

“Persevere” (James 1:1-12)(9.17.23)

James 1:1-12 Amplified Bible **Testing Your Faith**

1 ^[a]James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve [Hebrew] tribes [scattered abroad among the Gentiles] in the dispersion: Greetings (rejoice)!

2 Consider it nothing but joy, my ^[b]brothers and sisters, whenever you fall into various trials. **3** Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity, and inner peace]. **4** And let endurance have its perfect result *and* do a thorough work, so that you may be perfect and completely developed [in your faith], lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you lacks wisdom [to guide him through a decision or circumstance], he is to ask of [our benevolent] God, who gives to everyone generously and without rebuke *or* blame, and it will be given to him. **6** But he must ask [for wisdom] in faith, without doubting [God’s willingness to help], for the one who doubts is like a billowing surge of the sea that is blown about and tossed by the wind. **7** For such a person ought not to

think *or* expect that he will receive anything [at all] from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable *and* restless in all his ways [in everything he thinks, feels, or decides].

⁹ Let the brother in humble circumstances glory in his high position [as a born-again believer, called to the true riches and to be an heir of God]; ¹⁰ and the rich man *is to glory* in being humbled [by trials revealing human frailty, knowing true riches are found in the grace of God], for like the flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; its flower falls off and [c]its beauty fades away; so too will the rich man, in the midst of his pursuits, fade away.

¹² Blessed [happy, spiritually prosperous, favored by God] is the man who is steadfast under trial *and* perseveres when tempted; for when he has passed the test *and* been approved, he will receive the [victor's] crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: "**Persevere**"

INTRODUCTION:

Near the end of August, I got a phone call from Aiden. He is the president of the Stockton Christian Fellowship – a student led club on the university campus. While it is student led, they have advisors. The advisor for their apologetics club gave Aiden my phone number.

Aiden called to see if I would be willing to come and teach occasionally and be involved with the fellowship. After having served in that capacity for several years, I stopped in February of 2022. After my second bout with COVID, I had decided to reduce my workload.

I told Aiden that I would be happy to start working with the Stockton Christian Fellowship again. We arranged that I would come to their first meeting to meet him and the leadership and we could discuss things further. The first Tuesday of September was the first day of classes at Stockton and their first Stockton Christian Fellowship meeting.

At 12:18 that afternoon, Aiden texted me. The scheduled speaker for the first night had canceled. He asked me if I could teach on James 1:1-11 that night. Though not thrilled about the short notice, I told him I would do it. I spent most of the afternoon preparing the Bible Study. The lesson

went well and the students seemed genuinely interested.

The next morning, I finished my first devotional and then opened The Upper Room online devotional. Guess which scripture they used. Right; this same portion of James. I took it as a sign from the Lord that it is a message you need to hear. When I checked my records, I have not preached this text to you since 2016. And, this will be different.

Here is the Upper Room Devotional: **Embracing Obstacles** by Patrick Klingaman from Maine.

For years I viewed health issues, career setbacks, and other difficulties as frustrating interruptions to the life I wanted. Every time I overcame a tough situation, another one sprang up, slowing my progress.

However, God helped change my attitude toward such challenges through an unlikely sport: dog agility. For over a decade I ran alongside Portuguese water dogs through winding courses filled with jumps, tunnels, and other obstacles. In agility competitions, speed is less important than successfully navigating each obstacle.

Both in dog agility and in life, I have learned that what is most difficult can prove most important.

And thankfully we do not endure trials alone. Today's reading from James teaches us that perseverance is developed through the testing of our faith during life's trials and is key to making us "mature and complete." It also reminds us that God's guidance is available to all who seek it. Much like my dogs could master difficult agility courses when they sought my direction, I have discovered that I can better handle challenges when I direct my attention toward God. When we keep our focus on God, we can find joy even in life's most unwanted interruptions.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Dear God, help us to see our difficult circumstances through your eyes, knowing that our struggles can help us grow to be more like Jesus. Amen.

BODY:

James' teaching is challenging. We are supposed to welcome trials and tribulation. But more than that, we are to consider them nothing but joy, or all joy, or pure joy. This is not a truth that you want to try to teach someone who is in the midst of the chaos and grief. They might find it impossible to accept during the storm. That is why it is critical for Christians to learn this truth early in their faith

journey because Jesus himself promised that in this world we WILL have tribulation.

Now, I want to show you a short video of comedian John Crist where he makes fun of a modern superficial approach to the Bible. {show clip}

On the other hand, there are real-life catastrophes happening all the time. Our newsfeeds are filled with them. This past week, there were floods in Libya. The initial floods in northeastern Libya — after torrential rain this past weekend — were bad enough. But the worst of the damage was not a result of those floods. It has instead come from the subsequent bursting of two dams near the coastal city of Derna. The death toll has now reached 11,000.

The week before there was a devastating earthquake in Morocco. It is considered rare and powerful at a magnitude of 6.8. Nearly 3,000 people were killed and it injured almost 6,000, making it Morocco's deadliest since 1960 and most powerful since at least 1900.

It seems that a good portion of August, the news was dominated by fires in Maui. The final death toll is expected to be over 100. Hundreds of buildings and homes were destroyed and it is expected to take years to rebuild at a cost in the billions.

No, when your hopes and dreams have been destroyed by floodwaters, quakes, or fire you are not likely to listen to James with an open heart and mind. This lesson must be ingrained into the fiber of your being prior to being overwhelmed by tragedy.

Pastor Greg Laurie preached: "I read about a traveler that was visiting a logging area in the Northwest United States. He watched with great curiosity as a lumberjack working alongside a mountain stream would periodically jab his sharp hook into a log as it passed by and separate it from the others. This visitor could not see any rhyme or reason as to why the logger would grab certain logs and let others go by.

He asked him, "What are you doing?" The logger replied, "These logs may all look alike to you, but I can recognize that a few of them are quite different. The ones that I let pass by grew in a valley where they were always protected from the storms. **Their grain is rather coarse.** But the logs that I have pulled aside come from high up on the mountains. They were beaten by strong winds from the time they were quite small. This toughens the trees **and gives them a fine grain.** We save these logs for choice work. They are too good to be used for ordinary lumber.""

I tell you that James knew what he was talking about. He is writing to real people facing real issues. We need to know a little about James and his day to get a fuller understanding and establish his credibility.

James is the half-brother of Jesus, but he doesn't brag about that fact. Why, we may wonder. He only identifies himself as a bond-servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. While this is an act of humility, James rightly emphasizes what is most important. He did not mention in his greeting that he has authority as the head of Jerusalem Christian Church – the first church. When you read the Book of Acts, you can see that James is an important leader and that others seek out his approval.

While James grew up with Jesus, he and his brothers and sisters did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. John 7:1–5 (NIV84) **7** After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.² But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near,³ Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do."⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show

yourself to the world.”⁵ **For even his own brothers did not believe in him.**

So, they knew about the miracles, but did not believe. Jesus was right when He declared that a prophet is not received in his hometown. This next verse was the impetus for Jesus’ statement and establishes that James is the name of one of Jesus’ brothers. Mark 6:3 (NIV84) Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him [Jesus].

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the situation has changed. Acts 1:14 (NIV84) They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and **with his brothers.**

In Paul’s establishing the succinct account of the gospel, we are given a clue to James’ conversion. 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 (NIV84)

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of

whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ **Then he appeared to James**, then to all the apostles,⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

James is writing to the 12 tribes. This is a common reference to The Chosen People. For the most part, James is writing to Jewish Christians. Most of the early Christians were Jews. Do not forget that Jesus was a Jew. It was no accident that Jesus chose 12 disciples. We must remember that we have a spiritual Jewish heritage. Paul explains that the Church has been grafted into the True Vine of Israel.

We see this theme consummated in the closing portion of our Bibles: Revelation 21:10–12 (NIV84)

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Why were the tribes scattered? We find the answer in Acts 7:59–8:3 (NIV84)

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

8 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

And, this persecution continued. James knew of what He spoke. He was the leader and he felt responsible. I told you we must learn this early to equip us for when we face trials, but James did not have that luxury. The fire had already struck; the flood had already come; and the earth had already shook.

Even his death witnessed to this persecution. The historian Josephus recorded it: "because James was preaching that Jesus was the Christ in Jerusalem at Passover, he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple. James does not die immediately; instead he kneels and prays, "father

forgive them for they do not know what they do.” Afterwards, James was stoned and beaten with a fuller’s club, and then buried near the temple.”

How can joy and trials be conjoined? Do you believe that God is sovereign? Is God omnipotent? Does God love you? Romans 8:28 (NIV84) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV84) Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

And the Lord Jesus promises in Matthew 28:18–20 (NIV84)

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always,** to the very end of the age.”

Our heavenly Father goes with us. Our Savior, Jesus, is with us always. Somehow, someday, the God of all creation is working for your good. No

matter how dark the circumstances; no matter how severe the test; no matter the shouts of the Enemy; we are more than conquerors through Christ who saves us.

This testing does an amazing thing. The original words for the testing of our faith came from a process the silversmiths would use. They would use fire to heat the silver. When it got hot enough, all the impurities and dross would rise to the top. Then the silversmith would scoop it off and remove it. This process would be repeated until...until the silversmith could see his reflection clearly in the surface of the heated silver.

That is what is happening in our trials, in our testings. We are being formed into the image of our creator. This should reshape our thinking and approach to trials. It is how we can find joy in our suffering – because we trust God completely in the process – and we want to be like the Lord Jesus. Note that when Stephen was stoned and when James was thrown from the Temple pinnacle, they both mimicked the words of Jesus, **"Forgive them Father for they know not what they do."**

Yes, this is a hard teaching, very hard. It takes faith. But how do we grow our physical muscles? By working them. Our spiritual muscles must be exercised too. The Lord is preparing us for the next

climb, the next ascent of His heavenly hill. We are climbing Jacob's ladder. Every round goes higher, higher. Soldiers of the cross.

How is it possible for us weak mortal creatures? If any of you lacks wisdom, we are to ask God. This wisdom is divine wisdom ordained for real-life application. It is not just intellectual, it has a strong moral content. This wisdom gives light to our eyes of faith so that we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

The book of Hebrews 12:2 (NIV84) tells us,

²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Do not be discouraged because even the Apostle Paul knew he was a work in progress. Philippians 3:12 (NIV84) Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

CONCLUSION:

I love how perfect is this word persevere here. Per severe; per severe: for testing. James is not sugarcoating the Christian life. He is telling it how

it is. But I could have chosen other words besides persevere because several English translations are needed to gain a full understanding. Patience, endurance, steadfastness, fortitude, and toughness complete the meaning.

In the closing words of Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, he says, "Our prayer is for your perfection." James proclaims our testing matures us and makes us complete. Then we will receive the Victor's crown of Life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

This week, I watched a movie, "How Green Was My Valley." It is based on a book of the same name written by Richard Llewellyn. It is about a faithful Welsh family who were coal miners in the mid 1800's. They faced many trials and testings.

In this scene I am going to show you, there is a boy who has been bed-ridden for several months. He had fallen through the ice into the chilling water and the doctor didn't know if Huw would ever walk again. The pastor had promised that Huw would see the first daffodils of spring.

{show clip}

Megachurch preacher Matt Chandler knows something about trials and testing. He has battled brain cancer. In his sermon on this text he says, "I

want you to notice really what God is about is progress, not perfection.” Nevertheless, James tells us that God’s desire is that we would be mature and complete, that we would be perfect.

Amen and amen. Let us Pray.