

James – Life after Faith
James 1:12
“The Prize for Passing the Test”

Outline:

- I. THE RESULT THAT IS POSSIBLE FROM YOUR TRIAL
 - A. a surprisingly blessed experience
 - B. a spiritually beneficial experience
- II. THE RESOLVE THAT IS PARAMOUNT IN YOUR TRIAL
 - A. Commitment in the presence of a trial
 - B. Confidence in the passing of a trial
- III. THE REWARD THAT IS PROMISED AFTER YOUR TRIAL
 - A. The image that James gives us
 - B. The inspiration that James gives us

1. We live in a therapeutic age, where very often personal responsibility is avoided when someone claims to suffer from some kind of disorder.
2. It does not even have to be a real disorder. One can be created, if necessary. For instance, have you ever heard of testophobia? Testophobia is defined as an acute disorder in which a person suffers severe anxiety and fear whenever they take a test or exam.
3. I used to have anxiety and fear when I would take tests, but it wasn't because of a disorder. It was because I hadn't studied, and I knew my paper was going to end up with more red ink than the gospel of Matthew.
4. In James 1:12, we find a beatitude that speaks to us of the value of passing the tests of life. James says, *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”*
5. One recent translation renders that phrase “when he is tried” this way: “when he passes the test”ⁱ.
6. James has already written about the “divers temptations” and “trying of your faith” earlier in this chapter.
7. In our text, he returns to the subject of the testing and trying experiences that we will inevitably encounter in life, and he teaches us there is a prize for those who pass the tests.
8. Looking at this wonderful verse, there are some truths James gives us that encourage us to endure our trials while keeping an eye on the prize that awaits us.
9. Notice these truths with me. First of all, James speaks to us about:

I. THE RESULT THAT IS POSSIBLE FROM YOUR TRIAL

1. There are two words in verse 12 that don't seem to go together. They are the words "Blessed" and "temptation."
2. Just as it was strange to hear James say, "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations," it is also strange to hear him declare that a man is blessed who has to endure a trying time in his life.
3. The word translated "blessed" is a word that literally and simply means "happy". It is the same word Jesus used during the Sermon on the Mount, when he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit", etc.
4. James teaches us in this verse that it is absolutely possible that the experience that is currently trying your faith will result in your eventual happiness.
5. Though it may be hard to see our tests that way, notice a couple of things James teaches us about the possible result from your trial. First of all, James says that your trial could be:

A. A surprisingly blessed experience

1. James says, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation...*" Again, this just strikes you as a silly statement.
2. We think of blessings as coming to us in the form of good things and pleasant things. We say, "God blessed me with a good job." We talk about the blessing of our health, or our family.
3. However, you never hear someone stand up in church and say, "I want to thank God for the blessing of going through a crisis. Thank God I lost my job."
4. We don't say things like that, nor is that what James is encouraging. What he is saying though, is that the burdens of life can very often prove to be some of the blessings of life.
5. Have you ever seen someone go through a trying crisis in their life, and then look back on it and say, "Even though that was a difficult experience, I am glad that it happened"?
6. What they found was that their difficulty was a surprisingly blessed experience. Was it hard? Yes. But it was also helpful, and something for which they could look back and thank God.

7. William Secker observed this truth in the life of Joseph. He said, "If Joseph had not been Egypt's prisoner, he would have never been Egypt's governor. The iron chains around his feet ushered in the golden chains about his neck."

8. Joseph would say "Amen" to verse 12, because he knew that our tests can actually prove to be a surprisingly blessed experience.

9. Notice something further about the possible results from your tests and trials. Notice not only that your trial could be a surprisingly blessed experience, but notice also further that it could be:

B. A spiritually beneficial experience

1. Look again at verse 12. James says, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried...*" Note that phrase "when he is tried".

2. The word "tried" speaks of the process of testing something in order to prove it. It is the process of validation and authentication.

3. For that reason, many translations read, "...when he has been approved," or "proven."

4. In this phrase we have what should be the utmost ambition and aim of the Christian life – to be approved by God.

5. Paul wrote to Timothy in II Timothy 2:4 and said, "*No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; **that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.***"

6. We are often so worried about what others think of us, and we do so much in search of the approval and acceptance of people around us.

7. However, what matters most is not the admiration of your neighbors; it is the approval of the Lord Jesus.

8. That approval comes as God brings us through tests and trials, and demonstrates the reality and strength of our faith in him. That is why we can be blessed by the endurance of a trial. It is a spiritually beneficial experience.

9. There is a poem I dearly love. It speaks of God making a man that He can use. Part of it says:

"How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him,
Into trial shapes of clay,
Which only God understands,

How He ruthlessly perfects,
Whom He royally elects...

How He bends but never breaks,
When His good He undertakes,
How He uses whom He chooses,
And with every purpose fuses him,
By every act induces him,
To try His splendor out –
God knows what He's about."

10. James reminds us in verse 12 that though a situation may wear the robes of a test and the garments of a trial, it may actually prove to be a blessing in the end.

11. Notice not only *the result that is possible from your trial*, but notice secondly, James speaks to us about:

II. THE RESOLVE THAT IS PARAMOUNT IN YOUR TRIAL

1. There is an important link in the chain between a trial and a blessing. That link is found in the word "endureth". James says, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation...*"

2. The presence of a trial in your life does not guarantee a future blessing. The blessing of a test is only found in passing it, and to pass the test means that you endure the trial.

3. In other words, it is of the utmost importance – it is paramount – that you resolve to remain faithful in the face of your trials.

4. Notice a couple of things that are involved in this resolve. First of all, it involves:

A. Commitment in the presence of a trial

1. Mark that word "endureth" in verse 12. If you look back up at verse 3, you will notice the word "patience". The word translated "endureth" in verse 12 is the verb form of that word.

2. The word translated "endureth" is a compound of two words and it simply means "to stay under".

3. Think about that. When a trial comes into our life, and we find our faith being tested, our temptation is to try to escape from the trial – to run from that which is challenging us.

4. However, as we learned when studying the opening verses of this chapter, there is more value in enduring trials than there is in escaping them.

5. Therefore, you must make a commitment that you are going to stand strong, even in the face of trials in your life. You must resolve that come what may, you are not going to fall apart, fall back, or fall away.

6. In Edinburgh, Scotland, I had the privilege of visiting the graveyard just outside of Greyfriars Kirk. The most famous grave in that small yard is that of a little dog called "Greyfriars Bobby".

7. Greyfriars Bobby was a Skye Terrier who spent some 14 years guarding the grave of his beloved master. There is a statue of the dog there, who was eventually buried beside his owner.

8. There are, however, some other graves in Greyfriar's cemetery that I believe point even more clearly to the concept of commitment and loyalty. There, just a few yards from the statue of the dog is a mass grave, containing the bodies of a number of the Scottish Covenanters.

9. The Scottish Covenanters were an early protestant group who were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ alone. Rather than renounce their convictions, these brave souls endured in the midst of their trial.

10. Though our trial may never be as serious as the Covenanters, we must nonetheless commit to endure in the presence of those things that would test our faith in God.

11. Notice something further about this resolve that is paramount in your trial. Notice not only that this resolve involves a commitment in the presence of a trial, but notice also that it involves:

B. Confidence in the passing of a trial

1. James says that a man is blessed who can endure his trying circumstances, and pass the tests of his life. Within that truth is the realization that the test and the trial are not permanent things.

2. In other words, part of endurance is the understanding that there will be a point when the thing we are enduring will be over.

3. It reminds me of one of favorite stories. A lady stood up in church and testified that her favorite words in the Bible were the words, "And it came to pass..."

4. It seemed like a strange thing to say until she said, "...Cause whenever a storm comes into my life, I say, 'Thank you Jesus, it didn't come to stay; it came to pass!'"
5. Part of the resolve we need in our trials is the wisdom and foresight to see that there is an going to be an end to our adversity.
6. We need to stand up under the strain of our trials, saying with the Psalmist, "...weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning (Ps. 30:5)."
7. Your trial can end up as a blessing in your life, but only if you have the resolve to patiently and prayerfully endure what God sees fit to allow in your life.
8. There is a third truth that we draw from this wonderful verse. James speaks to us, not only about *the result that is possible from your trial*, and *the resolve that is paramount in your trial*, but notice also lastly that he points us to:

III. THE REWARD THAT IS PROMISED AFTER YOUR TRIAL

1. Look again at verse 12. James says, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*"
2. The primary reason that our trials can eventually become a blessing is because of the reward that is available for those who pass the test.
3. James describes this reward as, "...*the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*"
4. Think about that phrase with me, and notice a couple of things about this reward. Notice first of all:

A. The image James gives us

1. Notice that word "crown" in verse 12. James says that a crown awaits those who endure their trials and pass the test.
2. When we think of a crown, we think of a golden, jewel studded sort of hat, such as would be worn by a king or a queen.
3. The Greeks had a word for that sort of crown. It is a word that gives us our English word "diadem." That is *not* the word James uses here in verse 12.
4. The word James uses here was a word that described a type wreath, or braid of leaves that would sit upon the head.

5. This type of crown would be awarded in a couple of different settings. For one, it was the crown that was awarded to the winner in the ancient public games.

6. There is a reminder here that one day - if we are faithful - we are going to finish the race of our Christian life. If we endure through all our challenges, when we cross the finish line, there is a victor's crown awaiting.

7. This type of crown was also awarded to a conquering general or soldier who had won a key victory.

8. James is reminding us that when the warfare and struggle of this life is over, those who have stood through the battles will be awarded a conquerors crown.

9. Perhaps Paul had this text from James in mind when he said in II Timothy 4:7-8, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

10. James uses the image of a crown to teach us about the reward for endurance. Notice not only the image James gives us, but think further about:

B. The inspiration James gives us

1. The Bible indicates that we will receive crowns and rewards in heaven – which we will subsequently lay down at the feet of Jesus.

2. I am not sure, however, that James is talking about a literal crown in this verse. You see; in the original language there is a little article just before the word translated "life".

3. The text could actually read, "...he shall receive **the crown of the life...**" In other words, rather than a literal crown, the reward is the life that we receive once we have passed the tests of life.

4. What is James talking about? Well, contrary to the title of a popular religious book, James is talking about receiving "your best life later".

5. James is telling us that when we patiently endure the trials and tests of this life, we will be rewarded with a trial-free, gloriously and eternally blessed life throughout all eternity.

6. It reminds me of II Corinthians 4:17: *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

7. James is trying to inspire us by reminding us that the few and fleeting days in which we must endure our trials will seem like nothing as we enjoy the timeless eternity of heaven.

8. Its like a homeless man who can trade his cardboard box for the Biltmore mansion. It is a no-brainer. That is the inspiration James gives us. That is the kind of reward that is promised after the endurance of your trials.

1. Several years ago, when my dad preached through the book of James, he entitled his sermon on this text, "We'll Trade the Old Cross for a Crown."

2. That old song, "I'll Trade the Old Cross for a Crown" was written by a man named Johson Oatman Jr., who also wrote "Count Your Blessings".

3. The last verse of the song says:

"Every cross that I bear for my Savior,
Will at last, when He calls, be laid down,
And my sorrows will all be forgotten,
When I trade the old cross for a crown."

4. The cross of your present trial may seem exceedingly heavy. Yet, don't let the difficulty of your trial cause you to forget the prize that is promised for those who pass the test.

5. Look beyond the battle, and see the blessing that can result from your trial. Resolve therefore to stand firm in the midst of your trial, and wait patiently for the crown of the life that is to come.

ⁱ HCSB