

Encouragement Along the Way

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[0:00] James 1, we'll read the first 12 verses. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position, but the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wildflower.

For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant. Its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. James is giving us God's truths to live by.

[1:33] And here in chapter 1, he's teaching us that trials are God's pathway to holiness. Though trials themselves are often painful and annoying and we don't like anything about them, yet what God is doing through them is so good, so sweet, so wonderful, so desirable, that whenever a trial comes into our life, we count it as an occasion for pure joy.

Well, what is it that God is doing through our trials? Well, he's producing holiness. Remember the process? Trials test our faith.

They call faith into action. They put us into situations where we must lay hold of the unseen Christ and his words of promise.

And this exercise of faith develops perseverance. Perseverance, endurance. The ability to keep going.

And when perseverance has finished its work, it brings about the perfect holiness, the completion of the process of transformation into the likeness of Christ so that we are complete, lacking absolutely nothing.

[3:07] That's what God is up to in our trials. And that's why any lover and pursuer of holiness greets trials as an occasion for pure joy. So the words of James.

Back in the 70s, a theme song of a certain health, wealth, and prosperity broadcast was, Something good is going to happen to you.

Now, in that program, good was defined by wealth and health and prosperity. How sad to have your joy hitched to such unpredictable horses. James says, No.

That's the song we should sing at the approach of trials. Something good is going to happen to you. Rejoice. God is up to something good.

Namely, your faith strengthened. Perseverance developed. Holiness perfected. All reasons for joy. And on top of that, there is plenty of wisdom available from God for everything that you need to get through that trial.

[4:14] So ask him, believing, not doubting. And you will find that he is so generous to those who ask. And then, in verses 9 through 11, James gave us a specific example of how to rejoice in trial.

He takes an example of financial trials, whether it be having little or having much, whether it's poverty or wealth. Yes, both are trials. And he says, if you're poor and in humble circumstances, then rejoice in your high position.

You're a child of the king. You're rich. You're loaded in the things that really matter. The unsearchable riches of Christ. And if you're wealthy in the things of earth, then rejoice in your low position that you will pass away like a wildflower.

That you're going to leave everything below, behind, and move on to receive your true riches above. And brothers and sisters, our crumbling economy and diminishing earthly wealth is trying our faith.

And I wonder if we're hearing it as a call to rejoice in our true riches that Wall Street cannot touch. Do we believe that? Do we believe we're wealthy in Christ? Or is it just a fable?

[5:34] If it's true, then we need to rejoice in our high position. Rejoice in the wealth that is ours in Christ. If this is not truth for life, I don't know where you're living.

Joy in financial trials. Well, we come now to our text for today. It's just one verse. Verse 12. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

This is sweet encouragement in our trials. Encouragement to persevere. According to the Bible, we need perseverance along, or we need encouragement along the way if we are to persevere in holiness all the way to the end of the race marked out for us.

This came home to me recently when our son notified us that he wanted to run cross-country this fall. We had never been to a cross-country meet in our lives, and we soon learned that it's the most active spectator sport that there is because the kids don't just run around on a track in circles. No, they run all over the place. They run over hills and around buildings and through water and places where you can't see them into woods. So if you want to see them, you've got to go where they are.

[7:07] You can't just sit there and watch. That's too easy. And so I soon learned from other parents, some who are here, what you do at a cross-country meet. You go cross-country.

You watch them start, and then you run off to some place where they'll be winding around again, and once they pass, you run over to another place where they'll be.

You like to catch them before they go into the woods and the trials there, and then you try to find them when they come out of the woods. And if you're really fast, you try to get to the finish line before they do and shout one more time.

Sometimes I think we run nearly two miles in watching them run theirs. Why do we do it? Why do we do it? We want to be there to shout encouragement to them.

We want to say, don't stop now. Keep running. You know, it's hard to run fast for two miles. They get tired, and it hurts.

[8:13] My son says that every step, his legs tell him to quit. And so I want to be there every step to tell him not to quit, to keep running, to not slow down, to finish well.

The pain is just weakness leaving the body. Go! Run faster! And I think it's encouragement, and I hope he takes it as that as well. Now, our blessed Lord Jesus, he knows how hard it is to persevere in holiness through trials.

He knows the way is rough. He knows it's often uphill. He knows where we're at in the race. Exactly where we're at. He knows the trials we're presently facing.

He knows the wind is in our face. He knows it's no easy assignment to consider it pure joy when you're running up the hill difficultly. Because he's run up that same hill, you know.

Indeed, he has climbed the steep of Mount Calvary to die for us. And this is the same Lord Jesus who comes alongside us in his word with encouragements.

[9:24] And he shouts to us sweet encouragements along the way just what we need to keep going another day, another step, another mile to not lose heart, to maintain our joy in trials.

It's all here in the scriptures. For everything written in the scriptures was written in the past to teach us so that through endurance and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

And sometimes our great trouble in trials is just this, that we have forgotten the word of encouragement that addresses us as sons. So what is the word of encouragement to persevere in James 1 in verse 12?

It's just this. A crown of life is waiting at the finish line for all who persevere in holiness to the end. A crown of life is waiting at the finish line for all who persevere in holiness to the end.

May the Lord draw near and speak encouragement to our hearts from this verse this morning. Now what we have here in verse 12 is a beatitude. You'll find many of them in our Lord's teaching, especially in the Sermon on the Mount.

[10:37] You'll find them throughout the Psalms and the wisdom literature. Blessed is the man. Happy is the man. To be envied is the man. This man is in a state to be wanted, to be like him.

He's happy. He's blessed. Well, what man is happy? Well, the rest of verse 12 gives us four descriptions of him.

It's a portrait of the blessed man. Or you might call it a scrapbook page with four pictures on it of the blessed man.

First of all, he perseveres under trial. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial. Can you see him? There he is.

He's going up the hill and he's sweating profusely and his steps are slowed but he's continuing to run. Now the world looks at that picture and says, he's a miserable man and God says, you're wrong.

[11:39] He's happy. He's blessed. But not all who are tried are blessed. Some people think that all the poor are blessed just for being poor.

All in humble circumstances are blessed by God. Not so. Notice, the ones who are blessed are those who are persevering under trial.

Who press on in the race in the face of every difficulty. It was August 29th, 2004. The last event of the Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.

The men's marathon. 26 miles. Vanderlei de Lima from Brazil was leading the race by 30 seconds with just four minutes to go.

And at that point a man stepped out of the crowd and went right out onto the road and grabbed Lima and pushed him off the road and stopped his progress completely. Although it only took him a matter of seconds to shake off the man and to free himself and to resume running, he lost his rhythm and eventually lost the race itself.

[13:00] Now it's sad. It's not the way it's supposed to be. But you know folks, that is a better picture of the Christian life as a race than anything you'll see in a controlled environment.

We're not just running along unassailed in a controlled race free of interference. rather the road is filled with all sorts of those spectators that run out and grab us or lure us or slow us down and impede our progress.

That's the Christian life. That's the race we're running. Remember, in every trial sent by God to grow our faith, there is a temptation from Satan to destroy our faith.

And so the enemy would use our trials to discourage us, to make us complain under trials, to lose our joy and to lose our strength, to make us grow weary of holy responses, to doubt God's love. Satan is out to keep you from the finish line, to slow you, to lure you off the path, to get you to quit doing the hard right to cave in to some easy wrong.

[14:19] But do you see him? Do you see the blessed man? He's right there, right now, day by day. He's persevering under trial. He's finding in his God all that he needs to persevere through trials.

He's finding joy in the midst of his trials. He's finding wisdom in answer to his prayer. His faith is being strengthened to lay hold of this unseen Christ and the promises in his word.

And so trials, rather than destroying him, are actually blessing him, building his perseverance, completing more and more his holiness, leading him to the crown of life.

That's the first picture we have of the blessed man. He's persevering under trial. The second picture is found in the same verse. He will stand the test.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test. Life is full of tests, so much so that here all of life is referred to as a test, singular.

[15:24] One grand test. When he has stood the test, the test of a lifetime of trials. You know, kids, what it is to be put to the test in school.

And what's being tried is your knowledge of a subject. But trials put our faith to the test, verse 3 says. And it tests the genuineness of our faith.

Not everything that calls itself saving faith is the real article. Last week, World Magazine had a picture of a long section of the waterfront properties along the coastline of Gilchrist, Texas.

And there's just nothing left as far as you can see. It's just rubble of houses that were destroyed and then washed out to sea by Hurricane Ike. All except for one house.

One house that survived and stood the test. The same test. It went through the same test that all the other neighbor's houses did. But this one stood the test.

[16:36] Like the wise man in Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, who built his house upon the rock. And so when the rains came down and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat

against that house, it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock.

It stood the test while others were falling flat. That's the blessed man. That's our man. In James 1.12, he's being put to the test and after all the testing is done, he's found standing at last.

No hurricane of trials is able to blow him off of his foundation. There he is, standing the test. How blessed to be found standing in the day of judgment.

The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, but the blessed man will. He will stand.

The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 24, 12 and 13, because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

[17 : 59] Those are sobering words. they tell us that most will not stand the test. Most will have their love grow cold and will be washed away by the trials of their faith, proving it was no true saving faith in the first place.

But here's the blessed man and he's standing after the testing is over. He's Paul's Christian in complete armor.

Put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything to stand.

You see, the crown is for those who stand, who stand the test of life. You're in a test. Did you know that to live is to be tested? And the crown of life awaits those who stand the test, those who are persevering now and who will persevere all the way to the end, who when the dust of battle has settled will be found standing by their faith in Christ.

Oh, they've fallen many times along the way, but they've always gotten up. Proverbs 24, 16, for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again. But the wicked are brought down by calamity.

[19 : 25] You see, the righteous keep getting up. They get up by their confession of their sin. They get up by repentance, by renewed faith in the Savior and the merits of His blood. They get up and pursue holiness.

They're persevering to the end. Job was a man sorely tried, but he was a blessed man, and he stood the test.

Right in the middle of his test, he says, he knows the way that I take. When I am tested, I will come forth as gold. Now, that's the picture of the words James, the word James uses when he says that this blessed man stands the test.

It's to stand approved after testing. testing. It's what happens when you test gold and silver and precious metals, and you put it into the fire, and it comes through the fire, approved.

It's the real thing. It's not full of gold. So the Christian, the whole of his life, is a test. He's going through fiery trials. And the blessed man will come through approved unto God.

[20 : 36] Faith is the real thing. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. That's how this man is so blessed, is to come through the trial standing.

It is God who makes us stand firm in Christ. Therefore, Jesus says, pray, Luke 21, 36, pray that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

Do you pray, Lord Jesus, hold me up or I'll fall? We ought to. blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test.

The third picture of the blessed man, he will receive the crown of life. And now we've come to the central point in the whole verse. This is the encouragement for those running through trials.

This is what makes the man blessed because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

[21 : 46] Happy man indeed to receive the crown of life. Now, we're not supposed to think of this crown in a literal way. We're not to be thinking of this crown of life as some little sparkling gold thing.

Friends, that's not enough to get me persevering in holiness through trials in my life. To think that at the end of it all, I'm going to get a little sparkling gold thing. No, he's speaking figuratively here.

He's speaking of the crown, which is life itself. The crown of life. It's like saying the reward of life. The reward which is life.

The crown of life. The crown which is life. Namely, eternal life. Abundant life. Life lived in fellowship with and in the presence of Jesus forever, in whose presence is fullness of joy and in whose right hand are pleasures forevermore.

To enjoy his fellowship in a glorified state forever. Yes, the crown of life is heaven in all its unspeakable joys unmixed with trials.

[22 : 58] What's your greatest pleasure here? happiness on earth? That is a faint shadow of the pleasure and happiness of heaven.

The streams on earth I've tasted more deep I'll drink above. There to an ocean fullness his mercy doth expand. What I'm tasting now with the pleasures and happiness of my God in Christ are just little streamlets.

In that day it will be an ocean. Indeed, the Bible tells us that what we have to look forward to is far better than eye has ever seen, ear has ever heard, or than has ever entered into the mind of man. You can't even imagine how good heaven will be. You can't even imagine upon receiving the crown of life will gasp and say the half had never been told.

Now that's the way our Lord encourages us here in the race of life. That's how he encourages us to persevere in our trials. He runs up alongside of us and says, John, don't forget there's a crown of life waiting for you at the finish line.

[24 : 23] So run on. I know the perseverance in holiness through trials is difficult, painful, with much self-control. I know the world does not reward you for persevering in holiness, but I will, I promise.

That's the encouragement to go another lap, to go another mile, another step, another day. He graciously allures us. He entices us.

He holds out the carrot of heaven. The crown of life. You've seen horses running with a carrot somehow strapped to their neck and so they keep chasing after the carrot.

Well, in that case, they never reach it. That's not what this is like. The Lord Jesus is promising us a crown of life and we're getting closer every step. And when we cross the finish line of life, the crown of life will be ours.

Jesus does the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

[25 : 36] Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. Do you see what Jesus is doing? He's coming alongside the ones in trial and saying, come on, rejoice, keep going.

You've got a great reward in heaven. In our trials, the Lord Jesus would fix our eyes on future reward. That's what he's doing in James 1, 12.

You will receive the crown of life and that which is to be ours at the end of the race makes every step along the way worth it. the coming crown of life is what makes a man in his trials to be a happy man.

It's why he can count it all joy as he's going through another trial because it's leading to a place of pure joy unmixed with trials.

And by the way, the joy of the Lord is our what? Our strength to do what? to persevere, to keep running this race of holiness. No wonder James is seeking to encourage us.

[26 : 49] No wonder our Lord gives us reason after reason to rejoice that we might be strengthened in our faith and perseverance might be developed. Your trials, brothers and sisters, are leading you.

They are a pathway that are leading you to the crown of life. That's a goal worth pursuing and the road to it is worth traveling with joy. When the last trial is over, you'll receive a crown of life.

As the old song says, when the battle is over, we shall wear a crown. We'll reign with him, the victor's crown for those who overcome, for those who persevere to the end.

We should not complain if we must pass through a few trials on our way to being crowned. Can you imagine it? A man who is poor.

He's on his journey to some far-off kingdom and there he is to be crowned king and he's to reign over the whole universe. And on the way, his horse buckles and off he goes into some mud puddle.

[28 : 00] Should he complain, he's going to receive a crown. Back up on his horse and on he goes. He perseveres. We shouldn't complain if we would realize the crown of life awaits us.

Samuel Rutherford who knew much of suffering along the way to that crown says, it were a well-spent journey those seven deaths lay between. The crown, the crown of life.

this is how the Lord Jesus ran his race and how he is to be our example in how we are to run with perseverance.

The race marked out for us. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2 and 3. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Here is the model for you brothers and sisters. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. There it is again. Jesus recognizes that sometimes saints are growing weary in the race and he draws alongside with this word of encouragement.

[29:18] Remember how Jesus ran. How did he run? He had a race. If ever there was a race that would make a man want to quit, it was the race to Calvary where he would bear the wrath of God for our sins.

But he persevered. How did he do that? He did it for the joy that was set before him. He wasn't just looking at the holes in his hands, the crown on his head and the blood streaming from his face.

He was looking beyond that to the joy set before him, the crown that would be his, the joy of bringing many sons and daughters to glory and that kept him enduring.

He endured the cross. He scorned its shame and he finished the race and sat down at the right hand of God on high. Now that's how you're to race, run the race.

People who lose sight of the coming reward lose hope. so he runs best who keeps the end in view.

[30:27] For the joy of that day spills over into this day of trial. Encourages us that our running is not in vain.

That's how Paul ran the race, Philippians 3. Not that I've already been made perfect, but I press on for that. I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is before, the crown of life.

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. He ran with his eye on the goal, winning the prize, the crown of life.

That's how Moses ran his race. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the whole treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

[31:31] Folks, that's how everyone runs the race. That's how Abraham ran the race. That's how David ran the race. And that's how the blessed man runs.

with an eye on the crown of life that encourages him. What's this crown worth to you? Remember Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress, when he first set out for the celestial city, first was leaving his home there in the city of destruction.

He was like the Olympics and people were jumping out onto the road saying, oh, don't leave, don't leave. They were shouting after him, come back, come back. They were hindering him. Remember what he did.

He put his fingers in his ears and he ran and he cried what? Life, life, eternal life.

There's a man with his eye on the goal, on the crown of life that will be his. And so he stuffs his ears and he turns his eyes away from all that would hinder him and he pursues the goal, the crown of life.

[32:37] You've got to run that way. Every blessed man, must shut out the world. You know, athletes go into strict training and they persevere in discipline.

Paul says to get a crown that will not last. In those days it was just a little wreath that made out of a plant and it would wither and crumble and fall. But we do it, he says, to get a crown that will last forever.

What is that crown? It's the crown of life. Trials only last a lifetime. The crown of life lasts forever.

So weigh your painful trials of 70, 80 years against the eternal pleasures at God's right hand or you will never have a right perspective on your trials.

That's what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4. Therefore, we do not lose heart. Not even when our bodies are growing old and all the breakdowns of health happen.

[33:36] how do you not lose heart? How do you not slow down in the race and start to wonder whether God is good or not when the body is failing in its health? He tells us, we do not lose heart, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes, not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. The whole key, Paul says, is where you've got your eyes fixed. And friends, if you're not reading your Bible and you're watching television, I'll guarantee your eyes are on the wrong thing.

It's this book, this is Jesus coming and telling us, the crown, John, the crown, run on, the crown. The world is telling us pleasures, here and now, without waiting.

So we fix our eyes on what is unseen, what treasures in Christ to be ours forever and ever, and it infuses strength in our legs, and we suddenly feel like we've turned 12 again, and there's strength and bounce in our step.

[35:03] Why? Because faith has laid hold of that unseen Christ and that unseen world that he's promised to us. Faith is exercising and perseverance is being developed and it keeps us running, keeps us holding on tenaciously to Christ and his commandments, his way.

you see, the race doesn't just wind on forever. Sometimes we think that. These trials just never end. Oh, my friend, they do. They do. At last the march will end.

The weary ones will rest. The pilgrims reach their father's house. Jerusalem, the blessed. There's coming rest. Keep your eyes fixed upon it. So run on, brother.

Run on another day, sister, in the way of holiness, in the midst of your trials. Every step is a step heavenward. You read that book? Stepping heavenward?

That's the Christian going through trials, running on every step. It's a step heavenward. So have you kept the crown, the crown of life in view in your present problems?

[36:18] Your financial problems, your health problems, your relationship problems? Or is the crown of life somehow out of the picture?

Oh, bring it front and center. We're in danger of quitting when we forget the crown of life.

Remember Christiane and her family when they come to interpreter's house and they come into a little room and there's a man all bent over and he's raking with a muckrake in the straw and sticks and all there is there is straw and sticks.

He's just bent over and right above him is a crown of life. James 1 12, the crown of life. It's there and it's being offered to him.

If only he would take his muckrake, he could trade it for the crown of life. But no, he rakes on. He can't see the crown. The God of this age is blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

They cannot see the crown of life, which is to be with Christ forever. And so they rake on. And Christianity says, I think I get the point.

[37:30] I think I've learned the lesson. Is he not a man of this world who has no time for eternal things? You are right, interpreter says, and his muckrake shows his carnal mind.

He's bent on gathering as much trash of the world as possible before he dies. He has no time to think of eternal things. To many heaven is but a fable, and the material things of this perishing world are the only substantial things.

Oh, Christiana cries, deliver me from this muckrake. An interpreter says, that prayer has been unused so long that it's almost rusty.

when's the last time you've prayed, oh, Lord, deliver me from this muckrake. Deliver me from raking in the sticks and straw of this world when there is the crown of life.

And friends, if your eyes of faith have been opened to the crown of life, rejoice. You know what it's all about. You're not living for the wrong world. And it's God who in grace has opened your eyes to make you see Christ and all riches in him.

[38:41] the crown of life. What is it that keeps us from turning aside to rake in the muck with the rest of the world? They're all around you. They're everywhere you see.

They're raking through muck. What keeps you from doing it? It's the crown of life. You have eyes to see. True riches. Oh, fix your eyes on Jesus.

Fix your eyes on the crown that is to be yours when this race is over. Let them call after you. Come rake with us. And you tell them, oh, no, I found the pearl of greatest price.

I found treasures, my friend, that will last forever. Tell them of your Savior. What will be strong enough to keep us persevering in holiness when the world invites us to turn aside?

When people run in our path and say, no, come over here. It's the reward at the end, the crown of life, seen and embraced by faith.

[39:53] Basil tells of some martyrs for Christ who were thrown out naked all night long in a wintry, cold weather, and they were to be burned the next day.

So here they are, freezing. How are they comforting one another? They said, the winter is sharp, but paradise is sweet.

Here we shiver for cold, but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all. They saw the crown, and so they kept running.

They did not deny Christ. They kept running, kept holding to Jesus and the testimony of his word. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ. One glimpse of his dear face, all sorrow will erase. So, so what? So bravely run, run, run the race till we see Christ.

[41:02] There's the encouragement that Christ comes to give us. happy man indeed to have the crown of life before him. Let me just give you a word of caution before we take the last snapshot of this man.

The crown of life is not merited by his running in holiness. No, the crown of life is not merited by us. It's given graciously by him.

You cannot put God in your debt by living a holy life. You owe it to him to start with. No, the crown of life is a gracious gift that he bestows freely upon those who persevere to the end.

Not merited. Perseverance is not the merit for life. It is merely the means to it. It's just the way to the crown of life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The crown of life which God has promised. Lastly, this man, this blessed man, loves God. He will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

[42:21] love him. Now, there's many reasons why James perhaps used this description of the blessed man. He's a man who loves God. It's a common way to identify the people of God in Scripture.

They love God. In chapter 2, verse 5, he speaks of the kingdom that God promised to those who love him. Romans 8, 28. And we know that in all things, God works together for good to those who love him.

Nehemiah 1, 5, those who keep his covenant of love. He keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands. This is a way of referring to the true child of God.

He's one who loves God. He's the one who will receive the crown of life. After all, loving God is the foundation of all true religion. It's right at the foundation. It's the greatest commandment in the law to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.

It's the summary of the whole law. You can hang all the law upon those two commandments to love God and to love your neighbor. Indeed, love is the fulfilling of the law. It's the summary of holiness, of what it means to persevere to the end.

[43:31] It's the evidence of the new birth, that we have a new heart, a new affection. We love God, whom we once did not love. And all those are good enough reasons for James here to describe the blessed man as one who loves God.

But I can't help but thinking that James also is pointing us to another motivation for persevering in holiness, and that is love for God. Thomas Manton says, we live for God as we love God.

How well do you live for God? That will tell me how much you love God. It's an important dynamic of perseverance in the Christian life, the power of love.

love. We will suffer and endure for one we love. Love empowers perseverance. If a man loves God, he perseveres. And again, the words of Jesus in Matthew 24, 12, and 13, because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

But no one underestimate the power of love to make us persevere to the end. It's when love grows cold that the feet slow down.

[44:52] A cold heart is soon a straying heart. It's because of the absence of love that many fail to stand firm to the end. That's why, folks, we must guard our hearts, our affections, with all diligence, because out of our hearts flow the issues of life.

love. That's why we must deal ruthlessly with anything in our life that in any way drains love away from Christ. Is it pulling your love away from Christ?

Deal ruthlessly. Get the knife out. We can't afford to have love weakened, or our perseverance will lose strength.

How is your love for God? Warm your cooling heart beside that hot fire of Christ's love for you. Displayed at Calvary. Pray against the cooling heart.

More love to thee, O Christ. More love to thee. So there we have the portrait of the blessed man. Here's a man he loves God.

[45:59] He perseveres under trials. He stands the test. He receives the crown of life. He loves God. Is that you? Then run on with joy. Rejoice.

You are downright happy. You are blessed. Be encouraged and run on. If this isn't you, then repent. It's a great sin not to love God.

To not consider him as your highest good. To count your sins more precious than the crown of life.

To count the muck of this world as a richer treasure than the crown of life.

than seeing Christ and being with him. My friend, if that's true of you, the road you're on leads to hell, not to the crown of life. So you need to turn around and confess your sin.

Confess, Lord, I've loved myself, I've loved my sin, but I've not loved you. Forgive me for Jesus' sake. Wash me and cleanse me through his blood and righteousness.

[47:00] Receive me graciously. And you'll find him to be a gracious savior. Begin today to run this race. Take your first step of running today.

Run to Jesus. And believers, as we leave this verse and its encouragement, realize this. Now is the only time that we have to glorify God through trials.

Why do you live? You live to glorify God. How do you glorify God? Well, you do so by persevering in holiness through trials. This is the place, this is the time.

There'll be no more trials in heaven. No one to allure us off the path. The wicked will cease their troubling and the weary will be at rest. So seize the moment. Now is the time.

Let your perseverance and holiness demonstrate how worthy the Savior is of your love. love. Let the world rake up their muck.

[48:06] You show how valuable Jesus is by refusing to be drawn aside in the race and running after him. So you show how precious the Lord Jesus is to a world that does not know him.

You're looking forward to being with him. That's the crown of life for you. I thought about the Muslims and how their view of what's waiting for them in the afterlife is enough to motivate some of them to drive airplanes into buildings or to strap on a pack of dynamite and to blow themselves up because of what they think is waiting for them at the end of the race.

and it's all a lie. A lie of the devil who's blinded their minds. What should the crown of life do to motivate the true child of God?

Folks, we don't have a lie. We don't have a fable dangled in front of us. We have the crown of life promised to us by a God who does not lie.

Oh, may we be encouraged today then to run with perseverance this race that we might be found standing at the end and so receive from him the crown of life that he's promised to those who love him.

[49:27] Amen. Our King of Grace, we do rejoice in you today. We are ashamed and confess, Lord, our great sin of raking through this world as if there were no King of Grace waiting to meet us with the crown of life.

Wash us and cleanse us. In your blood, keep our eyes fixed upon you. And the joy that will be ours when we cross over into Emmanuel's land and we see you for who you are and were changed and made like you.

Keep that picture before our eyes. Allure us. Draw us after yourself more and more. Help us to hold out those great riches that are found in Christ to a poor and needy world around us whose treasures are drying up and have nothing for the life to come.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being made poor that we through your poverty might be made rich and rich forever. Send us then out with the encouragement of this text.

Thank you for drawing aside of us on this Lord's Day and speaking words of encouragement to us. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.