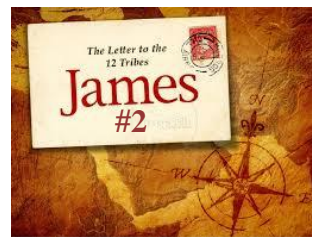




Chico Alliance Church
February 11, 2018
Pastor David Welch



“The Benefit of Endurance”

Review

Last week we began our journey through James. The letter was written to Jewish Christians who he warmly addressed as “brothers” multiple times. They had been scattered throughout the Roman empire and were suffering persecution both from their own kind and from the pagan world in which they lived. James, the half/brother of Jesus wrote this letter of encouragement and instruction. He identified himself as James the bondservant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He did not pull the leader of the church in Jerusalem of brother of Jesus card. He gloried in the role of bondservant to Jesus.

After a brief greeting, he launched his letter intended to validate genuine faith. He issued over 50 “life instructions (LI)” supported by numerous “divine insights (DI)”.

Purpose and Theme

- Behavior of Belief
- Ten Tests True Trust (Faith)
- Faith that Works
- The Practice of Righteousness
- Faith that is real
- Faith in Action

James serves as a mirror to inspect the health of our faith. As we pause in front of this mirror it either confirms or corrects our faith. Each week we will stand in front of the mirror of God’s word to evaluate our responses to life circumstances and determine whether they indicate trust in God or not. James centers on the behavior that suggests spiritual maturity. Not behavior driven by a desire to **secure** salvation but a Spirit-stirred desire to **express** a salvation already received by faith apart from personal behavior or works. The first life challenge to our trust in God is trials. James addresses faith’s response to trials in verse 2-18.

I. Faith’s response to trials 1:2-18

Life Instruction 1 – Consider it all joy when encountering trials

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

The term trials can refer to something that tests and stretches us.
The term can also refer to something that tempts us solicits us.

These tests come in all manner of shapes and forms. Only context determines which kind of test is in view. Here it deals with the growth producing kind of tests. Later James will address the sin tempting tests. God allows these encounters with difficulties to: Prove us -- is our faith genuine? Probe us -- is our faith active? Purge us -- what stands in the way of our growth?

James instruction applies **WHENEVER** we encounter trials. Difficulties in life are inevitable. James did not write “if”, but “when”. James refers to various circumstances that come upon us. Jesus did not ever promise an easy journey, but He did promise a safe landing.

The term **“encounter”** means to fall into, be surrounded by, be encompassed by, be enveloped by. These tests are not necessarily due to anything we did or didn’t do. The flat tire, the breakdown, the sudden sickness, the extra bill, the broken appliance, the unpleasant personal encounter...

No one escapes difficult times. Anyone who promises otherwise is selling something. This instruction applies to whatever kind of trial comes and whenever it comes. So, what are we to do when a trial blindsides us out of nowhere? James calls for what seems to be an impossible or at least irrational response. It is the response of one who fully trusts their well-being into God’s hands.

“count it all joy”

He instructed them to consider this encounter with life’s difficulty as a good thing. Treat any and every encounter with trials as an occasion for joy. The term “count” means to consider, reckon, count to be a reality, deem to be true, regard. Calculate the benefits of trials to be an occasion to rejoice.

I love some of the suggestions offered translators into various languages.

“You should rejoice greatly”

“Your stomachs should feel very warm”

“Your hearts should dance”

“Your inner most being should ring”

“Consider yourselves fortunate”

“Consider it a great benefit when...”

It seems irrational to consider a trial an occasion for joy. Usually we rejoice **COMING OUT** of the trial. James instructs to also rejoice **GOING IN**. Counting it all joy is not the trite response of shallow superficiality but the honest assessment of the trusting soul. (Sweeting)

Such a response requires faith. Faith is always based on truth or Biblical reality. Therefore, James provided the first perspective adjuster or divine insight enabling joy in trials.

Divine Insight #1 – Knowing testing produces endurance

Both Paul and Peter urge the same perspective. (Rom 5:3-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7)

“knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

James provided the insight necessary to follow the instruction. The “knowing” enables rejoicing. We may think we have strong faith to deal with life’s trials but how we respond when those trials hit clearly reveals the actual level of trust.

Knowing that trials produce endurance enables us to view trials differently. The term translated “endurance” comes from two terms meaning to “remain under”.

The meaning of "endurance" here is that of courageous endurance, and not merely docile submission.

Coffman Commentaries

Endurance is the ability to continue pursuing and doing what we know is right before God, despite my feelings, or fatigue and in spite of any pressure to escape, grumble, or crumble under the load.

We remain under trials in order to refine our faith.

We resist temptations that seem to destroy our faith.

Attitude change comes from perspective change. Knowing the positive benefit enables us to joyfully face the negative trial. Trusting God in trials develops endurance. Rather than collapse, run, fall apart, lash out, give up, blame God and others, we endure. We continue trusting God with the expectation of positive results. Endurance however is not the final goal. James includes another life instruction and diving insight.

Life instruction #2 – Continue enduring

Divine insight or Perspective adjustment #2 – endurance produces maturity and stability

James shares a secret to becoming perfect and complete, lacking in NOTHING.

We can continue a steady trust in God whenever we encounter a trial.

Knowing that every trial is an opportunity to develop endurance.

Knowing that endurance produces spiritual maturity and stability

The key is our faith in Jesus.

And let endurance have its perfect result SO THAT you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The final goal of endurance is spiritual maturity. WE can consider it joy because properly responding to trials produces endurance and enduring produces maturity and stability. Spiritual maturity comes from continual endurance of trials by continually trusting Christ in the trials of life. Christians are like tea bags, they are not worth much until they’ve been in hot water. When we bail out or crash and burn, or fail to respond with an attitude of joy, we will not grow spiritually. These life encounters cause us to trust God alone. We will lack the spiritual muscle tone necessary for future encounters with unexpected trials.

The analogy of physical exercise to the body is instructive. Failure to exercise results in muscle atrophy, loss of strength, inability to endure. Improper, or the wrong kind of exercise can do more damage than good. When we cave at every difficulty or try to get out rather than remain under to allow God to refine us, we find ourselves becoming spiritually unstable. Later, James warns about doubters driven, tossed around, double-minded and unstable. James encourages “staying power”.

We endure in order to reap the benefits. Last week I suggested that the reason we find it difficult to consider trials joy and to continue enduring is because we don’t place a high enough value on spiritual health. Again, a physical analogy applies. If physical health was a high value, I would have a different attitude toward the disciplines necessary to achieve physical health. The motivation to consider encounter with trials joy and to continue to endure is maturity and stability. James mentions three components of spiritual health.

“perfect”

Reaching the end, function at full capacity or development, fully grown. Jesus calls to be perfect as His Father is perfect. Matt 5:48 Paul wrote about attaining unity of faith to perfect manhood according to the measure of Christ. Eph 4:13

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature (perfect) in Christ. Colossians 1:28

None of us will attain to the ultimate level of perfection. Just because we may not be a perfect “whatever” does not mean we stop that activity or keep striving to improve. Properly enduring trials is the means to spiritual growth. Continually resisting those trials will stunt out growth. Some Christians seem to stop growing. They are not becoming more like Jesus. Their issues never seem to improve. They may say, “Well, it’s just the way I am.” That’s the problem. God doesn’t want us to stay the way we are. He calls to be holy as He is holy. He instructs us to become more like Jesus not stay like we are. I think that perhaps part of the problem may have to do with the fact that we fail to face daily trials with faith.

I find it interesting that we seem to respond the opposite way we should to trials. We resist the trials that bring growth and remain under the temptations to sin until we finally fall. We need to remain under trials until we reap the growth God intended and resist the temptations that Satan sends to derail our growth.

“complete”

Be whole, be sound,

a state of complete health or soundness in the whole body." Cornerstone Biblical

When one recovers from a disease or a broken bone we might declare, “I’ve become whole again!”

“lacking in nothing”

There is another way of expressing perfect and complete. If we are perfect and complete in Christ, we will have no wants. We will not be defeated or destitute.

*Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.
Galatians 6:9*

The goal is becoming more like Jesus and our heavenly Father. The goal is to move on from spiritual babies to spiritual maturity. A proper response to trials is God's pathway to spiritual wholeness. Paul reprimanded the Corinthians for failing to grow out of babyhood.

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

The writer of Hebrews reprimanded those readers for having once grown up but lapsed back into babyhood.

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Heb 5:11-14

In both cases, the telling factor had not to do with knowledge but behavior.

Since trials provide opportunity to learn endurance and endurance develops spiritual wholeness, maturity and stability...

Consider trials to be a positive thing

Determine to continually endure

The message of 1:2-4 is that the trials of life are allowed by God as a spiritual necessity that tests our Christian character and gives us an opportunity to strengthen our faith by learning steadfast endurance, thereby making us complete in Christ and whole (healthy) people of God. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary

Enduring trials thus produces joy because such tests shape believers into the image of Christ. In that image one lacks nothing. College Press NIV Commentary, James & Jude.

As such, James says that endurance must be allowed to operate in a child of God so that the Christian pilgrimage will rise to a more refined level of spiritual maturity. Easy-To-Read Commentary Series

This whole attitude toward suffering and trials is counter intuitive. Our natural response is to not see the positive and remain under, but react and escape. James isn't the only one who calls for this contrary response to trials based on an understanding of what they produce.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces

hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:2-5

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12-13

So we do not lose heart (in trials). 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, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

I always assumed that Paul looked forward to a future heavenly glory. It is possible he references the unseen changes in the heart and soul brought about the “momentary light affliction.” The important things have to do with what God is doing in the heart. A positive attitude toward trials can only come from a perspective adjustment. Every trial must be met with a conscious evaluation or calculation.

In what way will proper response to this trial build the kind of endurance that will build new muscles in my soul and character that will in turn enable me to endure the trial I face down the road. Don't resist it or resent it but welcome it as an opportunity sent by God to move me closer to perfection, completeness and wholeness.

Since trials provide opportunity to learn endurance and endurance develops spiritual wholeness, maturity and stability...

Consider trials to be a positive thing

Determine to continually endure