



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 1: 1-11

Summer 2021

"Christian Trials"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth. We are starting a new series this morning, the Book of James. And we're going to look at verses 1 through 11 of chapter 1. And it was called to my attention that it would be good if we read through this book—routinely. And I think that is a good idea. It's a short book, five chapters. You can read it in one setting. But maybe read through it once a week and prepare yourself for what we're going to be studying.

I am probably going to be doing about two lessons per chapter, so there should be about ten sermons. So if you want to think ahead, we'll be doing the second half of chapter 1, next week; the first half of chapter 2 the following week; and in that way you can prepare yourself for the sermons that you'll hear on Sunday morning.

Well, this is a great book, and we're going to look at the introduction and the first subject that James takes up in chapter 1, verses 1 through 11. James writes,

1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

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.

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. **6** But he must ask in faith without any

doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

⁹ But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰ and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

James 1: 1-11

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and our time in studying it together.

(Message) Well, we sung some very good hymns here in the service. And one of Isaac Watts' hymns, titled "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" asks the question, "Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas?" The intent of that is to move us to say, "No beds of ease for me. I'll sail those seas." But in our more ordinary moments, we really want those beds of ease.

Alas, that is not possible—not if we are living the genuine Christian life. It's full of difficulty. James tells us that in the first verses of his book. We will "encounter various trials" that test our faith. The Christian life is not a soft life. That's the subject of our passage this morning, trials, as we begin a series of studies in the Book of James.

But first, before we look at our passage and we take up that subject, I think a brief word of background on the book would be helpful. The Book of James is one of a group of short books, known as the 'catholic epistles'. Catholic means *general*. So they're also known as the 'general epistles', the 'general letters'. In addition to James, they are 1 and 2 Peter, the Book of Jude, and 1, 2, and 3 John.

They're called 'general' because they are not addressed to any specific locality. The exception to that is 2 and 3 John, and 2 John is somewhat ambiguous; it's not clear exactly if he's writing to "the elect lady", someone in particular, or if that's figurative of a church. But nevertheless, the 'general' aspect of the letters is that it's written to a general audience, not to a specific church or person.

The book gets its title from its author, James—but which James? There are five of them in the New Testament. Now, it's not as difficult as that might seem. Of all the Jameses, only two are really likely the author of this book: Either the apostle James, the son of Zebedee; or James, the half-brother of Jesus. The apostle was martyred in A.D. 44. We read of that in Acts, chapter 12 verse 2. So, the one that is most certainly the author of the letter is James, the LORD's brother; his half-brother because of the virgin birth.

He was not a believer during the LORD's lifetime and ministry. We know that from John chapter 7, when His brothers were not believing in Him. It's only after the resurrection, when Jesus appeared directly to James, that he did believe. And he became, as a result of his wisdom, his knowledge, his maturity, a leader in the church at Jerusalem.

In Galatians 2, verse 9, you may remember, not that long ago when we were studying that passage, Paul writes that James, along with Peter and John were reputed to be "pillars" in the church. He had an important position in the church of Jerusalem, and we see his importance throughout the Book of Acts. We see that, for example, in Acts 15, where James supported Paul at the council of Jerusalem and supported the Gospel that he preached to the Gentiles. That was the great controversy there.

He took a bold stand with Paul and with the truth. He took a stand with Paul on his Gospel to the Gentiles; but he was a man who observed the Law. Not improperly. He was a Jew, among the Jews, and he lived a Jewish life. And I think that's reflected in his letter. It's been described as the least doctrinal and most practical book in the New Testament.

I don't like that division that people make between doctrine and being practical. Doctrine is practical, and we build our practice off doctrine. But you see the point, it's not as doctrinal as it is about life and about practice.

But it had a stormy history. It wasn't accepted into the Canon of Scripture until late, though it was recognized as Scripture by various people very early on. For example, Origen, one of the church fathers from the second century, quoted it often. He quoted it as Scripture and called it Scripture. But official or universal recognition of the Book of James came late. That's probably because it is a short letter and also because it is, as I said, more *practical* than *doctrinal* in character. Luther famously called the Book of James "an epistle of *straw*", for that reason. One of Luther's great gifts to the German people and to the Reformation was translating the Bible into the local language—translating the Bible into German so that people had access to it. And in his first edition of the New Testament, in the preface, the introduction, he wrote that the Gospel of John, and especially Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter are books that, he said, "Show Christ to you." James, not so much. "It is," he wrote, "a right strawy epistle in comparison to them."

He liked the book. He said, "There are many good sayings in it," but, "The book," he thought, "has no Gospel character to it." It seemed to him to ascribe justification to 'works'. And he's referring in that concern to James chapter 2, verse 24, where James writes, "A man is justified by works and not by faith alone." Now that disturbed Luther because, as you know, the central issue of the Reformation was justification by faith alone. Luther said, "Justification is the article by which the church stands and falls." And he was right on that—but wrong on James.

James did not teach justification by works: or justification by faith plus works. He was teaching what the men of the Reformation taught, that we are saved by faith alone, but not a faith that is alone. A justified person, a saved person, will bear fruit in his or her life. New Testament scholar, Robert Gundry put it this way, "James writes of justification by works before other human beings who need outward evidence because

they cannot see into the heart." The works of a believer demonstrate the reality of his or her salvation or justification.

And that's really the great theme of this book. In fact, one study on the Book of James by Guy H. King makes a good attempt to express the theme in his title, *A Belief that Behaves*. James is a book with an ethical emphasis, a moral emphasis, which shows that true faith is active faith; or true faith is obedient faith. We're to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only. One of the main faults, which James sought to correct is, 'faith without works'. Now this, I think, is a good overarching theme of the book, *A Belief That Behaves*"; and "Salvation by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone." It is instruction on how faith should operate with guiding principles.

Still, the book is notoriously difficult to outline, and probably the best way is to simply divide it into topics, like 'control of the tongue'—it's one of the great topics of the Book of James. And the danger of 'favoritism'—favoring the rich over the poor. Other topics are 'humility' and 'purity' that are necessary to avoid quarrels on the one hand or worldliness on the other. All of this comes under the broad subject of 'wisdom'. It's really what James is teaching, skill in living, which is throughout this book. In fact, the Book of James is very much like the Book of Proverbs—kind of the New Testament version of the Book of Proverbs. And it's been compared to that.

One writer describes James as "Just a handful of pearls dropped one by one into the hearer's mind." That's a pretty good way of describing the book. Just a series of pearls—of subjects, of issues that need to be explained and urged on the reader.

The subject of the first 11 verses of the book is *trials*: rejoicing in trials, praying in trials and in dealing with the rich and the poor, (it's also in this passage); and their response to trials. You have three subjects it seems: trials, prayer, and the rich and the poor. I think we can see them as within the whole subject of trials, and so they do coordinate, rather than see them as separate little subjects that he takes up. And that's,

at least, how I will treat the subject: Verses 2 through 4—rejoicing in trials, verses 5 through 8—praying in trials, and verses 9 through 11—the rich and the poor in trials.

James gives his greeting, and introduces himself in verse 1. The way he identified himself is significant, as much for what he doesn't say, as for what he does say. He begins, "James, a bond-servant of God and of the LORD Jesus Christ,". In Galatians 1, verse 19, Paul described James as the LORD's brother—but James didn't. It seems to have been a deliberate decision on his part not to trade on his natural relationship with the LORD as his sibling according to the flesh, in the LORD's human nature. Nor is it 'James, a pillar of the church', as Paul described him.

He's simply a servant of God and Christ. He was nothing in and of himself, and providence by his fortunate birth gave him no ground for boasting. He was what he was, only by the grace of God. I think that's what he's expressing in what he says. And grace had made him something special, in that He'd made him a servant, who belongs to the LORD, body and soul.

But that states the essence of the believer's true relationship with God. He really puts this all on the same level and expresses our dependence on the LORD. —We are all servants of the LORD. We're to see ourselves in that, and we're to glory in that.

Now I say we're 'to glory in that' because among the others of the world, (the Gentile world specifically), the Greeks with their sense of freedom, their strong sense of freedom, that title *servant*, carried very little weight. In fact, it had a demeaning connotation to them and would have been thought by them to be a lowly kind of title; and something to be embarrassed about. They're not *servants*, they're not *slaves*, they're freemen—and they boasted in that. But for the Jew it's different, because that title, "servant of the LORD", was one of great dignity. It's a title that's used of Moses as "a servant of the LORD." It's used of the prophets in the Old Testament. There is no greater privilege than to be that, "a servant of the LORD". And that's what James was—and that's what you are.

Next he addresses his letter, "To the 12 tribes who are dispersed abroad." (vs1b). These are Jewish Christians living beyond the border of Palestine in the dispersion, the diaspora. It is not a Gentile/Jewish church imagined as 'a new spiritual Israel'. There's nothing in the letter to support that. J. Gresham Machen wrote that it deals with the typical Jewish, Pharisaic, legalistic faults—and ignores Gentile faults like idolatry and impurity.

So the Book of James is addressed to a specific group of people, in that it's addressed to Jewish believers living in Gentile lands. Perhaps members of the Jerusalem church that he knew and were driven from Jerusalem when Stephen was martyred, (many in the church of Jerusalem were scattered at that point.) So, James is addressing this particular group; this group of Jews in the diaspora.

This book has one of the shortest introductions in the New Testament. It's really only in one verse, and it's only 15 words in the Greek text. But James moves quickly to his introduction on how these Christians were to live in this, (what would have been for them to some extent), a strange environment, these Jewish believers living in a Gentile world. So he moves quickly from his introduction to give them this instruction.

And the first subject of the book, given in verses 2 through 4, and I think we can broaden that, 2 through 11, is Christian trials and maturity.

James writes, in verse 2, that we are to, "Consider it all joy...when you encounter various trials." He leaves the trials undefined, and he calls them "various trials". The word that he uses there for *various* means 'variegated', 'many colored'—to show that Christians go through all kinds of trials, from persecution to inner moral tests. We are not exempt from hard times. If we are faithful, we will suffer persecution from the world.

If you're going to be a man, a woman, a young person that stands for Christ in this dark world, there's going to be hostility. There'll be persecution, (that's one way of suffering). And if we pursue godliness and obedience, we will struggle with the flesh and temptation. We'll have struggles from without; we'll have struggles from within. All of

that's included in what James describes as "various trials". We'll undergo the sorrows of life; and we talk about these kind of things in our prayer requests on a Sunday morning.

We go through difficulties, loss of family and friends, sickness, financial setbacks. The list goes on. James doesn't try to list them all, but we face all kinds of trials. And they come inevitably. James doesn't say *if* you encounter, but *when* you encounter. We *will* encounter various trials.

We can't predict when they will occur, at all. They come unexpectedly. In fact, I think that's suggested in the word that he uses here, *encounter*, because that same word is used in the parable of the good Samaritan, of the man who went down to Jerusalem to Jericho, but there, the word encounter is translated "fell among." He 'encountered' thieves, or he 'fell among' thieves. And the idea there is it wasn't expected. It was unforeseen.

And we can't predict when we will *encounter* or *fall* among trials—but we can know that we will. We can be forewarned that they are coming. That's one of the first steps in preparing for them. Don't be naive about life. This is, as I really think about it, a hard way to begin a book—right off the bat he's talking about *trials*.

But James was doing more than alerting us to the inevitability of trials. He was directing us to *rejoice* when we encounter them. Now you can't help, if you're seriously reading this book and not just breezing through it—How do we do that? How do we rejoice in the trials that we encounter? How's that possible? That's what trials undo—they destroy joy and hope. And, of course, the trials themselves are not the occasion for joy. We don't rejoice in and about a trial, and a difficulty, and a sorrow.

That's not James' point. It's what those trials and those difficulties produce. And that's what he explains next, in verse 3, "...knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." Trials are one of God's means of exposing the true nature of our faith in our heart, and in so doing, revealing the weaknesses that are there—things that we may not have known were weaknesses in our life. And we have a trial, we have a difficulty, and we realize there's pride, or there's stubbornness, or there's something

there that's not right. And the result is, hopefully at least, that we honestly ask the LORD to deal with us in that; that the LORD would sanctify us, that He would do that work of purifying us and making us holy. And we seek, as a result of that, improvement in our lives, so that we grow in endurance—or *staying power*, as one of the commentators, James Ropes put it—“staying power.”

Trials, if received well, make us strong, so that we have a certain tenacity of spirit that holds up under pressure, which has a further result or greater goal. James gives that in verse 4, and that greater goal, that greater result is maturity. He exhorts us to, “Let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” In other words, don't resist, don't rebel against trials. It's by remaining steadfast, it's by remaining faithful in the midst of them that the perfect work is accomplished and the goal is reached.

A diamond is made under intense pressure. Carbon is turned into a gem, but it must remain under the pressure. And as we are under the pressure of trials, we're transformed, we're made firm, we're made whole, and we're made increasingly mature. And all of this has eternal reward.

Now Paul says that in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comprehension." Now when Paul talks about the difficulties of life, affliction as *light* and *momentary*, he's not saying, 'Yeah, there are some afflictions that they're really not that difficult, that hard. They're light.' He's describing affliction of any kind as *momentary* and *light* in comparison to the great blessing that will follow from them to the faithful man or woman who endures them.

And James here, is speaking of that; though he's speaking here of affliction and what it does in the present time—what it does for us now. It makes us mature in faith in this present life. But ultimately, as Paul says, (and James would be applied in this way), it has eternal benefits. Because everything in this life is preparing us for eternity. Trials have a purpose. They are not the bludgeonings of chance. Trials occur by the permission

and the will of God. They serve His purpose—and He can and He will deliver us from them.

Paul spoke of that in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 11, where he recounts, ‘The trials and persecutions he suffered on the first missionary journey in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra’, (which is Galatia, and those are the churches to which Paul wrote his Book of Galatians). Paul suffered during that time—and he suffered in various ways. He suffered stoning, for one. And he writes in 2 Timothy 3, that, “...out of them all the Lord rescued me!”

Now He didn't rescue him from those trials and those difficulties. Paul wasn't spared suffering. He endured it until God delivered him “out of them”. God knows when to do that. We can be assured that nothing comes into our life, and He allows nothing into our life, that is not for a good purpose. And it won't end until the trial has done its right work, its perfect work in us. There's wisdom and guidance in it.

We don't see that in the experience of it and we might find ourselves, in our weakness, questioning where the LORD is and why things are going on as they are. But He has a perfect purpose in it. And so we're to be patient in the midst of it and let endurance have, as James says, “it's result”. We're to ‘consider it all joy when we encounter various trials.’ And in view of the end, that is not fanciful, flippant counsel. It is far superior to the alternative of succumbing to self-pity, or brooding over our circumstances—or even living our life by keeping “a stiff upper lip”; a kind of stoical resignation about things. For the Christians, (not the non-Christian), this is written to brethren, this is written to Christians, trials always have a good result and purpose.

But James knew that rejoicing in trials, and not rebelling, is much easier said than done. And I can assure you, as a preacher, and one preparing these sermons, and thinking, "This is far easier to preach, and to say, than to actually experience," because life's full of crushing experiences. You wonder, ‘How in the world do we rejoice in them?’ But James recognizing this and knowing that it takes perspective, the kind of perspective that Paul gave in 2 Corinthians, it requires wisdom and it calls for help.

That's really what James speaks of next in verses 5 through 8. It's about prayer, but I think we can see it in this context: Whoever feels unable to look at his life or her life or their trials, as James has advised to rejoice in them, then they should look to the LORD God for wisdom; for help; for strength. He says in verse 5, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

I don't know anyone who would say that he or she doesn't lack wisdom. That's really a first step in gaining wisdom; to recognizing that we lack it. We need wisdom to see trials the right way.

James knew that from various sources, I think. But certainly Psalm 73 would have been one which asks the question, basically, 'Why do the wicked prosper?' That's what Asaph, the writer of the Psalm contemplated. It disturbed him. He almost stumbled, he said,(vs2), because of it—and would have. But he gained divine perspective when 'he went into the sanctuary of the LORD.' (vs17). There he got perspective and there he was able to 'keep from slipping', as he said. There he gained endurance.

Wisdom is *the art of living*. It is the ability to select the best ends—and the best means of obtaining those good ends. God is the source of wisdom; so we're to seek that wisdom from the source. Pray for wisdom. And James assures us that if we do that, if we ask for it, God will give it, generously, and without reproach. God is not tightfisted but open handed toward His people. That is His nature: He's a loving, generous, good God. He won't scold us for asking for too much and asking too often. We sometimes feel that way, 'I ask for too much.' No! We're to pray without ceasing.

We fail. We stumble; 'I'm too ashamed to go to the LORD. I keep stumbling.' No, continually go to the LORD. We should never hesitate or fear to come to Him; and come to Him in prayer. He desires that of us—and it's necessary if we're to have wisdom and a right perspective on life.

He wants us to come to Him often, constantly. But, as James points out in verse 6, there is a certain attitude that is required in prayer, a certain way to pray if it's to be

proper and successful prayer. And that is, it's to be done "without doubting". The word *doubt* has the idea of 'a divided mind'; 'hesitating between two opinions'. Believing in the LORD—then not believing in the LORD. Trusting Him—then not really trusting Him. The illustration that James gives of that kind of mind and that kind of person is that of a stormy sea with its waves. There's no stability on the sea. There's no stability in water. Waves are blown about by the wind. The waves are up and down. They crest and fall. The person who doubts the LORD questions the LORD's ability. And readiness, wisdom, and love, is like that person—is like that restless sea.

Doubt is unbelief. It is an unwillingness to rely completely on God. It disparages God's character, and dishonors His generosity. Now, maybe not explicitly; we may not think that way and think those specific thoughts—but that's the implication of doubting the LORD and it frustrates prayer.

We must approach God in faith. That's the Christian life. It's a life of faith. And we believe things that we don't see. We believe things that we can't touch or hear audibly. We believe God's Word. And so, in complete trust in Him, we come to Him in prayer. 'That's the proper way to pray', James says. 'Don't expect', he says if we don't, if we're doubters, if we're double minded, trusting and not trusting—to receive what we pray for.' But that's the way we are, isn't it? I think you read this, (and I read this), and think, 'Well, this is a specific kind of Christian—a weak Christian.' Look, I think we're all like that to a great degree. That's our weakness.

We're like that anguished father in Mark chapter 9, verse 24 who told the LORD, "I do believe; help my unbelief." His son was in need of deliverance, and the disciples couldn't do it. And the LORD said, "What a faithless generation." And this man confessed, 'Yes, I am weak, but I do believe. My unbelief, though, I need You to help me with that. Help me overcome it.' I think that's us. That's every child of God, and it's what we all want. We want to overcome unbelief. How do we do that? Well, we do that by prayer, asking God for wisdom, asking God to increase our faith.

And we do that by study. It's not what James mentions, but it is what Paul mentions in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, "Faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by

the word of Christ." You want strong faith? Be a student of the Bible. It's that simple. But it's that challenging, as well, because so often we do not go to the Word of God and apply ourselves to it. But it's by applying ourselves to the Scriptures that we're changed, that we're sanctified, and that we gain wisdom.

And there's a logic in that, a logic to the study of the Word of God, and studying who the LORD is, and being strengthened as an individual, becoming more and more stable. Because the more we know about God: who He is; His character; His deeds; His power; His faithfulness; what He's done—the more confidence we will have in Him. We will know Him, we will know His will, what He wants for us, and what He blesses. And then we will seek those things and be confident that He will answer them in His time and in His way.

We'll be patient through it all, knowing also that His answer sometimes may be a "No" to the request we've made. It'll be a 'no' if our requests are not according to His will and not for our good. So a 'no' answer is not a bad answer—it's a good answer. It's what we need to hear when we are not clear in our own understanding of things and asking improperly.

Well James knew of what he spoke. He understood this subject of prayer that he's now explaining. He was the kind of man that he extols here—a man of prayer. Eusebius, the first church historian, (not a contemporary of James, he lived some generations later), but an early writer of these first couple of centuries. He wrote of James and he said James was called, "The Just." He wrote, "It was his habit", (James' habit), "to go alone to the temple in Jerusalem where he was often found on his knees, begging forgiveness for his people, (the Jewish people); and doing so often and so long in his prayers, that his knees became callous. Callous like a camel."

Now that's the picture of a man who was stable in all his ways, not "unstable." (vs8). And the reason?—He knew the LORD. He knew His Word. He knew Scripture. He believed it. He acted upon it. He asked, in his prayers, with faith.

But it's a process. It's a lifelong process, growing in our faith and understanding. We will never come to that point when 'we have arrived'. We will never come to that

point when there's no need for further development. In fact, I would say, in our entire existence, not only in this life, but in the life to come, in all eternity, we will only be growing—and never come to the end of it. But we're certainly not going to come to the point in our life in this world where we are *there*, we no longer need growth or maturity.

But as we trust and pray, and see answers of the LORD to our prayers, and we see His hand in our life, then we do grow. That's all part of the experience of growing into maturity—waiting patiently and seeing the LORD's hand.

The LORD answered that father's plea in Mark chapter 9, to heal his son and help his faith. And that tells us something about the things that James is speaking of here—and about our weakness in prayer. And that is, the LORD even helps us in 'our little faith'. And as we have that consciousness of our 'weakness', He doesn't cast us off—He does deal with us. He's a generous, loving God and He helps even the weak. "I do believe. Help my unbelief."—and He'll do that.

Now, in verse 9, James moves to the subject of the rich and the poor. It might seem, as we read it, unrelated to what preceded—but I don't think it is. I think we have a subject that is very much related to the two subjects that he's just touched on; trials and prayer. Trials come to everyone, to both the rich and the poor, and everyone in between. Everyone will deal with the trials of life and James states here what their attitudes are to be when they face trials.

First the poor, in verse 9. He "...is to glory in his high position"—the "high position" that the poor has. Well, you don't think of the poor as having a high position. Poverty is a great trial in and of itself. The poor man has to scratch out a living. He is deprived of the basics and he gets no respect from the world. The world discards the poor—doesn't give a thought to them. And that can lead to bitterness.

We might think James would commiserate with the poor. He lived among them. The Jewish believers in Jerusalem were known as a poor church. But he didn't commiserate with them. He said, 'The poor believer should glory in his high position.' He's been *born again* into the royal family. British preacher, R. W. Dale said, "He is a

prince on his way to the kingdom, traveling on a rough road. The people among whom he is traveling do not know anything about his greatness; but he knows. Let him glory in his high estate."

People may not see anything glorious about this poor saint, but that poor saint knows that he is a child of God and he is going to a great glory. And James is saying, 'Glory in that. Rejoice in that. Rather than sink into misery or covet another man's place or possessions. He should bear in mind the glory that's to come, and who he is by the grace of God; who she is by the grace of God, and what great things are coming. Think of that! And in the meantime, work to overcome the poverty.'

Generally, the rich have less hardships than the poor. They live in luxury and ease and that condition can very easily shape, and does shape, their outlook on life—so that they imagine that money is the measure and the end of all things. As a result, that's the way they often live. They often live for pleasure; the pleasures of this world and its prestige and all that they can enjoy. And they are the people that the world does honor and looks up to.

But they don't escape trials. And those trials can come suddenly, unexpectedly: A loved one dies—or even wealth is lost. And such trials can be harder on the rich man than the poor because the rich man has never known privation—and suddenly he's cast into that terrible situation. But rather than become bitter, James says in verse 10, "...the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away." Verse 11, "For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and his flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits, will fade away."

You think of something like the stock market crash of October 29th, 1929. It's known as *Black Tuesday* when fortunes were suddenly wiped out—and you read the stories of these people, who were in utter despair, jumping out of windows. It happened. And while we don't wish for the market to crash, a benefit of calamities like that, like *The Great Depression*, is it destroys illusions; it destroys the illusion that wealth

is a real and lasting security. It does not. It has wings; and it flies away. Trials like that force people to fall back on what really is stable, what really is lasting, what really is important—and that's the LORD God.

So the rich man can “glory in his humiliation” because he learns in it how transient, how ephemeral, how temporal physical things are. And like the poor man, he too, can glory in his high position as a child of God, (assuming that this rich man is a child of God.) But that's what trials are designed to do: To cast us back on the LORD and what is important.

And that is, ‘What is eternal.’ What is important is what is eternal. And we are like grass. We're temporary. So, all our trials are temporary and they work something good in us if we receive them properly.

James knew suffering. He's teaching it here. He experienced it. He would experience it. He not only taught what the believer was to do—he would endure it himself.

His life ended “through bloody seas.” The Jewish historian, Josephus, recounted it. So did Eusebius, in his church history. Josephus called James, "The brother of Jesus, Who was called the Christ." And he said, "He was brought before the Sanhedrin, was accused of breaking the Law, and he was condemned to be stoned."

James had quite a good reputation in the city of Jerusalem and the city was offended by this sentence that the high court had handed down to him. Nevertheless, the judges, in spite of the attitude of the citizens, they took him to a pinnacle of the temple and threw him down, to execute him. —But he didn't die. So they stoned him. And then, according to the account, a laundryman took the club that he used to beat out his clothes and he beat James with it. And in that way he suffered martyrdom for the LORD and the Gospel.

Well, most of us won't go through those kinds of experiences. We won't sail through that kind of sea. But James tells us, ‘We will fall among trials of various kinds’. And the only way to prepare for that is to know Scripture, is to pray, and is to grow in

grace and knowledge of the LORD. So in the brief time we have in this world, we're to be faithful "And let endurance have its perfect result." (vs4).

And that result is maturity: Trust in the LORD for all our needs and serve Him. That's what we're to do. That's why we're here in this world. And may God help us to do that—To serve. James was 'a servant of the LORD.' So are you. We are 'servants of the LORD'. And our service is to be done to His glory—all things are. May God help us to live that way.

But if you've not believed in Christ, we invite you to come to Him, believe in Him. You may be living a charmed life like these rich people that James refers to. But you won't last. As James says here, 'We're like grass that "fades away", that "withers." '

And later he develops that theme throughout his book: Later he speaks of us as being just "a vapor." That's life. That's life at its longest and its best—just a vapor. It's gone in a moment.

And then for the unbeliever, then, whether they lived well or not, then, the trials really begin—and those trials are eternal.

But we have a Savior who died in the sinner's place. He bore the punishment that we deserve. So trust in Him if you have not. Receive forgiveness and life everlasting. That's what He gives at the moment of faith—and it is forever. And you have that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. May God help you, help all of us, to live that life well for Him; growing in maturity and bringing glory to Him in all that we do. Let's pray and seek that from our LORD.

Father, we do pray that You would bless us. We pray that You would enable us to live a life that James is setting out here in the very beginning of his book. It's quite a challenge, Father. James knew it was and You know that it is, but to endure trials that can be crushing, and knowing that the result will be that we will be made 'complete' —'perfect', as it were; whole, as it were, and mature to Thy Glory. So LORD, we know

these things will come. May we be ready for them. May we respond well and may You do a good and perfect work in our life.

We thank You Father, that the end is certain and the end is glory. And that's what we are moving toward. So may we move toward that glorious end wisely, and well, and faithfully. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD be gracious unto you. The LORD make His face shine upon you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)