice James 1:6a again.

James tells us that we are to ask in faith nothing "wavering". The word "wavering" here has a very interesting meaning.

Really the word has a double meaning, it means "to doubt" or "to dispute" or "to contend".

I want to address both meanings here if I could.

1. There are people who when they face the trials of life go to God in prayer but they do not seek wisdom for the decisions they face but instead they dispute with God about why He has brought them to the place where they are currently at.
2. Then there are those who go to God in prayer and they ask God for wisdom for the decisions they face and when God answers they doubt that it is the right choice.

Let me show you 2 places the same word is used but it is translated differently.

Romans 4:19-20

¹⁹ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

²⁰ He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

When speaking of Abraham and God's promise to him he "staggered" not or he never doubted. This was after the Hagar experience.

Jude 1:9

⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Here it is translated "contend".

Here is the point. When we go to God we are to ask for wisdom and then surrender the request and the situation to Him. When He answers we are not to doubt but we are to step through the door He sets before us.

The writer of Proverbs got it right.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Now listen to what I am going to say!

When God gives us wisdom for a decision we must NOT look at the circumstances. We are told to walk by faith and sometimes God opens doors and to step through requires a great amount of faith because the circumstances appear as though they will defeat us.

That is exactly what happened to Israel when the 12 spies came back from spying out the land of Canaan. They were not willing to walk by faith but they allowed the circumstances to keep them from going through the open door. Remember also the open door closed and the consequences were painful.

There are also other consequences.

Notice James 1:6-7

This is very important to understand.

When we do not have faith in the Lord James tells us that we will receive nothing of the Lord.

What does this mean?

- a. No peace.
- b. No direction.
- c. No understanding.
- d. No testimony.

But it goes beyond this.

Notice James 1:8

The lack of faith will make you unstable in all areas of your life. If you do not look to God and trust Him when you are faced with a decision and if you allow circumstances to control you, then you will be a person who struggles to find peace in the midst of the trials of life.

It will not only affect your spiritual life but it will affect all areas of your life. You will always be unsettled in your life. You will always struggle when you come to the crossroads of life.

Conclusion:

The writer of Hebrews speaks of a rest which God has for His children.

He uses Israel as an illustration and points back to the time when they refused to go into the land of Canaan because they would not have faith in the promises of God. Therefore they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness.

Hebrews 3:17-19

¹⁷ But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

¹⁸ And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

The point I want you to see is that there is no peace or rest when we do not walk by faith.