

Steadfast Under Trial

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[0 : 00] James chapter 1, we'll be reading verses 12 through 18. This is God's word that is at work in you who believe, changing us.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my brothers, my beloved brothers. Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. This is something that we probably all need to be reminded of, but especially young people, maybe college age, teenagers in this room, when we hear that word ancient, I think oftentimes of something very negative, like I don't want to be called ancient one day, I don't want to be thought of as ancient.

[1 : 51] You hear your dishwasher is ancient. Just a reminder, kids, when we sing ancient words, it's not because those words are now irrelevant, or they're old and used up, and we need new words.

The beauty of those ancient words is they are words that have stood the test of time, because they are God's very words. So when we sing ancient words, we are singing precious words, words that we need to hear, words that we need to continually come back to.

And so we do that this morning. Blessed is the man. We have heard that phrase a lot in recent weeks in our study through the Psalms.

The very first Psalm. The Psalm that sets the tone for the rest of the Psalter. The Psalm that welcomes us to worship. Well, how does that Psalm begin? Blessed is the man.

We heard even just read Psalm 32. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

[2 : 54] Psalm 2 or Psalm 3. David cries out, Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing be on your people. Psalm 5, which we aren't going to be in this morning, but it's the next Psalm after the Psalms we have been in.

Psalm 5. For you bless the righteous, O Lord. You cover him with favor as with a shield. So the Psalms are packed full of promises of blessing.

The blessed man of the Psalms. Now this morning we come to the blessed man of James. And we've already read it. How did our passage begin this morning?

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial. So where did James get that idea? Where did that come from? Well, I don't think it's too hard for us to see what was on his mind.

James, the author of this letter, he was the brother of Jesus, his half-brother. And James, in writing this letter, famously does not introduce himself to us as Jesus' brother.

[4 : 05] Rather, he simply says, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet this humble man knew Jesus well.

From birth, he grew up with Jesus. He lived with Jesus. Maybe like some of my boys, he might have shared a bed with Jesus in his room.

And as adults, he heard Jesus. He heard him preach. He heard him teach. Now, perhaps what comes to our minds first when we think of James hearing his brother teach and preach is actually a

negative encounter.

Jesus' family coming to him, thinking him to be what? Out of his mind. Mark 3:21, they say those words audibly. He is out of his mind.

And they try to get him away from the crowds. They try to kind of usher him back home and to get his thinking straight again. Of course, it wasn't Jesus who needed his thinking to be straightened out.

[5 : 06] It was his family. And by the grace of God, their thinking was made straight. Their hearts were made new. And many of those in his family, including James, came to faith.

We see that in Acts 1. Acts 1 tells us that Jesus' brothers, like James, were in that upper room at Pentecost, awaiting the Holy Spirit.

So it's this same James that wrote this letter. And it's a letter with the teaching of Jesus stamped all over it. So many things that James says, his half-brother Jesus said.

As so much of what James says was influenced by what Jesus said. Even when we read here, chapter 1, verse 12, blessed.

Blessed. That word should remind us of a very famous sermon that Jesus once preached up on that mountaintop. The Sermon on the Mount begins just as the Psalms do.

[6 : 17] Blessed. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Jesus preached with the Psalms in mind.

So as James writes, heavily influenced by Jesus and his preaching, James writes then, with the Psalms in his mind as well. Blessed is the man.

So we're continuing this short series this morning. A series that began in the Psalms, looking at the first four Psalms. And now we're going to take a slight different direction.

The sermon text is not Psalm 5, but rather James 1. But don't be mistaken, God's blessing appears all over this text as well.

And like many Psalms, this blessing that is promised here in James 1 is associated with suffering. It's in the midst of suffering that blessing is talked about.

[7 : 20] And we saw that. Maybe we didn't directly talk about it, but it was all over the Psalms. David in Psalm 3 said, Your blessing be on your people.

And what was he doing in writing that Psalm? Fleeing from his son, Absalom. Men were out to kill him, ready to climb those walls, to tear them down, to drag him out, and to have not one pebble remain where he had been hiding.

They were out to get him. And it was in the midst of that suffering that David says, Your blessing be on your people. Or Psalm 5. David yet again threatened by his enemies, writing of his enemies in Psalm 5.

And what does he also say? But let all who take refuge in You rejoice. Let them ever sing for joy and spread Your protection over them, that those who love Your name may exult in You.

For You bless the righteous, O Lord. You cover him with favor as with a shield. So David suffered for his faith in God.

[8 : 28] David experienced trials, and yet through it all, he counted it as joy. He counted himself a blessed man.

Well, now James speaks to us of trials as well. He knew what it was like to suffer. He was the leader of the church in Jerusalem when the church was being heavily persecuted.

He knew what it was like to write to those who were suffering. Believers spread out across Asia Minor, recipients of this letter. And he could begin his letter sounding a whole lot like David in Psalm 5.

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

So just nine or ten verses later, here we are in our passage, and it begins with similar words.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

[9 : 34] We should expect trials and tribulation in this life. So the question is, how do we respond to that?

Well, God's word is going to comfort us. God's word is going to encourage us and even challenge us this morning to do what? Remain steadfast. To persevere. To remain faithful.

To not doubt God or turn away from Him in our suffering. Or take into the extreme to abandon our faith and prove to have never been a Christian to begin with.

James says, blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial. So there is blessing for us in that remaining faithful. So how do we then persevere?

How do we remain faithful? What does that look like? Well, James gives us four ways this morning. Four ways from God's word for us to remain steadfast under trial.

[10:35] So let's consider the first together. We look forward to the reward. We look forward to the reward. Look again at verse 12. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. This is a motivation that God often uses in His word.

That of reward. The pain and the suffering, the affliction that we may experience in this life we can endure when we keep perspective on what is to come.

Here we read of this crown of life that's to be received. Not in this age, but in the age to come. God has promised eternal life to those who love Him.

So for His people, God has promised this crown of life. So whatever loss we may suffer in this life, will we persevere? We remain faithful because we have such gain to come in the next life.

[11:45] This crown of life that James wrote about, you know who else speaks of it? Jesus does. But not in the Gospels where we may find many things Jesus said, but in Revelation as Jesus is having John write down His letter to the church of Smyrna.

Listen to what Jesus says in Revelation chapter 2. Here the church is enduring persecution. Very similar context to James 1. They're under trial.

They're being tested. And so how are they to endure and hold up under the pressure? Well, Jesus says this. Revelation 2 verse 9. I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich.

And the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested.

And for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. There it is.

[12:56] The crown of life. Now, this crown was not like a crown we might envision a king wearing, a royal crown to be worn upon the head, but rather a crown than an athlete would wear.

A laurel wreath upon the head. That was the reward. That was the prize. Think about winning the race. The scriptures also speak in those ways.

So what was the race? Or what did the race look like for those believers in Smyrna? That race looked like getting thrown in prison. That race looked like even being prepared to give up their very lives, being faithful unto death.

I don't think they would have looked like winners to the watching world. I don't think they would have looked very victorious to unbelievers. But what was their suffering showing?

What was their suffering putting on display? Their faithfulness. Their perseverance. Their steadfastness. If they had renounced their faith.

[14:03] If they had abandoned Christ. If they had said, you know what? On second thought, I'm not a Christian. Well, they wouldn't have been thrown in prison. They wouldn't have been put to death.

But they would have been losers in eternity for it. By apostatizing. By renouncing their faith and proving themselves to have never been Christians.

They would have been spared suffering. They would have been spared death even. But in exchange for what?

Far greater pain and suffering would have awaited them in the life to come. Condemnation. Eternal death in hell. So they would have traded the crown of life for relief from persecution.

So what's the encouragement that the Lord Jesus gives them? To endure. To remain faithful. To prove faithful in the test.

[15:07] And so then be victorious. And so then receive the crown of life. It is no different for us. Remain faithful to Christ in the midst of trials now.

Keep the faith under the pressure that you face. And there is a great reward for us. Waiting in heaven. Those trials for us may be similar to the ones that the church in Smyrna faced.

Or maybe similar to the trials the recipients of James' letter faced. Which very well may have included the church in Smyrna. Those Christians face direct persecution for their faith.

Some to the point of death. Many though mistreated, reviled, ostracized by others. Things that we may face ourselves. Those are very real trials in our lives.

But not every trial necessarily comes to us in the form of persecution. We may be suffering physically from some chronic pain. We may have been diagnosed with something.

[16:19] We may have very real challenges at work, perhaps with co-workers, or maybe with a supervisor who has unrealistic expectations for us.

Our trials may be right at home. Conflicts that arise in our marriages, challenges in raising our kids, unbelieving family members that are far from the Lord, and therefore in many ways far from us as well.

Relationships that are strained, maybe even severed altogether. We've just scratched the surface of examples of trials. But what do they all have in common?

Any trial presents us with an opportunity to either persevere in faith, looking to the promised reward, or to crumble in unbelief, looking only at the present circumstances.

So what is it for you? I don't doubt that there are trials and hardships in your life. You and I are under trial in some way. Are we looking to the future reward that we might persevere to the end?

[17:33] We have something even better to come. So that's the first way that James gives us, to remain steadfast. We look to the reward. Here's the second way.

We are on guard for temptation. We remain steadfast as we are on guard for temptation. We see this in verse 13.

Look at how verse 13 begins. Let no one say when he is tempted. Now maybe you're saying, wait a minute. Just a moment ago in verse 12, James was talking about trials.

James was talking about being tested. What happened? Here in verse 13, he's now talking about temptation. Do you see the change there? It's not because James is equating trials or tests with temptation.

It's not because they are exactly the same thing. They're not. We're going to see that in just a moment. The switch here from temptation or from trials to temptations is because in our trials, in those periods of testing, what often arises?

[18:49] Temptation. In the trials we experience, we then can be tempted to sin. Isn't that really most often when we are tempted?

When there's pressure in our lives? When there's hardship that we're experiencing?

Responsibilities at work get ratcheted up? We're expected to get something done more quickly? Or multiple people are expecting something from us at the same time? Now there's this stress, there's this tightness that we feel in our chest.

I can feel it now as I think about working at Menards, sometimes alone in receiving, and I'd get a call that a customer needed a tub surround down from plumbing. And then a call that a truck was backing into the dock.

And then a call that UPS needed a signature. And then a call that there were pallets on the floor that needed to get brought back. And I'm the only one there. That was stressful. The pressure was on.

[19:49] And in that stress, in that pressure, there was now temptation. Temptation to lash out at others. Temptation to respond with angry words, to become impatient, to be irritable.

What's happened is really simple. A trial came, and in it there was temptation that followed. We get that. We know that. But we still need to be on guard for it.

We need to remember that in our trials we are most likely to experience temptation. And temptation can trip us up. We fail to remain steadfast, to persevere in those moments when we forget.

Temptations come with our trials. So is our guard up? Are we already thinking through how to respond when trials arise?

Trials? I know that we can't predict every trial that will come, but there are often trials that we face in life many times over.

[20:53] I don't work at Menards anymore. I don't get five calls on the radio anymore, but many evenings I get five calls from little voices in the home.

Maybe Cal is crying, maybe a brother of his is in the bath splashing and water is everywhere, maybe another brother has gotten out of the bath without a diaper on and is running free, maybe another brother can't be found and needs to be in the bath, and in all of those moments, the stress rises.

The trial, it's small, but it's still a trial has come, and I'm tempted towards the same kinds of reactions as Menards, irritable, angry words.

It's not a huge trial, but it's a regular one. I felt fine a moment ago, but now I feel the stress. There's great temptation towards sin.

So what trials do you perhaps regularly encounter, and are you ready for the temptation that may come with it? We need to be ready to resist, to remain steadfast under trial, as we know that temptation to sin has often arrived.

[22 : 07] And we see it here. James says when. He says, let no one say when he is tempted. He is assuming the reality of temptations in the midst of trials.

It's a foregone conclusion. Temptations, they are to come. So we need to expect, we need to have a plan, we need to be ready to resist.

We won't remain steadfast under trial if we let ourselves be blindsided by temptation. Well now let's consider the third way to remain steadfast.

We don't blame God for the temptation. We don't blame God for the temptation. Look again at verse 13. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

[23 : 15] Then desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. So James is crystal clear with us here.

God does not tempt us. But God does test us. Now that might not be as crystal clear here.

We might not say, well, he doesn't explicitly say God is testing you. But look at verse 12 again. God promises this crown of life to those who love him.

And when does he promise that crown of life? After they've stood the test. That's at least implying, and I think we see in many other places in scriptures just as clearly, that God is the one who brings the trial to test us.

He gives the reward at the end of the trial, and so it makes sense that he would be the one to do that because the whole trial has been from him. Remember, James is talking about this crown of life, so we should still even be thinking in terms of athletic competition, where victors receive that crown.

[24 : 26] When it comes to the Olympic Games, athletes are standing on the podium with their medals, we aren't wondering who gave those medals to them.

We aren't thinking, perhaps the local PTO snuck in and they said, we got some medals left over from some of these kids' games we did after school. We need to give these medals to these Olympic athletes.

Now, we know the International Olympic Committee gave those athletes those medals because this is the Olympics, and they run the Olympics. They organize the Olympics, so they give the medals. The same is true in our trials. The one who gives the prize is responsible for the trial that tested us. If God gives that reward, well, it's because he gives the trial in the first place.

Now, James brings up this whole point of not blaming God for temptation because God is responsible for the trial. And we might have this wrong idea.

[25 : 31] Well, if God brings the trial, then God must also bring the temptation. And James is saying, no, that's not the case. Here is the trial that has come to test you.

It is from God, but don't think the temptation that follows comes from God as well. Because testing and tempting are not the same thing.

Tempting is always done to encourage sin. Tempting is meant to provoke. Tempting is meant to encourage disobedience.

Think about Satan in the wilderness with Jesus. He tempted him. Well, how so? He tried to get Jesus to sin. He wanted Jesus to fail.

He wanted Jesus to go against God, to disobey God. So, tempting is always done with an effort to cause someone to stumble. I'm trying to get you to sin.

[26 : 33] I'm provoking you. I'm goading you towards sin. I'm pushing you towards it. Not true with testing. Testing is not about trying to get us to sin.

God tests us, but not so that we would sin. In fact, it's just the opposite. Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20.

Here is a wonderful example given to us of God talking of testing and what that test is for. Exodus chapter 20. Here in Exodus, God has just given the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel. And they're at Mount Sinai. The people are at the base of the mountain and God has spoken to them from the mountain. And as we're going to see, this is a terrifying experience and it is also a test.

Exodus 20, beginning in verse 18. Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled and they stood far off and said to Moses, you speak to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us lest we die.

[27 : 59] Moses said to the people, do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.

So what is God doing here? God is testing the people. For what purpose? To encourage sin in their lives? No, that they might fear him properly.

Now Moses had just said, do not fear, and then he says, God has come to test you that you may fear him. So do not fear in the sense of his wrath is against you, he's opposed to you, he's against you.

No, fear him in that humble, reverent awe that this is the God of the universe who is speaking to us. He deserves our ear, he deserves our obedience.

So he comes to test them that they might fear him. And what is the fear of God supposed to produce in our lives? Fleeing from sin. If I have a healthy, proper understanding of who God is, that he is righteous, holy, just, untainted by sin, then I all the more will say, I want nothing to do with sin.

[29 : 13] I run from sin because I fear God. So that we see happening here in Exodus. We see God testing the people, but it was meant for their good.

it was meant for their holiness. So in testing us, God is good, and in testing us all kinds of good, God is doing to us and in us.

He reveals what is in us. He strengthens us. He purifies us, all of it for our good, that we might not sin.

So testing is all about leading us away from sin. Tempting though, is all about leading us towards sin. If testing is for our good, well then tempting is for our harm.

So of course, God does not tempt us. Everything about temptation goes against his character. God can't be tempted, James says, because we know God can't sin.

[30 : 22] He's incapable of it. So he's incapable then of tempting us towards the very thing that he is incapable of, encouraging us towards sin. So can God test us?

Yes. Thank the Lord he does. Can God tempt us? No. So we never should think that he does.

We should never blame him for the temptation we face. Ultimately, the responsibility for our sin lies with us. That's what James is telling us here.

Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. When I sin, I only have myself to blame.

My desires gave birth to that sin. Now, of course, others can tempt us. Satan can tempt us.

[31 : 20] But James is helping us to see that even when tempted by others, the process by which sin comes about in us is entirely within us. We are lured and enticed by our own desires.

So we can't say, Satan made me do it. No, I ultimately chose to give in to that temptation. It was my desire that gave birth to that sin.

I can't blame My circumstances. I can't blame other people. I can't blame Satan and I certainly can't blame God because God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself tempts no one.

Why does all of this matter? How does remembering that God is not to blame for temptation a help to us to remain steadfast under trial?

Well, because if we could blame God for the temptation, how much easier would it be then to blame Him for when we fall into sin, for when we fail to remain steadfast?

[32 : 27] If God is against me, what am I to do? If He is provoking me to sin, what am I to do? I might as well give in, point the finger at Him, throw up my hands and say it's no use.

God is trying to get me to sin. I might as well do it. Why even bother trying to remain steadfast? If He is encouraging us towards sin, why should we try to fight against sin?

And that's why James is so emphatic to say God is not to blame for temptation. Let no one say when He is tempted I am being tempted by God.

James is saying God is not enticing us to God is not trying to thwart us. God is not out to get us. We can't blame God for temptation and certainly not for sin in our lives.

God is not against us in that fight and that helps us to remain steadfast. Now that's kind of the negative statement. God never gives temptation.

[33 : 33] But there's a positive statement now that James makes. God does give something and we need to see that. It's the fourth way that we remain steadfast. We rejoice in our new birth from God.

We rejoice in our new birth from God. Verse 16. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. So God doesn't give temptation, but God does give every good gift.

James says that does come from God. Temptation? No. Get that out of your mind. But every good gift, every perfect gift, yes, God does give that and no one else can.

Only God. If you've received a good and a perfect gift, you know, thank God for that. And we can have confidence that God will never change.

[34 : 54] We won't wake up one day to find out God is no longer giving good gifts. We've woken up to find out God is giving temptations. That will never happen because God never changes.

He's not fickle. With him, there is no variation or shadow due to change. He is not wavering between two opinions.

One day encouraging holiness and then the next day encouraging sinfulness. He doesn't do that. He is the unchanging good and perfect God.

And so he's the one who gives good and perfect gifts. And James highlights the best of gifts right here for us. Our very salvation. We see James talks here of how God brought us forth.

Or maybe your translation says that he chose to give us birth. That's the first divine act of salvation. James is talking about regeneration.

[35 : 57] You know when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus that religious leader who met with Jesus in the night. He came to Jesus and Jesus told him you can't enter the kingdom of God unless you are born again.

That's what James is talking about here. Being brought forth by God. God causing us to have been born again. And how important it is for us to see this is a work of God.

If you went back to John chapter 3 and you read that whole encounter that Jesus had with Nicodemus, Jesus never told him this is how you can be born again.

He never gives him the answer to probably the question that he most has on his mind. How can I be born again? In fact, he asked something of that question and Jesus said I can't go back into my mother's womb a second time.

Jesus still didn't give him a direct answer. Well, this is how to do it because guess what? God must do that. God must bring about that new birth.

[37 : 05] He must take our cold spiritually dead hearts and make them alive again as we hear what? The word of truth. That's the gospel message.

Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins and rising again. In hearing that message, the very first thing that happens is God regenerates us.

God brings life to our dead hearts of his will, James says. Of his will he causes that new birth.

James is just as clear about what God does do as to what God doesn't do. God doesn't tempt us, but God does bring about new life in us.

That is a work of God giving us eyes to see, giving us ears to hear, in order that we might then repent and turn to Christ.

[38 : 07] This is an incredible work of God in us. This is the grace of God shown to us. What does Peter say in his first letter? Blessed be, there's the blessing again, blessed be who?

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has caused us to be born again. God has done that great work. And then James adds at the end there, God having done this great work, what's the purpose?

That we should be a kind of first fruits of his creation. Or your translation might say a kind of first fruits of all he created.

Our redemption, the fact that God has made us to be new creatures, it's just the beginning. It's just the start.

The word first fruits, not too hard to understand, first fruits, the first of the crops, the first of the fruits. This is what was to be given to God at the harvest, the first fruits, the offerings that were to be made.

[39 : 15] So when James says that we are the first fruits of all that he's created, he's saying there's more to come. We're the beginning of God's work to redeem all of creation, the whole of the created order.

It will be made new, even as we've been made new in spirit. And one day we'll have new bodies as well. Paul talks about this in Romans 8.

Turn over to Romans 8. And it's interesting, Paul talks about this in the context of suffering. Listen to what Paul says. Romans 8, very similar to what James says here in James 1.

Romans 8, beginning in verse 18. verse 18.

And obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly, as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

[40 : 54] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

The whole creation has been groaning because the whole creation is eager to be restored. All of creation made new, far as the curse is found, as we sing each year at Christmas, joy to the world. It's why when Isaiah prophesies about the new heavens and the new earth, he talks about the wolf and the lamb grazing together. Or in the Psalms, like Psalm 98, we read, let the sea roar and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell in it.

Let the rivers clap their hands. Let the hills sing for joy together. Now we are but the first fruits, the beginning of the restoration of all things.

And this is all God's doing. Every good gift, every perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of lights. And the best of those gifts that he's given to us is our salvation in Christ.

[42 : 09] And our salvation finds its origin in God's sovereign, gracious, merciful work in our hearts. So why is this so important for us to remember?

Why is this so important to help us to remain steadfast under trial? Because if God does such a work in us, at the very beginning of our salvation, if our faith begins with him, then what confidence can we have?

Our salvation finishes with him. He brings it to completion. God does not save us and then leave us. He's not going to leave us out to dry.

He's not saved us so that we then navigate this pilgrim journey all on our own. No, we can be sure God will sustain us all along the way.

Every good gift, every perfect gift given by him. So he is the one who is sanctifying us. He is the one who is working in us so that we would sin less and less and so that we would seek righteousness more and more.

[43 : 22] God is working in us to produce holiness. So yes, God is the initiator of our trials, but God is also the initiator and the sustainer and the finisher of our salvation.

And remembering this is the motivation for us to persevere, to remain steadfast. God is preserving us, and so we persevere.

God is preserving us, and so we persevere. Paul in Philippians teaches us both of those things. In chapter 1, verse 6, Paul says, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

There's God's preservation of us on full display. But then in chapter 3, verse 12, Paul says, Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

That's our perseverance. That's us pressing on. And Paul says that we press on towards it. What is the it that Paul is talking about?

[44 : 43] Verse 14, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. That sure sounds a whole lot like James.

Remaining steadfast, under trial, in order to receive what? The crown of life. That eternal prize that awaits us in heaven. All the joys of living with God for all of eternity with no sin, no death, no suffering.

That blessing awaits us. All of the trials of this life, they will be what? A distant memory. And so in those trials that we face now, this is the wind in our sails.

That we might remain steadfast. That we might persevere. Four ways that James has given us this morning. We look forward to the reward. We remain on guard for temptation.

We don't blame God for temptation. And we rejoice in our new birth from God. But there's one more thing. There's one more thing that we can't forget.

[45 : 53] We saw a couple weeks ago. Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1. So it stands to reason, Jesus is probably the blessed man of James 1.

Is he? He absolutely is. Is he not the one who stood firm under trial? Is Jesus not the one who persevered to the end?

Is he not the one who endured the suffering? Who in his trials also faced what? Temptation. And yet stood firm. And he did it all.

He endured. He remained steadfast. To save us from our sins. To bring us back to God. What greater motivation then do we need?

Our Savior suffered for us. And he set an example for us. Just as 1 Peter 2 says. Beginning in verse 21. For to this you have been called.

[46 : 50] Because Christ also suffered for you. Leaving you an example. So that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten. But continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night of Jesus' arrest, as he was bearing his heart to his father, Jesus was doing what Peter said.

He was entrusting himself to he who judges justly. Father, Father, your will be done. Your will be done. He entrusted himself to God the Father.

So as we look to our Savior, we too can stand firm. We too entrust ourselves to God in the trials that he brings.

[47 : 50] And we too can say to our Father, your will be done. Let's pray. Father, we do pray those very words.

Not our will be done, but yours. So Father, keep us steadfast under trial. Help us that we might cling to Christ and look to him.

We pray you would sustain us as you are faithful to do. Give us strength, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Philippians 1.4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Amen.