

Blessedness in Trials

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[0 : 00] Well, in the Beatitudes that we've been studying, Jesus drew his disciples near to him and taught them what their high calling as disciples of Jesus Christ would look like in their daily lives.

They would indeed live distinctively different lives than those who are members of this domain of darkness, Satan's domain. And they learned their lessons well, although not perfect in all they did.

The Holy Spirit worked in their lives and through their lives so that they were also able to teach others what Jesus had taught them and commanded them that others also might live distinctively different lives.

And what they wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit has been preserved for us. To help us also, you could say, sit at the feet of Jesus and listen and learn of him so that we too could live lives pleasing to him.

We are citizens of a kingdom that cannot be shaken or destroyed. That should be a great encouragement to us. We're the king who is eternal.

[1 : 22] So as ambassadors in this world, our lives really do send a message. That's the responsibility of an ambassador, to send a message, to communicate a message as he lives in a foreign land.

So as ambassadors in this world, we do send a message from God of how a sinner can be reconciled to God, as many of us, most of us here this morning have been.

Reconciled to God by faith in Jesus Christ and live a new life as members of his kingdom. This morning, as we finished the Beatitudes last week, we continue to see an additional biblical paradox taught by James to those who needed to live distinctively different lives when facing various kinds of trials.

So you see how this paradox continues on right up into the present for us. James 1, verses 1 through 4. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes in the dispersion.

Greetings! Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

[2 : 47] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. It's a message that really is very different from those of James' day, but also from those even in our own day who proclaim that you believe in Jesus Christ, you'll have ongoing physical health, material wealth, and great prosperity.

Well, James is writing to Christians, and they are experiencing trials. So he's writing to help them prepare and to know how to move through these trials in a joyful way.

James, again, who was a disciple and apostle and messenger of Jesus Christ, called them my brothers. So we see right away in this letter that those who are true followers of Jesus Christ will experience various kinds of trials.

Christians are not exempt from trials while we live in this world. All throughout Scripture, we read the historical record of God's people experiencing various kinds of trials.

So as you do your daily Bible reading, take note of those who experience trials. What was the trial? How did they handle the trial? What was the purpose of the trial?

[4 : 15] What was God doing in and through the trial? Those are some of the questions that James addresses in this letter. Christians will experience trials, and the trials will be of various kinds.

Just think back over your life since you've been a believer in Jesus Christ, a follower of Christ. Have you experienced trials? Well, of course you have. So just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you won't experience trials.

Or just because you are a Christian or because you are a Christian, you can be assured that you will experience various kinds of trials. The word trial here means a test.

The time to scrutinize, to prove. So we understand that various tests are used to scrutinize, whether it's metals, gems, water, to determine or prove its genuineness, its strength or purity of the item.

A couple times a week, I walk with Kevin O'Keefe in the mornings, and we have good discussions together, and I asked him this past week, how did you become involved with Bremen Castings, and what was that like, and so on and so forth.

[5 : 34] So he shared with me at length his time with Bremen Castings, and what they do at Bremen Castings, and all it takes to take the ore, or the scrap metal in this case, to the finished product.

And the more and more he talked, I kept thinking of my lesson this morning and all the steps that could really be used to picture this process that God takes us through to test, to prove us as Christians.

In fact, I told Kevin at the end, we're going to have to organize a field trip for everybody to go after this lesson so they can see what you've been talking to me about.

So whether it's that or even other places that we might go where tests are conducted to prove an item's purity or strength, so on and so forth.

So the trial or test is an important and necessary process the item must go through for its ongoing greater use in accomplishing its purpose.

[6 : 41] Because the product that's put out by Bremen Castings, if it was just sent out without the testing and didn't prove to be worthy of the purpose for which it was made, the company wouldn't be in business.

It would cause great problems and difficulty down the line. Well, the trials James is referring to are trials of testing that occur in various ways.

The word various has the meaning of variegated or many-colored, diverse, manifold of various kinds. So James' point is that the trials we encounter won't be identical.

They won't always look the same for each of us. They're going to be multifaceted. They'll vary in time as to when in our lives they occur or maybe how long they endure and continue.

They'll differ in severity, the degree of the challenge of the trial. They'll differ in location. Maybe it'll be at work, at home, other places.

[7 : 53] They'll differ in regard to the people involved, the purpose. They'll involve both the inner and the outer dimensions of the lives of the people, the person who's going through the trial.

Certainly what happens to us outwardly will stimulate us to an inner response in our thoughts and in our emotions.

So we can see certainly what I'm talking about as far as the variety of trials through the Apostle Paul. 2 Corinthians 11, 23-28. It talks about all the various trials that he encountered with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes, less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked.

A night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst, often without food and cold and exposure.

[9 : 18] And apart from other things, there's the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches, his care and concern for the churches. In 2 Corinthians 1, 8-10, although I don't have all those verses, for we do not want you to be unaware, brother, of the affliction we experienced in Asia.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God, on Him.

We've set our hope. So certainly Paul faced various kinds of trials, and so will we. It's not a matter of if we'll experience trials, but when we will experience them.

And just as James writes in verse 2, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

Again, it is inevitable in this world. We don't know when the trials will come. We aren't in the new heaven and new earth. But we don't want to have the mindset or goal that you must have a life free from trials.

[10 : 33] Many times we try and move through life with that kind of mindset that I'll do everything I can to avoid any trouble that might come my way. Not that I go out looking for trouble, but with all my efforts to try and avoid every kind of trial, they still come.

I still encounter them. James writes that we will meet trials of various kinds. The word meet has the idea of to fall into, to encounter, to be surrounded by, like the man that was helped by the Good Samaritan.

The man needed help because, as it says in those verses, he fell among robbers who attacked and robbed him. It was an unexpected encounter that he had that day as he was traveling along the road, this meeting with these robbers.

He didn't plan that that was going to happen in his day. He met with this trial, this challenge. So again, don't build this expectation in your mind that you can avoid trials of life.

And don't even try and do this with your children and thinking, I'm going to do everything I can to protect them from all the difficulties of life. Certainly, we are going to do what we can to protect them from the dangers that are out there.

[11 : 58] But to enter this mindset of bringing children up that we can keep them from all the challenges and trials of life, don't put yourself through that.

Difficulties will happen. So even we don't want to hide our trials from our children, but show them how we as God's children meet the trial and move through it.

We can show them the necessity of life with Christ and His counsel for life. So your children are going to get sick. How can you help them understand how to meet trials in life and how a Christian can meet a trial differently than someone who's not a Christian?

There are great opportunities that are going to come. So it's important for us to learn something of the purpose of the trial. And this is what James moves into with his people in this letter that he's writing.

The trials, they're a test of faith in order to produce steadfastness. Verse 3, For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

[13 : 07] Again, James uses the word test or testing instead of trial, but the words really have the same basic idea of testing something in order to prove or disprove the genuineness or its true nature or validity.

Peter was revealing the same truth to the people he was writing to because they were also experiencing various trials. As it says in the verses, ends verse 6 and into verse 7.

They were experiencing various trials so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So, the testing is a refining process to prove, to reveal the genuineness of your faith.

In 1 John 2:19 we see individuals that John was writing about who were tested but failed the test. and showed not genuineness of faith but the opposite.

[14 : 23] He said, they went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out. That it might become plain that they all are not of us.

And then Paul in his letter to Timothy also writes of an individual Demas who when the test came failed the test as well. for Demas in love with this present world has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

So the trial and various trials is sent to test the Christian's faith to see if it's genuine. The trial is sent to see if the faith in Christ the person professes to have is genuine.

And that's good for us. Better to learn now that such professed faith is not real. Going back to the picture or the illustration of Bremen Castings they do the test to see if it's genuinely strong or fits the purpose that it's going to have to fill.

And boy it's nice to find that out now rather than the customer calling you back and saying hey this failed and it's caused this great trouble here.

[15 : 36] What are you doing sending us something that doesn't pass your test? Well it's good to realize and find that out now as an individual in this world whether our faith is genuine or not.

If it's not real the individual as we've read will stop following Jesus and will turn back to what his or her heart really desires.

But if the person really is a Christian then James writes about what is produced through the trial. Verse 3 says for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.

So steadfastness the idea is hopeful endurance constancy patient continuance. So steadfastness in following Jesus is produced through the trial which is a testing of your faith like what happened again in the believers lives in the church in Thessalonica in chapter 1 verses 3-4 Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

They were already entering and experiencing various kinds of trials and they were moving through it with steadfastness. The trial of persecution produced in them that patient continuance and hopeful endurance because their hope of eternal life with Christ was in Jesus Christ.

[17 : 23] They had the right focus as the trial of persecution fell upon them. The fire and the heat of the trial produced a patient continuance a steadfastness in their faith.

They didn't quit. They didn't turn back when the purifying fire of the trial came and fell upon them. In order for steadfastness of faith to be produced in our lives, we need trials strong enough and long enough to produce steadfastness, patient continuance.

That doesn't happen just through a little, short, easy trial and difficulty. They're necessary to produce that steadfastness and patient continuance.

So as we patiently continue on through the trial, not only is steadfastness produced in our lives but something else. As we move through the trial with patient continuance, James writes that we are made perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Speaking of a real spiritual maturity that's developed as we move through the fiery trial with patient continuance, having reached its end, complete, the word perfect, having reached its end, complete in all its parts, mature, referring specifically to the completeness of Christian character.

[19 : 06] Complete carries the idea, complete in every part, sound, perfect, entire, complete in all its parts, no part lacking or unsound, complete, entire, whole, you get the idea.

It's through various kinds of trials that as the Christian meets the trials and patiently continues through the trial, the individuals transform more and more into the likeness of Christ.

That's the end product if I can put it that way. That's the goal that God has for us. He has different means to take his children through to accomplish and reach that end in our lives.

And one of those means is using various kinds of trials that produce in us that patient continuance that reveals to us those areas of our lives that yet need to be refined out and replaced with the character of Christ so that we can come to completeness, that complete transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ which is happening now and which will be completed finally when Jesus Christ returns.

That's the goal God is working us toward and in his wisdom and power he's able to work all things together for the good of transforming both the inner and outer life of the Christian into the likeness of his son Jesus Christ this is a glorious working of God in our lives but we also have to hold it as glorious in our thinking especially as we move into the trial but we only do that as we bring this kind of truth to bear in our minds when the trial is there in light of this we need to think and consider well how do we respond then when we meet trials of various kinds we know it's going to happen and probably it's even today as you sit here you pass through a week where you are moving through various kinds of trials maybe specific just to you that God has designed for you in this sanctifying process so the first response that James writes about is count it all joy or to consider it this is a command for us commanded because certainly it's not something that we would do naturally when trials come upon us it is a mental activity that's essential for us to be going through to be steadfast and in order to let the trial do its perfect work consider relates to an activity of the mind means to lead oneself to think so when you're in a trial that's the time to do some hard accurate biblical thinking it's not the time to become lazy mentally and to give in to your feelings considering something has to do with how we look at and evaluate the situation what's going on around us outside of us but also what's going on inside me at this time consider it consider it all joy he's not saying consider the pain and the suffering joyful but rather what it's producing

[22 : 51] James is speaking of a unique fullness of joy that the Lord graciously provides his children when they're willingly and when they willingly and uncomplainingly endure troubles while trusting in him regardless of the cause type and severity of the distress your happiness over the event will grow out of your reason biblical evaluation of it and what's going on when an unbeliever goes through a trial all the considering and evaluating is done apart from God's word so the individual is doing all the evaluating out of a deficiency of essential truth essential truth about himself about God God's provisions for meeting the trials his higher purposes in trials the provisions again that he is for them therefore they can't move through the trial with the same kind of joy that the believer in Christ has to stay in him and to give him that persevering hope of glory it's a special privilege that we have as God's people that we possess us when we fall into or encounter trials of various kinds all this that we can bring to bear to consider that will move us through the trial with joy as

Christians we consider all we're going through with joy because of the truth we know about ourselves who God is what he's working to accomplish in our lives our transformation into the likeness of Christ through our lives his glory that can be accomplished he's working in and through us this is the way of thinking that we need to be prepared to practice again you don't jump right into the trial without some preparation just like your sporting team let's just take the days off we've got a big contest coming up here it's okay you guys just take some time off and show up here game times at whatever time jump into the contest and what a mess that would be it wouldn't be prepared to meet the trial that's set before him and so we as well we can't just sit without some preparation of truth being put in our minds and our thinking renewing our minds and think that we'll go through the trial with patient endurance and joy without having that preparation that needs to be made so we need to learn truth prior to the trials again the importance of parents teaching their children so that they're not surprised that the painful trial various trials they're going through you know children

I can remember years ago there was a cartoon I can't remember the name of that something about family life and what it was and in this cartoon the little boy was sitting under a tree and mom and dad were inside discussing the various problems that they were having faced during the week and they're agitated they look and see Billy was the name sitting under the tree oh just to be a child again with none of these problems and then shows the thoughts Billy was having oh I got homework to do and this friend is fully and children go through various kinds of trials and we need to help them understand how to meet the trials how they can move through it with joy and of course they don't know Jesus Christ that's a wonderful redemptive opportunity to show that God's higher purposes for people in this world and the sufficiency of God and his grace certainly for eternal life but also life in a world where they are already experiencing various kinds of trials so don't miss those opportunities but then

James also says capitalizing this idea of preparing he says because you know our movement through the trial with settled joy is based on a foundation of what we know of God and what he's working to accomplish in our lives and we've experienced that the word know carries the idea of full understanding of something that is beyond merely factual and that often comes from personal experience so from God's word the believer has learned truth about God and how he works he's been through trials there may have been smaller trials that met the need of his faith at that time and as he moved through that trial now he's learned from experience he knows from experience what God is up to based on the truth that he's brought into the trial he knows it now experientially the believer knows that the trials he endures do not come to him by chance he believes that everything comes to him by the hand of God so since becoming a believer

God has been taking an individual through this sanctifying process in various ways and at times it's been through the testing and purifying process of various kinds of trials the believer has persevered learned how to consider it all joy when meeting various kinds of trials and now he knows from experience that the testing of his faith produces steadfastness and maturity in Christ likeness so again that's what you bring in to this new trial this next trial that might be of greater severity in your life you're not forgetting the past made reference to that last week with the Ephraimites and how they were dressed for battle went into battle and then turned back in the time of battle because they had forgotten what God had done in the past they had experienced these things and forgot it didn't bring it to mind we don't want to be like them but with what God has done in our lives in the past we bring that into the present trial and that helps us move through the present trial with that steadfast endurance we know that God is well able to accomplish that which he is seeking to accomplish in our lives don't let myself spiral down into despair and anxiety and discontentment in the situation when the trial is continuing we consider it all joy because we know what God is doing through the trial now in all of this

[30 : 04] I'm not saying the pain of the trial isn't real the pain of the trial is real it is that's what makes it a trial what makes it challenging but what I'm saying is the sufficiency of God and truth that he's made available to us in our lives can move us through the trial and that's what we consider more than even our feelings at the time or what other people are telling us that that doesn't fit the biblical scheme of things now there are consequent outer actions that come from this kind of thinking this kind of knowing and properly considering the trial with joy and James says part of that is letting steadfastness have its perfect work and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing the NIV says let perseverance finish its work so perseverance indicates a length of time there are some things you just can't hurry along

I'm not a cook by any means but I've learned from Carol's instruction and some of her failures there are certain things you just can't rush when you're cooking something the same thing with trials and God's design and bringing these ingredients into your life you just can't hurry the process at times something you have to persevere through God knows that and we need to know and remember that in times of ongoing trial we don't hurry the process of a broken bone we want to walk normally the next day I remember when my knee surgery I had that I wanted to walk normal again I couldn't hurry the process had to endure the pain for a period of time in order to get to the place where I could walk effectively again so to do that I say we need to practice active perseverance through the trial so that

God's work can be brought to completion so what is active perseverance what are some of those things that we need to be doing and we provided a list this morning some anchors for the soul in troubles of life the list Carol made up and appreciated having that she's used that we've used that at different times but you take that list and you can add to that list more and more truth that would give you the anchors that your soul needs as you're moving through the trial and when you add some email them to us so that we can benefit from what you're learning as well but some of the activity certainly is to pray James goes right into that in verse 5 if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given him yeah you need wisdom as you're moving through these times of trial if you're going to count it all joy what is God trying to do here in my life specifically or in the lives of somebody else

God I'm not discerning that please give me discernment and the wisdom I need to know how to move through this trial bring back to my mind truth that I've learned in the past when things were calm that now come to bear in my thinking and living at this time I need wisdom pray for grace and mercy in your time of need since then we have a great high priest who's passed through the heavens let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need yeah just pleading with God help me you know I didn't know what to pray in certain time God help and God knows the kind of help to bring along in our lives but we're crying out to him as the great supplier of that which we need to move through these various kinds of trials of course we pray humbly honestly and honorably we don't come to God in sinful anger and accusations

I remember a time in the past where people were saying it's okay to be angry at God I mean angry in a dishonorable way God's a big guy he can take it that sounds so foolish you know that I would think that I could speak that way to God but David says with my voice I cry out to the Lord with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord I pour out my complaint before him I tell him my trouble I tell my trouble before him so yeah he's open and honest to God what he's struggling with and understanding meditate on applicable scripture passages remember who God is his promises the wonders he has done and still doing don't let yourself forget be an active rememberer I remember the days of old I meditate on all that you have done I ponder the work of your hands praise God in the midst of the trial 2nd Corinthians 12

[35 : 29] I mean Paul was facing a trial he was praying about it praying for deliverance from this affliction God said no therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ then I am content the higher purpose he has this higher purpose that he's considering bringing into the whole situation and that's what enables him to rejoice the situation didn't change but his mind was stable his mind was still praising God in the midst of that trial Psalm 147 1 and 3 praise the Lord for it's good to sing praises to our God for it's pleasant and a song of praise is fitting he heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds be one who knows some good Christian music that you can sing that you can listen to that is there to help us remember what's true of

God just some practical steps to take give thanks don't complain 1 Thessalonians 5 give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you moving through a trial sit down make a list of what you have to be thankful for put it in the refrigerator or someplace else in a mirror constant reminders to you that there's a lot to be thankful for Ephesians 5 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Philippians 2 do all things without grumbling or disputing you need to remember complaining is an act of disobedience to God's command to counter it all joy plus it doesn't help you endure the trial instead it really works against what God is trying to do in your life complaining adds to the burden of the trial really and just moves you in that direction of a downward spiral the attitude in which one endures suffering has a lot to do with how well the individual endures another action draw near to God's people listen humbly as people come blessed be the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of mercies the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction so that we might be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God so don't withdraw from God's people draw near to them and give them the opportunity to minister to you my friends Kim and Duane she's going through cancer treatments right now and it's one of these ongoing difficult trials for them and they've shared with us we talk with them regularly on the phone and it's the duration of it that's such a challenge to them right now and for Duane as he sees his wife going through what she's having to go through but he says you know something we've learned at times people would come and want to bring us meals oh no we don't need that we don't need that he said I finally realized I was denying them the opportunity to show their love to us and minister to us and so they changed that and even took it a little bit further when somebody else wanted to bring them a meal they said well you can bring a meal but only if you make enough that you can stay and eat it with us wow they are using this trial to learn perseverance steadfastness but also to minister to other people to give them the joy of knowing what it is to serve others

I gotta keep going here deal with the trial related problems in ways that honor God certainly relationships those bring their own special kinds of trials we need to know how to deal with those problems in order to move through the trial effectively as much as possible strive for peace with everyone if possible so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all if it's a matter of difficulty between two people a sin issue pay attention to yourself if your brother sins rebuke him if he repents forgive him you could be on either side of that the one coming seeking forgiveness from another repent or needing to grant forgiveness so relational trials you need to deal with those problems in ways that honor God even financial problems it's not like you're just moving through the trial ignoring the related problems that are there that need your action to deal with the problem that's how we move through these trials and deal with them in ways that honor

God of course there's different scripture passages I have here you could go in the scriptures further and find additional counsel from God in regard to financial matters we'll move right down to your own health you might need to see a doctor and get treatment certainly it's difficult why is this pain why am I experiencing this pain right now I want to endure it with joyful hope and perseverance but yeah you might need to get some help from a doctor to find out what's going on dealing with related problems in ways that honor God and of course in our day I need to give a caution to be aware of that that it's there are times when some non-physically caused emotional problems are designated as having physical causes and the misdiagnosis results in medications prescribed that don't deal with the true cause of the emotional trouble that takes some discernment as well so if that's a topic we could spend numerous lessons on and then finally look to future glory to main present joyful hopeful hopeful perspective 2 Corinthians 4 so we do not lose heart though our outer self is wasting away our inner self is being renewed day by day for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison and then

[42 : 16] Hebrews 12 to looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God so my brothers count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds let's pray father we'd be the first ones to admit our need for the great working of the power of your indwelling spirit to move us through such trials of life while we're here and so we're thankful that we can come to you for that help in time of need so as each individual here moves through even the rest of this day and then beyond through the week bring truths back to our minds so that we can meet the trials the various kinds of trials that we encounter in a way that would honor you and give to us the joy that is ours through faith in Christ in his name we pray amen thank you