*Introduction*

In John 16:33 Jesus gave His followers a strange promise, "***In this world you will have trouble***."

Paul said in 2 Tim. 3:12, "***Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted***."

As the disciples preached in Antioch, Acts 14:22 tells us their message was, "***We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.***"

Believers in Christ have found this message of Jesus and the Apostles to be true.

James 1:2 tells us that the trials Christians (& non-Christians) face are of "***many kinds***."

Some of you are either facing different trials in your life right now or have been through some only recently.

Some of you parents feel your teenagers are putting you through trials.

Some of you teenagers feel your parents are putting you through trials.

Some of you face the trial of not having any parents or ones who don't care.

Some of you have faced deadly disease or sickness.

Some of you have had some terrible tragedy in your family.

Some of you have recently had a loved one pass away.

James doesn't say "if you have some trials, here's some advice"

He says, "***When you face trials***" because he knows you will.

So the question before us today is not if we will face trials, but when we do face trials how should we, as Christians, react to them?

James gives us several suggestions:

**1. THANK GOD FOR THEM (read vs.2-4)**

James first suggestion is to thank God for our troubles.

James was referring to the problems, setbacks, & unexpected difficulties which often come.

When these difficulties & problems come, James says, "***Consider it pure joy***."

- "Joy?" How can we rejoice when our world is falling apart?

James offers 2 primary reasons:

**A. The Genuineness of our faith.**

We can rejoice because our trials give us a chance to reveal the genuiness of our faith. James refers to trials as the testing of our faith.

The word "testing" refers to ore which was put into a fire to burn away impurities.

If our faith is real, like gold, it will stand the test of fire & be proved as genuine.

Faith comes in two varieties: the "if" kind of faith & the "nevertheless" kind of faith.

One kind of faith says, "if"--all goes well, if life is prosperous & happy, then I will believe in God.

The other kind of faith says, "nevertheless"--though the forces of evil triumph, though everything else goes wrong, & Gethsemane come & the cross looms, nevertheless I will believe in God.

The "if" kind of faith was once demonstrated by a young man who asked God to help him pass his exam to be certified in his profession.

- When he failed the test, he stopped believing in God. His approach to God was, "If you will bless me, then I will serve you."

The other kind of faith was demonstrated by a lady whose son was critically injured in a motorcycle accident & whose husband had a heart attack from the shock.

At the hospital, where both husband & son were in intensive care units, she said to her pastor, "I'm not going to draw any conclusions from this experience until God gets through with it."

Anybody can have faith when things are going our way.

We show what kind of faith we really have when troubles come & the lights go out.

We are to rejoice in our trials, James said, for these trials provide an opportunity to reveal the genuineness of our faith.

The 2nd reason we can rejoice is because of;

**B. The Growth of our faith.**

Facing trials produces perseverance in us. Perseverance, in turn, makes us mature, complete, & lacking in nothing.

Trials produce perseverance which in turn equips us, develops us, & supplies us to do God's will.

Our trials mould us into fit instruments for God to use. They help our faith to develop & mature.

Study history & you will find that great souls are formed through facing trials in a Godly way.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) was plagued throughout his life by one illness after another. His biographer said it was his illness that made him great, for it weakened temptation, kept him from valuing the world too highly, & made him dependent on God.

Victor Hugo (1802-1885), the French literary giant, was exiled by Napoleon & forced to spend years of adversity away from his native land. During his trials, however, he found himself, his literary genius flowered, and his fame exploded. He was said to have exclaimed, "Why was I not exiled before?"

Helen Keller (1880-1968) never knew the beauties of sound or sight. Yet she said of her blindness & deafness, "I thank God for my handicaps for through them I have found myself, my work and my God."

Nature teaches us this same principle. Free a butterfly from its chrysalis, & from the struggle of liberating itself, & you destroy its life, for it will never develop the strength to soar as it should.

When fortitude is lacking in one of God's children, He has a time-tested remedy--

"the testing of our faith."

What is our handicap? What is our unpleasant circumstance? What is it that binds our life? What causes us to suffer?

James says - Don't moan about these things. Rejoice in them.

For God may be using these things to mould us into the person he wants us to be.

Every experience of suffering is a crossroads in our life. We can respond in anger & become bitter. Or we can accept suffering as the chisel God uses to sculpt us into a saint & become better.- It's our choice.

When we realize God is using our trials to develop our faith, we can thank God for them.

The 2nd suggestion James gives us is that we should:

**2. ASK GOD ABOUT THEM (read vs.5-8)**

A sign on the wall of a certain high school said, "In the event of an earthquake, the ruling against prayer will be temporarily suspended." That accurately expresses our ambivalence about prayer today. Many have given up on prayer.

In our busy lives we desire a more practical way to approach our fellowship with God. Or in our busyness we simply neglect prayer.

Yet time & time again we are driven back to prayer as the only alternative left by which we can experience the personal power & presence of God for which we so deeply long.

Prayer, properly understood, is the key to triumphant Christian living.

We need to reach the conclusion that the depth of our prayer lives will determine the strength of our Christian lives. We are stronger or weaker the more or less we pray.

One of the most neglected ministries in the church today is the ministry of prayer.

One of the most neglected commandments of our Lord is that men ought to pray so they will not lose heart (Luke 18:1).

Early in his letter James addresses the subject of prayer. First he tells us:

**A. What to pray for.**

He said, "***If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God***."

The need for wisdom is directly tied in with the matter James dealt with in vss.2-4.

The wisdom we are praying for is practical wisdom that will teach us how to face the trials we are going through. James says we can ask God and He will give us the wisdom we need to face our trials.

In the decision making process in life we need a higher wisdom. We need God's wisdom which comes through prayer.

The great theologian Reinhold Neibuhr once expressed a prayer which should be the prayer of us all: "*God grant me the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed. Grant me the courage to change the things that ought to be changed. Grant me the wisdom to distinguish one from the other*."

For what do we pray? Happiness? Success? Health? Money? James says to pray for wisdom.

Then whatever comes in life, happiness or sadness, success or failure, health or sickness, money or poverty, we will be able to discern how these circumstances of our life can be used to develop our Christian life & glorify God.

James not only told us what to pray for, he told us;

**B. How to Pray.**

When I say, "how to pray" I'm not talking about our posture when we pray.

Different people suggest different postures.

A poet has said:

*"The proper way for a man to pray," Said Deacon Lemeul Keyes,*

*"And the only proper attitude Is down upon his knees."*

*"No, I should say the way to pray," Said Reverend Mr. Wise,*

*"Is standing straight with outstretched arms, And solemn upturned eyes."*

*"Oh no, oh no," said Elder Snow "Such posture is too proud: A man should pray with eyes fast closed, and head contritely bowed."*

*"It seems to me his hands should be serenely clasped in front, with both thumbs pointing to the ground," Said Reverend Mr. Blunt.*

*"Last year I fell in Hodgkins well Head first," said Farmer Brown,*

*"With both my feet a-stickin up And head a-pointin down."*

*"And I prayed hard, right then & there--Best prayer I ever said.*

*The prayingest prayer I ever prayed was standing on my head."*

When I say, "how to pray" I am referring to our attitude.

The biblical admonition is to pray in faith.

What did James mean when he challenged us to ask in faith?

James provides some negative examples. James set doubting in contrast to faith (v.6).

Doubting refers to a person who wants both to rely on God & to rely on himself; one who seeks God's will, but wants to do his/her own will too.

In contrast to those who doubt James suggest we are to pray in faith.

To pray in faith means that we have only one loyalty & that is our loyalty to God.

To pray in faith means that we have decided to rely on Him & not ourselves.

To pray in faith means to believe that if we open up our lives to God through communion with Him, God will do in & through us what is best for us, & all of our needs will be met w/His glorious provisions.

The way to spell relief in the Christian life is p-r-a-y-e-r.

If we would begin praying biblical prayers our lives would be revolutionized.

The last suggestion James makes about dealing w/trials is that we should:

**3. HONOR GOD IN THEM (read vs.9-11)**

Our trials are not only to be endured, they are also to be used to honour God.

The earliest Christians were from the poorer classes in society. However, the Bible doesn't attribute material poverty an unchallengeable virtue, nor does it declare that one cannot be rich in material possessions & spiritual blessings at the same time.

So what does the Bible say about the relationship between prosperity & poverty in the life of a Christian?

1st James discusses;

**A. Our Problems.**

James implies that both poverty & prosperity can produce problems. Remember, James was discussing the trials in the life of a Christian.

In James understanding, both prosperity & poverty can present us with difficulties.

Either can lead to spiritual disaster unless they are faced with the wisdom God alone can give.

The problems of poverty are quite evident. Without sufficient money needs are not met & many desires go unfulfilled.

When our outgoings exceeds our income, our upkeep is our downfall. That is a fact of life.

Many of us can identify with the man who told his wife they were going to start living within their income even if they had to borrow money to do it.

When we're not able to buy for ourselves & our children the things we need, it can lead to envy toward those who have more.

If this poverty lasts over a long period of time, it can produce embitterment toward those who are able to do what we ourselves cannot do and when this embitterment runs its course, it can produce self-pity.

Self-pity says, "We are poor because the circumstances of life are against us. It is someone else's fault."

Such self-pity believes others are responsible to provide for our needs.

The problems of prosperity also need to be recognized. An abundance of money does not remove our troubles. In many cases, it increases them.

Abundance of wealth tends to give a false sense of security. Self-security says, "Whatever we need, we can buy it. Everyone has a price, & our money is a key which unlocks the door to security."

Such self-security leads to a dependence on our money that causes us to forget our need for God.

The tangible becomes our God.

We are tempted to believe our money will provide for us all the things we need.

Both poverty & prosperity can present us with troubles.

In most cases, the temptations of prosperity are greater. This is true today as it was in James' day.

Consequently, James elaborated on the nature of material possessions. Material possessions are temporary

A person who depends on his riches will be like a colourful flower in the desert.

His life may be colourful & spectacular, but it will also be short-lived.

Next James discusses:

**B. Our Position.**

How can we deal with the twin problems of poverty & prosperity?

James point is clear. We have a new position in Jesus Christ which makes our material standing irrelevant.

The Christian faith does not suggest that we even out our resources. Rather, the Christian faith declares we are equal before God, despite our resources.

Christ is the great equalizer. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

In Jesus Christ all human distinctions are abolished & we are all made one in Him.

This beautiful picture James painted is good news. It is good news for those who don't have much of the world's goods.

***JAS 1:9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.***

The Living Bible v.9 says, "***A Christian who doesn't amount to much in this world should be glad, for he is great in the Lord's sight***."

It is also good news for those who do have much of the world's goods.

When life on this earth is ended & the material things are left behind, the wealthy Christian has something that will last, a relationship with Jesus Christ which will endure through all eternity.

James spoke in terms of two groups: the haves & the have-nots.

Both have problems, James says.

But both also have a position in Jesus Christ in which they can find peace, power, purpose, & fulfillment.

*Conclusion*

In this life we will face trials, its a fact, we are not immune from them, in fact we are told they will come our way. How can we triumph over our trials?

1. Thank God for them;

2. Ask God about them;

3. Honour God in them.

Amen.