

When There's Joy in Falling. (Really!)

James 1:1-4

I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is now speaking.

A.W. Tozer

A Little About James...

He's known as James _____

He's the _____ of the Lord

James wasn't a believer until _____

After he came to faith, he became _____

He's a great example of the Gospel's power to _____

When did James write? _____

When/How did James die? _____

The blessing of James

James is eminently _____

It's a book that will help you _____

AND in the in the way you _____

James 1:1-4 (NIV 1984)

1James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. 2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Verse 1: One of the things I love about James is that there's no pretentiousness to it. It's written to a group of everyday people just like you and me whose recent history had been on the tough side.

What's the reference to the 12 tribes? They're _____

Because of their faith in Jesus Christ they'd been persecuted and scattered abroad by Saul and Herod Agrippa.

The Greek word for "scattered" is *diaspora*, meaning _____

Think of what a powerful illustration that is of God's ability to work all things together for good: though the Church suffered persecution at the hands of evil men, through its "scattering," the seeds of the Gospel were sown throughout the world — and more people came to know Jesus Christ as a result!

As James's audience settled into new areas and tried to make sense of their altered way of life, he wrote to encourage them and to remind them of who they were in their Savior.

We see that come into focus immediately as we move into verse 2.

Verse 2: Though it's a simple verse with only 13 words (and not even a complete sentence!), the implications here for you and me can be life-changing. To get the most out of it, let's break it down into three parts:

1) _____ pure joy...

Did you know that the nature of your attitude is important when it comes to facing trials? The Greek word for trial means trouble; something that breaks the normal pattern of your life and trips you up.

God calls us to be joyful in the midst of trials because regardless of their shape or size, His promise is to strengthen and mature us as we go through them. And frankly, a lousy attitude will only make things worse...so why not choose joy?

As a child of God, you have the _____ to make that decision. That's important to know, especially as we consider the next phrase:

2) _____ you face (encounter, meet, experience...**fall into**) trials...

Make no mistake: trials will come in life. It's not a matter of if, but when. We live in a fallen world where brokenness is part and parcel of our existence, and when you think about that truth, it's all the more reason to have a game plan for when those trials come along.

How are you doing in that respect? Do hard times throw you into angst and despair, or do they generate a measured response grounded on faith in the promises of God?

3) ...Of _____

Regardless of the kind of trial you encounter, God knows how to lead you through it. Jesus, you'll remember, was tempted and tested in every way that we experience ourselves, yet was without sin. He endured trials and temptation of all kinds and beat them. He is with you, and He has promised to use your trial as a way to strengthen you and build you up. That's showcased for us in the next verse:

Verse 3: Because you _____ that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

When we talk about testing in this verse, once again the Greek is helpful: testing is best translated as proof, or proving. As trials come, they give proof to the power of God in our lives because He helps us in our time of need. In turn, we learn to persevere, trusting that He will work the circumstances of our trial for our good.

Verse 4: Perseverance must finish its work. What work?

A) _____ B) _____ C) _____

The Greek phrase: " _____ "

God's ultimate plan in His relationship with you is to bring you to a place of wholeness and completeness, where nothing is missing...to bring you to a place where you enjoy an ever greater trust in your Lord Jesus Christ. It's a work that is ongoing and never stops.

Here's a trustworthy saying: The love of God in Christ and the power of His indwelling Spirit in your life will never stop the work of making you "in all the parts whole."

Sometimes, and sometimes especially so, that work is done through the pain of trials in your life...

And that's _____!

Remember: _____

Wrapping Up

Think about the trials you're facing right now.

Has tonight's time in the Scriptures prompted you to reevaluate the way you look at them?

How does God's promise to mature and strengthen you through your trials change your perspective on them?

Finally, what trial do you especially need to share with your heavenly Father in this moment?

Closing Prayer