

## The Four “P’s” of Tribulation James 1:1-12

### Introduction:

1. What is the purpose of a thermometer? It is used to take the temperature of something. What if someone gave you a **spiritual** thermometer to take your spiritual temperature (1 to 10)? Would it show you red hot, on fire for Jesus, cold and indifferent, or maybe lukewarm?
2. A good spiritual thermometer to test our spiritual temperature is a tribulation or trial. Those events will quickly tell us how far we have matured in Christ. Trials have a way of **revealing** our faith and how deep it really is.
3. But tribulations can also help in the development of our faith **if** we respond properly. We all know that problems are a built-in part of life here on planet earth, but God can bring great good out of our trials.
4. This is what our text is all about. Look at verse 1. James writes this letter to encourage many believing Jews (the 12 tribes) who had encountered persecution for their faith. Many were forced to abandon their homes and flee for their lives. They were displaced.
5. However, notice verse 2. James makes it clear that it is possible to still have joy **through** tribulation. Paul makes a similar remark in 2 Corinthians 7:4 (believe me - this doesn't happen by accident).
6. When encountering a tribulation, it is a great opportunity to grow as a believer.
7. I want to focus on four key words that hopefully will cause us all to view problems and tribulations with a little different perspective. They all start with the letter “P.”

### The first word is “perfection.” vs. 3-4

1. The word “perfect” in verse 4 means “complete.”
  - So God says, “I want you to be complete and entire, resting in satisfaction and contentment.” Remember the context. These people had been forced to abandon their homes and way of life.
2. Trials and tribulations can serve the purpose of developing spiritual character in our lives. We learn to patiently endure and rely on God. This does a work **in us**. This has a way of chipping away the pride and self-reliance we all are prone to have.

- We like to think that we can do it alone and that we don't need God. This is the flesh. When trials and problems come that we can't fix, we have to patiently endure. We have no choice but to look to God and lean on Him.
3. It is important to understand that positionally we are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). But Paul, in the same book, wrote that Epaphras was praying for the Colossian believers to “*stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*” **4:12** (See also, 2 Corinthians 13:9, 11; 2 Timothy 3:17)
  4. What does this teach us? We don't always **practice** our completeness in Christ in our daily walk. We grow discontent, dissatisfied, unhappy, uneasy, and unthankful. This is precisely why God is **not** going to wave a magic wand in heaven and make all our trials go away.
  5. God understands the value of suffering and trials. He wants us to fully grasp that we are complete in Christ and lean upon that which we've been given in Christ. He wants us to **stand** perfect and complete.
  6. As we go through trials and come out of them, we see more and more our completeness in Christ. We understand that we don't need outward circumstances or material things to make us happy. We've got it right inside of us.
    - God uses these life lessons to bring perfection or completeness to our everyday lives.

### The second word is “prayer.” vs. 5-8

1. Trials have a way of pushing us to prayer, don't they? God knows this. Notice verse 5 – we see that the seeking of God's wisdom in the midst of tribulation is through prayer.
2. Please understand, we **have** the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) and the wisdom of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30) imputed to us.
3. 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
4. We must remember, in Christ “*are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” **Colossians 2:3**
5. God wants us to speak His wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:7, 13) and **walk** in His wisdom (Colossians 4:5).
6. When things are good and everything is turning out right, the tendency is to start getting puffed up, thinking it's **our** wisdom that made all these wonderful things happen. Trials and problems have a

- way of knocking us down a few notches, getting us to pray and lean on God's wisdom again.
7. Bottom line, trials have a way of teaching us how to pray. Praying with faith and total dependence upon God (vs. 6). If we never go through trials, the tendency is to **not** trust God and forget to depend upon Him.
  8. 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
  9. When things are going well, we are tempted to start forcing our will in situations and even on God. We lay out the plan, then pray, and try to get God in on **our** plans.
    - When we start wavering between our will and God's will, we can't expect anything from God (vs. 7), but rather we just go around forcing our will in situations.
  10. What is the result? It is instability (vs. 8). God is not going to alleviate all the trials and tribulations in our lives. Why? They have a way of keeping us stable on our knees before Him.

### **The third word is "provision." vs. 9-11**

1. Here we have a warning to the rich. Who is rich? Anybody with more than us! James is encouraging these believers who lost everything.
2. Trials help us remember where our provision comes from.
  - God is the supplier of our needs. Philippians 4:19
  - Even though God may use people, our provision comes from God, and that's where our thanks belongs. 2 Corinthians 9:12-13
3. Trials and tribulations benefit both the rich and the poor.
  - They remind the poor man that he is rich in the Lord and can lose nothing.
  - They remind the rich man that they'd better not live for riches or trust in them for joy and peace.
4. 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

### **The fourth word is "promise." vs. 12**

1. What a glorious promise is given to those who endure temptation.  
vs. 12  
Notice the phrase, “*endureth temptation.*” Sometimes in the Christian life, we must endure. 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5
2. I love 1 Corinthians 10:13 – there are 5 promises concerning trials in this one verse.
  - You’re not the only one.
  - God is faithful.
  - God knows your limit.
  - There will be a way of escape.
  - God will give us strength.
3. Trials cause us (hopefully) to focus on God’s promises and stand upon them. When we do this, our faith grows.