

Book of James - Profiting from Trials (James 1:2-8)

© Paul Henebury

August 2, 2026

i This transcript was computer-generated and may contain minor inaccuracies.

Book of James.

It's not James 2. I know it says the book of James 2.

That just means it's the 2nd sermon in a series. It's James chapter one. And as you can see, verses 2 through eight, although we might as well start at verse one.

James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the 12 tribes, which are scattered abroad, greetings. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patients have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

But let him not ask. But let him ask him faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

He is a double-minded man. Unstable in all his ways. Well, this, this opening from James is both encouraging and may cause a little bit of trepidation in those that hear it.

After all, look at some of the words that James employs here. He talks about patients. Patients.

How many of you are patient? How many of you have this kind of spiritual patience? that endures trials and learns from trials?

How many of you are just content? To wait upon God day after day, week after week, month after month? Year after year.

And so there's this challenge of patience straight away. There's the introducing of this thing that we don't want to talk about in our societies today of trials and tribulations and suffering. Our lives are supposed to be, you know, go for it lives, lives that are full of our own entertainments and our own enjoyments.

That's the way that it's portrayed often in the world. And sometimes too often in the churches too that our lives are supposed to be, unhurried, on, perturbed lives because we're Christians. that God will bless us in every turn that we take.

That's often the god that's presented in modern Christianity, but it isn't true. Often we mistake the passage that's in Corinthians. It talks about the fact that, God will not, give us, or sorry, God will not, I forgot, this just left my mind.

It happens sometimes. More temptation. Sorry, he will help us in our temptations and give us more.

Thank you, Daryl. Then we can bear that we'll make a way of escape too. And sometimes we take that, which is a true biblical teaching.

And we apply it to struggles and suffering. And then it becomes something that's not taught in the Word of God. And something that we need to take a bit more seriously and soberly.

Sometimes God will allow things that will overwhelm us. It's just true. Face it.

It's just true. The death of a child. Or, like in Kayla's case, you know, this, this disease and this destroyed her life.

And how can we say that's more than she can bear? She bears it because she lives it. And the only way to stop living, it is to die.

But that's hardly what we mean when we say, well, God will, you know, not give you more than you can take. Well, sometimes he will. It's just a reality.

It's just a reality. Yes, he will not overdo the temptations. But sometimes God will allow suffering that will to all appearances, just be overwhelming.

For a while. Now, God's grace is not apart from that, God's help is not apart from that. But some trials and some struggles that some Christians have are really awful.

And you need to we need to wake up to that. We need to understand that. However, we might want to paper over certain things.

It doesn't, it doesn't comport with Christianity to avoid unsettling truths. We have to take the unsettling truths and we have to include them within our understanding of Christianity, with our understanding of what God may be doing or why God permits and allows certain things. I don't know if any of you have been following what's going on in Nigeria.

With the Christians there. I can't even repeat some of the things that are happening. Because it's just so too upsetting.

It's too upsetting. But women are saying that their kids killed in brutal ways in front of their eyes by these savages, and they are savages. I hope I want them to be saved.

I want them to not to go to hell. I want them to repent. But these Christians in other parts of the world are having to deal with savagery.

And it's part of the Christian life. For some of these people, maybe for some people that you know. And James.

Confronts us. With this issue. And he says, my brethren counted all joy, when you fall into various trials.

Now, he's not, let me state straight away. He's not got in mind the major things that I've just been talking about. Although they will also be included within what he's talking about.

Do you understand? What he's particularly referring to in the context of his book is probably more along the

lines of the disadvantage people in the Christian churches, who are being taken advantage of and exploited by the richer people. And as we go through the book, you will see that James hits this 2 or 3 times in the book.

So it's obviously going to be, it's obviously a problem that James's recipients are encountering and experiencing. Wealthy people, not some of them will be Christians, some of them not Christians, but wealthy people taking advantage of poorer people. That's always been the way it happens today, happened back there.

And unfortunately, yes, it happened even within the Christian church. As it does in Christian churches today, unfortunately. We can't say that what James talks about here and what he will talk about in his book doesn't happen anymore.

Please. We shouldn't have that kind of attitude. So that's one of the things.

One commentator thinks that probably it has to do with land and people with land, because that's what made a person wealthy in those days, people own land, and they were exploiting people upon the land. That's something that's dealt with in the Old Testament as well. But there's another trials, another one that is probably there because it's certainly inferred, is slander.

Chapter two. What's he going to talk about? You're going to talk about the tongue?

He's going to talk about it being a world of iniquity. Set on fire of hell. Why is he going to refer to the tongue like that?

Well, probably, because people have been victims of gossip. People had been victims of slander. And so that becomes an issue.

And yes, slander can be extremely painful and can cause great suffering in the lives of God's people. And other thing was the ever-present problem of persecution, from the Roman world, and also from Jewish people. Remember in the book of Acts, Everywhere Paul went, he went into the synagogues 1st and then he was chased out of the synagogues and then he was chased by Jews, from place to place to place to place.

And who is James writing to? The 12 tribes scattered abroad, but he's talking about the, the Christian Jews in different parts of the Roman Empire. And those, traditional Orthodox Jews of the day, they would persecute the Jews that converted to Christianity.

So that was certainly a problem. And of course, that caused friction and problems in families, just as it does today. So these are the kind of, trials that James was particularly concerned with, although he says various trials, doesn't he?

In verse two. And that word trial, it can be translated as temptation. Or, you know, any other word that speaks about our undergoing difficulty and pain.

Because of our beliefs. So James acknowledges that trials and suffering and trouble, It's just a lot of the Christian. It's a lot of many people, whether they're Christians or not.

But sometimes being a Christian brings on more of that to you. Just blending in with the beliefs of the age or of the place that you are causes you not to have as much trouble as if you are set against those values. And Christianity, of course, does set you in opposition to the values of the world.

And so brings upon you. Certain trials and difficulties. Maybe some of you have been in a job or a career, and you've been overlooked, even though you were most qualified for the job, but you've been overlooked for the job, and you can't understand why.

The only thing that you may suspect is that your boss knows you're a Christian and he doesn't like you because you're a Christian. Maybe that's happened to some of you. It's happened to me.

It just is one of those issues. And that's a trial. That's a, a temptation that you have to deal with in life.

Is it unfair? Yes, of course it's unfair. Is it painful?

Does it have consequences? Of course it does. Difficult and sometimes, you know, very troublesome consequences.

But this is part of the Christian life. I used to, many years ago, I used to, preach in the street in Hyde Park, in London and Trafalgar Square and places like that. And, You know, you generally, you'd have these people come up to you and say, well, your Christianity's just a crutch.

And so I would tell him, I said, well, since I become a Christian, actually, you know, I've been overlooked for a promotion, I've had this happen to me, and this happened to me, and this happened to me, because I'm a Christian. So how is it a crutch? If I wanted a crutch, I'd be like you.

And just go along with the world. Christianity is not a crutch for those Christians that have had to endure heartbreak because their families have cast them out. For those who have put Christ first.

And people want, other people wanted them to put them first. And so there's been a season in the families or in their friendships. These are the kinds of various trials.

It's the stuff of living in this world, the stuff that we've talked about, and we'll talk about, in other studies, in this church. It's the day-to-day problem of living in a sinful world, in a fallen world. So, trials will come upon you.

Maybe as you're sitting listening to me right now, you can think of one or 2 trials that you might be going through. Maybe you're looking for a job or you're looking for a, a decent job, and it's just difficult because jobs are difficult, hard to find nowadays. Maybe it's trouble in your marriage.

Maybe it's trouble with your kids. Maybe it's difficulty trying to find a wife or a husband. Maybe it's some physical ailment that you're having to deal with.

We prayed for somebody and our list who has migraines recurring. These are all trials. These are all difficulties that come upon the saints.

Would you call them positive? Would you say that they're good things? Would you say that they, you know, these are things that you want?

No, not unless you're crazy. But James opens his book with this line. Counted all joy.

When you go through various trials or temptations. And straight away, we might want to think, if we're full of, you know, too full of our own problems, and we're too focused on ourselves, we might want to think,

James, you're crazy. How dare you do that?

Do you know what I've endured? Do you know what I've suffered? Do you know what I have to face?

And James does know. He does know. The difficult troubles and difficult pains and difficult relationships.

Maybe bills that are piling up. We can add to the list all of these things that confront people in everyday life, and some of them, it's just not one thing, it's 2 or 3 or 4 things. And James has the audacity to open his book with count it all joy.

When you fall into various trials. How can he do this? This is a very important question.

It's not one to be avoided. It's not one to be smoothed over. By some Christian platitude.

We need to feel the ruggedness of it, the hardness of it, the difficulty of it. Because if we don't, we're not putting ourselves in the place of people that have to endure really difficult trials. And therefore, we're not being Christ-like.

So let's have a look at the opening again. Count it all joy, he says, when you fall into various trials. Now, picking this apart a little bit more.

What word does he use to describe the visitation of trials and trouble in our life? He says that we fall into it. Now when you fall into something, Okay, it's not like you're, you're walking over dangerous places or a place where there could be a crevasse or something that could give way.

It's just that you're walking along and you're unsuspecting. And all of a sudden you fall. You're walking in a meadow, maybe, and you, there's a root and you fall.

Or the ground gives way, or you get that shale underneath your feet, and it just takes you down by gravity, and you fall. And we've all fallen like that. We've always, we've all taken those falls.

And so, this becomes a, an adjective that's used, to describe falling into trials and suffering. We just, we're going along, we're doing fine, we're minding our own business, and then we fall into these problems. And all of a sudden we're in this, you know, this pit of trouble.

I hope that you know what I'm talking about here. We've all experienced this. And James says, well, okay, this, therefore, this is part of life.

This is part of living. And it's probably even exacerbated because you're a Christian. Because, of course, you've got the world and the flesh and the devil against you.

So not only do you fall into these temptations, but then you have these enemies that are trying to make the most of your suffering. And James counters this with an extraordinary claim. And he says, Count it all joy when this happens.

Now he doesn't say, It's joyful when this happens. He doesn't say these things, trials are good things. Trials are not good things.

In and of themselves. When evil overtakes you, That's not a good. It doesn't all of a sudden become good

because somebody says so.

No, it's evil. It's part and parcel of living in a fallen world. But when it does, come upon you.

James says, because you're connected to God, because you're connected to the kingdom of God, that's to come, because you're connected to one who cares for you and watches over you and knows all of the hairs in your head, he says that, you can count it all joy. Now why? You've kind of, I've confronted you with that kind of difficult, you know, problematical statement.

Why can we do that? Well, get to the a deeper answer in a few minutes, but he continues and he says, knowing that the testing of your, what's the next word? Faith.

So this, this, these trials, in verse 2 are connected to your faith, Verse three, do you see? The testing of your faith produces patience or perseverance. But let patience have its perfect work.

Do you see how we words that? Let patience, but we're impatient. We're to let patients, even though we're impatient.

We need to let patients work. We need to let what's happening, work out, do what it's doing. Let patients have its perfect work that you may be perfect or mature or established, not actually sinlessly perfect or anything like that, doesn't mean that, okay?

And complete, lacking nothing. Now, what he means by this, is that God wants to take you, from where you are, in your spiritual walk, To a firmer place in your spiritual walk, a more advanced place in your spiritual walk. And he will use trials, the trials that you are visited with, to do that.

That means that any trial that meets the Christian is not pointless. Not arbitrary. Not without its usefulness, not without its fruit.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that the trial itself, which may stop you from doing things that you otherwise could do profitably, is itself a valuable thing. It's evil, remember.

But God can bring something out of it. That's the point of what James is saying. Any struggle, any trial, that you are going through.

Whether I've named it or whether I've failed to name it, any trial can be used by God for good. Now I know what you're thinking. Well, I think I know what you're thinking what I'm thinking when I read passages like this sometimes.

And I'm not paying attention. It is, well, good grief, couldn't God do it in a different way? What?

You know, couldn't he, because he's almighty. And he says he loves us. So, couldn't he just let us, you know, weave our way through life without suffering?

And just let us mature a different way. And I suppose he could. But that wouldn't be living as strangers and pilgrims in this world, would it?

If we were avoiding everything because we were connected to God. No, in order to be real, as inhabitants of this world, we have to endure the things of this world. We have to receive, unfortunately.

The struggles and the trials of everyday life. So now God does allow us to get sick, get cancer. I had a good friend who passed to be with the Lord just 2 weeks ago.

And last time I saw him, he was describing to me, that a cancer had, had eaten its way through his leg bone. And the 1st thing he knew about it was when his leg broke. And he said, I have never endured any pain like that before.

This is a, a man's man. He said, this thing brought me to tears. I couldn't bear it.

He said it was indescribable pain. Why in God, God loves him, doesn't he? Wouldn't God just do something about it?

Heal it. Get rid of it. Or reduce the pain a bit.

Because it's, unfortunately, part and parcel of living in this world, of dealing with the curse. But also, We can add on top of that, now, he wasn't enjoying himself when his leg was broken. He wasn't enjoying himself.

He wasn't happy. But he could, by grasping hold of the truth of the fact that God uses, even suffering such as that, to bring out fruit, to bring out something that's of lasting value, he could, in his mind, rejoice at what that would produce. And this is where I want to bring in The key, as it were.

Look at verse 12. Blessed is the man who endures temptation for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life. Which the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Now this crown of life, we'll get to it in the next sermon, Lord willing. So I don't want to go into the details of it, but this crown of life is not something that's given to you now. This crown of life is something you receive in the next life.

It's something that is yours. In the kingdom of God. And temptation and all of the pain, and all of the trouble, and all of the sorrow that you endure as a Christian goes into something that you are rewarded with in eternity.

And that is the reason that James can say what he says. That is the reason, because whatever pain, whatever trouble or trial that you have to endure down here, It's not lost on God. It doesn't just, you know, disappear, when you take your last breath.

No, it reappears, but it reappears in glory, as reward, as something that is given to you by God. Because you went through this ordeal, this pain. And you turned your mind, you turned your thoughts toward God, even in your trials and your tribulations.

I'm not saying that you did it all the time, you did it, you know, every day you were perfect at doing it, but you took this suffering, you took this pain, and you directed this, and you cried out to God. And you realize by faith, because this is all about faith. You realize by faith that you were going to be the victor, that you were going to be the recipient of a crown of glory, a crown of life, that this suffering added up to.

If that wasn't the case, if there wasn't something that was glorious, that outshone by its brilliance, the shadow and the pain of today, if there was not something that was that more than covered. The troubles that we have to go through today. James couldn't write this.

James advised counting it all joy when you go through trials would be stupid advice. Because there would be no payout. There'd be no reason for it.

The joy is that comes because you grasp hold of what will happen to you, what will come to you in the future. Do you see that? That's why you can rejoice.

This is rather like Jesus and the beatitudes. Yes. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Is that a good thing? Actually, actually, that probably is a good thing. It probably talks about humility and meekness.

For theirs is the kingdom of God, but the poor in spirit in this world are often trodden on, taken advantage of. If you're going for a job and they want to know about your attributes and so on, you better not put, oh, I'm humble and meek. You won't get the job.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for my sake. What? Persecution, that's not nice.

That's very unpleasant. Blessed, which can be translated. It's a sloppy translation, so don't run away with it, but it can be translated happy.

Okay? In other words, it has this idea of not just being content with something, but being really overflowing with it. I mean, True happiness, peace, and so on.

Blessed are they that are persecuted for my name's sake, but theirs is the kingdom of God. Well, that means the kingdom of God is real. That means the kingdom of God is great.

That means the kingdom of God completely overwhelms and outweighs any difficulty and trial that we have to endure down here. Do you see? And that's why you can rejoice.

Because God takes your pain. God takes your trouble. And he doesn't say, well, just deal with it.

But he sees you in that trial, he sees you in that pain. He sees you in that season of trouble. And he makes something in the kingdom of God for out of that, some fruit out of that that will bless you forever.

That's the point of James language here. God puts value into our trials, and therefore, we should use our trials for our own spiritual profit, because we know it will profit us. Okay.

Verse six, he says, but let him ask in faith. With no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind, for let not that man, supposedly will receive anything from the Lord. What is James saying here?

James saying, okay, so your trials will come to you, and you are to, by faith, rejoice in those trials because they will bring about certainly and definitely something +and good and blessed for you in the kingdom of God. But you better not doubt. You better be 100% on this.

And if you're not 100% on this. Then it's all worthless. You're just going to suffer.

Is that what he's saying? That's how it's sometimes interpreted. That's not what he's saying.

Okay? James has just this very, very practical way of joining one idea with another idea. You know, he says that these things are used by God to help us to, to promote our faith.

But he does say this. It takes some understanding sometimes. It takes some wisdom, some skill in enduring these trials.

We ask, God, why me? Remember the psalmist, how long, O Lord? He praised this over and over again throughout the Psalms.

Perfectly understandable, perfectly human question. It's perfectly okay for us to ask God about these things, to go to God, and say, Why? And how long?

In fact, that's what we should be doing. We should be going to God. That's not an expression of doubt toward God.

Because we're going to God with it, do you see? We don't have all the answers, but we want more understanding of it. We want wisdom.

About this trial and about how we're to deal with this trial. So this is not just a kind of asking for wisdom for anything. You know, where should I go to college?

Or, you know, should I do this, Lord, or that? That's not primarily what James is concerned about here. He's talking about wisdom in the midst of your trials.

Lord, I'm enduring something that's very uncomfortable, that's very troubling, that's causing anxiety, that's causing difficulty. That's bringing stress. How do I deal with it?

How do I manage it? It uncomfortable. I want to get rid of it.

I don't want it. But, Lord, you've visited upon me. You've allowed this trial to happen to me.

You're going to bring something good out of it, but how do I deal with it now? And tomorrow and the next day. That's what it's asking, you see?

And if you lack wisdom, ask God. Ask God. Go out to God.

Tell him your trouble, like the psalmists do. You don't have to collect all of your thoughts. Just go to God.

Sometimes you may not be able to put what you are struggling with into words. It's okay. The Holy Spirit can take those words that are not uttered and bring them before the throne of God.

You're okay. You're covered. Just go to God.

And he says, ask for wisdom. Why am I going through this trial or how? Not necessarily why?

Because these are trials that come upon people. There's no why. Half the time.

They just come upon you. You fall into them. How do you want me to be during this trial?

during this suffering. Lord. How can I glorify you?

How can I be the person you want to be in this pain and in this suffering? So that's the wisdom that he's talking about here. If any of you lacks wisdom about the situation that you are in, let him ask God.

And understand that God is not uncaring, and he hasn't got his arms folded in front of you with a big grimace on his face, when you come to him, God is overflowing in goodness. So he says that God gives to all liberally, and without reproach, she's I'm going to tell you of. He's not going to have some scathing rebuke for you because you go to him in your weakness.

And it says it, wisdom for what you need for the suffering, for the day, will be given to you. Clarity of mind that is connected and James will connect this to the promises of the word of God. And so he says, let him ask in faith, 100% faith.

Well, it could be interpreted that way because he says with no doubting for he who doubts is like the wave of the sea. But, The idea here of no doubting is just that you're not going to God in this God, are you even there kind of thing? You're going to God because you know he's there.

You're going to God because he know, you know he hears you. Jesus Christ is, as we've already looked at. He's your advocate.

The Holy Spirit's within you. Of course, God hears you. And you go to him that way.

Will there some be some doubts in your mind? There may be doubts about, well, will God, break this trial? Will he end this trouble?

When will he? There might be doubts about things like that, but that's not what James is talking about. There might be uncertainty that's connected with your present suffering.

But James is not talking about that. He's just talking about going to God for wisdom, for getting what you need to understand this suffering. And that includes remembering that your suffering is not valueless.

You'd rather not have it. But it's not useless. It's not vain.

So you go to God and you say, God, in this trouble, in this trial. I just want wisdom to order my thoughts. I want wisdom not to fret.

I want wisdom to understand that in the midst of this trouble, you haven't forgotten about me, that you're going to go through this with me. Where I go, you go. And then when it gets overwhelming.

You understand. That kind of wisdom. Because what that wisdom does, it's skill in living, the difficulty that you're facing.

Do you see? And that's what wisdom is. It's skill for living.

And so in that context, When you go to God to ask him for wisdom for the trials and the trouble that you're in right now. Don't doubt as if he's not going to help out, as if he's not, doesn't care about your troubles. Don't let Satan insinuate that God is a harsh God so that you don't pay attention to the admonition of James.

No, go to God expecting that he will give you wisdom, that he will set, settle your heart. He will settle your thoughts. You will get clarity.

Once you go to him. Don't be double minded. Verse 8 says he's a double-minded man unstable in all these ways.

Um, a double-minded man who is a person that goes to God, but then goes somewhere else too, because God may not be up to the job. I've got to kind of make sure I've got a 2nd string here. I've got plan B. Because God may not be up to it.

No, no, no, no. Forget other things, go to God with a full heart. Go to him with your troubled soul.

And ask him. So James is simply saying, give God the credit of being God. We can profit from our trials.

Again, as I started out this sermon, these trials are not nice. They can be extremely unpleasant. And we don't kind of pretend that these aren't unpleasant because that makes us spiritual.

It doesn't. To ignore reality, doesn't make you spiritual. No, you understand the reality.

Jesus understood the reality of the nails going through his feet and through his hands. He understood that. But for the joy that was set before him.

He endured the cross. And what is James doing here? James is saying?

Count it all joy when you encounter these various trials because they produce something. They matter to God. Trials come at us in different guises, and at different frequencies and intensities.

Many of them are just normal in this world. But God uses them, you see. God uses them.

God doesn't waste the pain that comes into your life. Trials are just a part of life. But God can and will profit us from these trials.

Yes, he can profit us in the present by us knowing that God is with us in this trial, knowing that we can trust God, in this pain, in this difficulty. We don't know why he allows it to be upon us. We don't have all of the answers, but we trust him, and that matures us.

That gives us perseverance. That adds value right there, but then we can be joyfully even because we know that the exchanged, In the kingdom of God is great. Paul talks about the enduring the pain and the trouble and the strife in this world.

He calls it a light affliction. And he says this light affliction, which may not be a light affliction, but he's making a contrast here. This light affliction that works in us a far more exceeding weight of glory.

He puts it again in the kingdom in the life after this life. He says, the glory that you'll meet because of your pain here. Because of your faith in the midst of that pain will be something that so far overshadows, your struggles, that you'll forget about, that you ever had them.

That's hard for us to conceive, I know. It is. But James says, Have faith to reach into the future.

Have faith to understand what God's going to do. Have faith to understand that God sees, he knows, he understands, he values, and he will reward. Count it all joy.

Therefore, when you fall into various trials. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we Many of us have fallen into grievous trials.

Things that broke our hearts and maybe break our hearts even today. We've endured pain, we've endured suffering, we've endured, things that have shaken us. Things that have threatened almost to uproot us out of this world.

And then there's the ongoing, nagging, there's the ongoing, little problems that keep coming. These things that accumulate through our lives. Lord, we come to you.

And we know that there is a payout. There's a value to all of these. And so we ask, Lord, that in those times of difficulty and trial, that we would come to you and ask for wisdom.

As for skill in thinking through our present situations or our dire circumstances, and it will be given to us. And help us to do what James tells us we can do. Count it all joy when we fall into these difficult times.

We know we need you, Lord. We need the grace of God. We need the wisdom of God.

We need the word of God. So help us, Father, always to turn our eyes upon you. And we ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen.