



## Introduction:

What if someone gave you a spiritual thermometer to take your spiritual temperature? On a scale from one to ten, what would it be? A good spiritual thermometer to test our spiritual temperature is a tribulation or trial. Those events will quickly tell us how much we have matured in Christ. Trials have a way of revealing our faith and how deep it really is. If we respond with wisdom and maturity, tribulations can help in the development of our faith. In our text, which is found in James chapter 1, we find James writing to believing Jews who had been displaced by persecution (James 1:1; Acts 8:1). Although they had to flee their homes and places of comfort, James writes to encourage their faith during this troubling time. He wrote that it is still possible to have joy through tribulation (James 1:2). Paul made a similar statement in 2 Corinthians 7:4. As a believer, we must have a different perspective than the world's view of problems. We must view them through God's eyes, through His Word. As believers, we must remember that some of the greatest times to grow are through tribulations.

## The Focus:

- **Every believer can grow through the trials and tribulations of life. How?**
  - **By remembering and acting upon four key words:**
    - **Perfection**
    - **Prayer**
    - **Provision**
    - **Promise**

As we go through trials, it is not for nothing. In every tribulation, we are assured that God works all things together for good (Romans 8:28). The trials of earth are like a refiner's fire. As that which passes through the fire becomes purified, in a like manner, we become perfected. Describing the process of trials and tribulations, James tells us the reason for the tests – *"...that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* The word *"perfect"* means *"complete."* The trials those Jews faced developed their spiritual character. When we learn to patiently endure, waiting and relying on God, He does a work in us. This helps us to bring our focus back on God, and away from what we think we can do. Oftentimes, when we go about our days in the flesh, we think we can do it alone and that we don't need God (Job 21:14; 22:17; Romans 1:21). Our faith in God should cause us to lean on God. If we never go through trials, how will we grow in our maturity in the Lord? When we cease to grow, we become discontent, dissatisfied, unhappy, uneasy, and unthankful. And that is precisely the reason why God will never magically remove our problems or get us out of certain situations. God desires that we stand perfect and complete (Colossians 4:12). As well, He uses these life lessons to bring perfection or completeness to our everyday lives.

Difficult circumstances and dealing with challenging people have a way of driving us to our knees. In verse 5, we see that the seeking of God's wisdom in the midst of tribulation is through

prayer. As believers, we must understand that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) and the wisdom of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30) imputed to us, but we don't always manifest it. Instead, we lean upon the wisdom of the flesh (2 Corinthians 2:13) and the world (1 Corinthians 1:17-20; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:19). God has given all believers a high calling, and He desires that we speak His wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:7, 13) and walk in His wisdom (Colossians 4:5). The danger is when things are going well. When things are good, we tend to become prideful and think it was our wisdom that allowed everything to fall into place. The reality is that trials and tribulations have a way of knocking us down a few notches, driving us toward prayer, causing us to again lean on God's wisdom. God knows and desires that we pray with faith and total dependence upon God (vs. 6). If we never go through trials, the tendency is to not trust God, and we forget to depend upon Him. This approach is very dangerous, causing instability. God wants us to learn that when we pray, we can't waver between our will and God's will. Our total dependence and trust must be on Him (vs. 6). However, if we begin to waver between our will and God's will, if our life is not aligned with God's Word, we can't expect anything from God (vs. 7). As was stated, I ask again, what is the result of such an approach? It is instability (vs. 8). If we desire stability, it will be obtained through prayer.

As James continues, he transitions from a call to prayer to a warning to the rich. The verse he uses to transition this is James 1:8, *"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."* The Jews who fled were composed of the rich and poor. Both would have to recognize the source of their provision. James was encouraging these believers who lost everything. As God provides, we must be thankful to the Source of blessing (James 1:17; 2 Corinthians 9:12-13). Trials can benefit each us (the rich and the poor). They remind the poor man that he is rich in the Lord and can lose nothing (vs. 9). They remind the rich man that they'd better not live for riches or trust in them for joy and peace (vs. 11; 1 Timothy 6:17). When we're going through a tribulation, it causes us to remember the marvelous riches that God has provided in Christ (Ephesians 1:3, 7; 2:7; 3:8). As trials come, and we know they will because of the actions of mankind back in the garden (Genesis 3:6, 17-19), we must view them from God's perspective. He knows that they are for our spiritual growth and maturity. They should provoke us to lean on God as our Provider.

The last word brought out from this passage on temptation is "promise." If we patiently endure the tests in this life, we will progress in our perfection. Our life is increasingly perfected as we engage in prayer to the Almighty. As we align our life with His will and not ours, we increase in the wisdom of God, and that allows us to testify of His great grace and glory. Through trials, whether we have little or we have much, we all must arrive at the same conclusion – our hope is in the eternal, unfailing God. And if we do those things, we have a promise. James 1:12 says, *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."* What a glorious promise is given to those who endure temptation. Paul echoes this thought of endurance in this life. Paul informs us that our life isn't a bed of roses and that there may be persecutions and tribulations that we will endure, but it is all for a purpose (2 Thessalonians 1:4). He tells us why these things are – *"that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thessalonians 1:12). His grace is given to us for us

to extend His glory. As we embrace each situation by resting and relying on God, our faith grows.

### **Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:**

On Sunday, Pastor Dan gave us a lot of practical things for us to apply to our lives. As an aside to his second point on prayer, he referenced how every believer is complete in Christ. I think it beneficial to stop and focus our attention on some thoughts surrounding our position in Christ and our relationship to God.

According to Colossians 2:10, what is our status before God by being in Christ?

According to 1 Corinthians 1:30 and 2:16, what do we presently have that was given to us the moment that we trusted in Christ?

Paul informed us of the practice of one of his co-laborers in the ministry, when he said of Epaphras that he prayed the Colossian believers would “*stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*” (Colossians 4:12). Knowing that he prayed in this way, what does that mean about us in our relationship with God?

According to Paul, how can we ensure that our life is aligned with God’s will and that we are living a life that continues to remain perfect and complete (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)?

### **Application Questions:**

James was writing to believers after they had been persecuted and scattered abroad because of their faith in Christ (Acts 8:1; vs. 1). James is writing to encourage their hearts. He desired for them to understand that when trials come, it is cause for celebration. We are to rejoice in the fact that it is an opportunity to manifest what we have already learned from previous trials, but it also is another occasion to grow and mature in our faith (vs. 2-4). He also writes to encourage

them about coming through the trials by leaning on God. There is a reward for those who persevere through the trials having their faith fully in God (vs. 12).

According to James, what is the purpose of the trials and tests of life (vs. 3-4)? Knowing this, how should this change or affect our perspective on tribulations?

According to James, if we enter into a trial that brings about a new circumstance that is unfamiliar to us, what does he suggest we do (vs. 5)? Why is this important to remember to do when we find ourselves entering and going through a trial?

If we come to God humbly, seeking His wisdom, what does He promise us (vs 5)? But if we neglect to come to God, what should we expect (vs. 6-7)? How should this help us and others we minister to regarding trials and God's wisdom?

Regarding this life, what is the danger zone that we must recognize in order to keep God and His will central in our life (vs. 9-11)?

If we are to receive the reward God desires to give us, what must we do (vs. 12)? What does this look like in reality?

**Prayer:**

- Pray that as believers we would walk in the wisdom of God (Colossians 4:5).
- Pray that believers would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12).
- Pray that we would declare the wisdom of God before the lost (1 Corinthians 2:7, 13).
- Pray over the promises of God when you are in the midst of a trial (1 Corinthians 10:13).