

CONTENTS

Publisher's Note	7
Introduction	9
1. Growing Through Testings (1:1–12)	15
2. Admitting the True Source of Temptations (1:13–18)	33
3. Using the Word for Spiritual Maturing (1:19–27)	45
4. Accepting Others Without Partiality (2:1–13)	59
5. Exhibiting a Productive Faith (2:14–26)	73
6. Controlling the Tongue (3:1–12)	85
7. Demonstrating Godly Wisdom (3:13–18)	97
8. Giving God First Priority (4:1–10)	107
9. Avoiding Presumptuous Behavior (4:11–17)	123
10. Enduring Wrongful Oppression (5:1–11)	133
11. Concluding Counsel (5:12–20)	147
Bibliography	163
Notes	165

GROWING THROUGH TESTINGS

1:1–12

James begins his letter with the customary New Testament practice of a three-part salutation: the author, the recipient, and the greeting. Any or all three of those parts could be expanded to suit the particular needs of the author. James amplifies the first two members, but the third part contains the single word “greetings.”

James could have identified himself as the Lord’s brother (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19), or by his ecclesiastic position as the leader of the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:12); but he chose rather to portray himself as “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” His brother Jude also designated himself a “bond-servant” (Jude 1), as did Paul (Titus 1:1), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), and John (Rev. 1:1). For the Christian to be a bond servant or slave portrays not the inhumane, forced, involuntary submission so often the case in human slavery, but rather a willing submission and obedience to the service of Jesus Christ the Lord (Rom. 6:16–23). James recognized that he had been purchased and that he was now a bond servant to the one who had purchased him (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18–19). To

be a slave of God is not degrading; it is a high privilege.

James saw himself as “a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” In characteristic New Testament style, the Father and the Son are named together in the salutation (Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1). That is not the proverbial serving of two masters (Matt. 6:24), for the two are one (John 10:30), and to serve the one is to serve the other (John 5:17; 9:4; 17:4). James, an avid monotheist (2:19), here subtly affirms his belief in the Trinity and reminds his Jewish readers that Jesus the Messiah must be served equally with the Lord God. The full title (“Lord Jesus Christ”) conveys many things about Jesus. To the Jewish reader, the ascription “Lord” would signify deity, for in the Old Testament *Yahweh* is translated by the term “LORD” (Ex. 6:2–3; Gr. *kurios*). Several Old Testament quotations that contain the name *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*) are applied directly to Christ in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 10:9, 13 with Joel 2:32; and 1 Peter 3:14–15 with Isa. 8:12–13). The title *Lord* also denoted sovereignty. Christ is to be both worshiped and served. The name *Jesus* is equivalent to the Old Testament name *Joshua*, meaning “savior.” To Joseph the angel said, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). That is the name given Him at the incarnation, and it speaks of His humanity. *Christ* is the Greek term for the Hebrew word *Messiah* (John 1:41; 4:25). As such, Jesus is the “Anointed One,” the one who fulfills the messianic prophecies (Ps. 2:2; Dan. 9:25). He is the long-expected deliverer, the one who is to establish the Davidic kingdom. It is interesting that only here and in 2:1 does James employ the compound title. Elsewhere he simply uses “Lord.”

Two things are said about the recipients of this letter: they are of the twelve tribes, and they are in the Dispersion. The twelve tribes represent the whole physical seed of Jacob, both the north-

ern and the southern kingdoms. The northern tribes of Israel were dispersed after the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC (2 Kings 18:9–12), and the southern kingdom was carried into Babylonian captivity in stages, between 605 and 586 BC (2 Kings 24–25). Under Cyrus, king of Persia, many Jews returned and joined with the remnant that remained in the land (2 Chron. 36:22–23). In New Testament times there were two groups of Israelites: Jews living in Palestine and Jews living throughout the Roman Empire, sometimes called Hellenists. The epithet “the Dispersion” refers to those Jews who were scattered like grain throughout the world. In addition to the scattering because of conquests, Jews had migrated to the four corners of the earth for commercial and other reasons. Luke indicates that at Pentecost there were Jewish people of the Dispersion from “every nation under heaven” who had come to Jerusalem for the feast (Acts 2:5).

It is not certain whether James was writing to the entire Dispersion or to a limited segment of it. Because he has certain subjects in mind and is addressing definite issues, it seems that he is writing to a specific group, perhaps certain Christian Jews living outside of Palestine but still within the province of Syria.

This brief salutation closes with the simple “greetings” (lit., “to rejoice, to be glad”). It was used in the letter of the Jerusalem Council, a document probably written primarily by James (Acts 15:23), and in the letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix (Acts 23:26). The greeting “to rejoice” prepares the reader for the discussion of joy and trials that immediately follows.

Following his brief salutation, James plunges immediately into the subject of trials, counseling his readers to count it all joy when encountering them. James follows with four reasons they should rejoice: trials properly faced develop maturity (1:2–4); trials drive us to God (1:5–8); trials force us to make a proper

evaluation of life (1:9–11); and the endurance of trials brings the crown of life (1:12).

TRIALS PROPERLY FACED DEVELOP MATURITY, 1:2–4

The readers were facing difficulties of such magnitude that their faith was being tested. James counseled them to “consider it all joy” when confronting trials. In like manner Peter exhorted his readers, who were being “distressed by various trials,” to “greatly rejoice” (1 Peter 1:6). Neither James nor Peter defined the nature of those trials, but it can be assumed that they were both external pressures, such as afflictions and persecutions, and the annoyances and griefs of everyday life. Contrary to the natural fleshly response to difficulties, these Christians were challenged to consider such experiences as a basis for all joy. That joy is not to be confused with a happiness or pleasure that is dependent on outward circumstances. Rather, Christian joy is, as Adamson says, “a man’s pleasure in his (*and his brothers*)’ progress toward Christian salvation.”¹ “Consider” means careful, deliberate judgment. The readers are encouraged to evaluate carefully their trials, knowing that from negative experiences Christian growth can take place. For that reason they can rejoice in the face of hardships.

“All joy,” in the emphatic position, forms an interesting bridge to the salutation. Having just written “greetings,” or “to rejoice” (*chairein*), James challenged his readers to assess their various trials as a basis for joy (*charan*). “All” joy speaks of pure joy, unmixed joy, joy to the highest. Perhaps James used “all joy” as a balance or counterpart to “various trials.” Christian joy can be as intense and pure as trials can be varied.

The term translated “trials” (*peirasmm*) is a word of considerable breadth. It is used both of adversities that plague man within

and without and of inner enticements to sin. Often those two meanings, “trials” and “temptations,” are closely related. What God permits as a test to develop character in His child, Satan or the flesh may use as a temptation. No doubt when God tested Abraham by commanding him to offer his son (Gen. 22:1–2), Satan tempted him not to obey God’s command. It is interesting that God used the evil designs of Satan against righteous Job to build Job’s character. “Various trials” are permitted by God to develop character, though the flesh may use those same problems as a temptation or enticement to sin (1:13). When trials come, the believer will react in one of two ways: he will either grow in Christian character or he will become embittered, rebellious, and hard-hearted. James assumes the best of his readers (cf. Heb. 6:9) and exhorts them to rejoice because character development will come.

Fifteen times in this short epistle James addresses his readers as “my brethren” or “brethren.” He sees them as fellow members in the spiritual family of faith, not merely fellow Israelites. From the start, James seeks to identify with them as a brother in their sufferings. By being genuinely concerned about them in their trials and gaining credibility as a caring family member, he will later be able to rebuke them severely in certain problem areas, such as partiality (2:1–13), lifeless faith (2:14–26), uncontrolled speech (3:1–12), and dissensions in the body (4:1–6).

Those varied trials are not to be understood as troubles of one’s own making, but rather those of an unavoidable nature. They are trials into which believers fall. Also, it is not an issue of “if they come,” but rather “*when* they come.” Paul reminds us that those who desire to be godly will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

It is easier to understand having joy follow sorrow than having joy during the difficulty. In Scripture, we read both of rejoicing after calamity and during calamity. Christ told His disciples

that as joy follows the sorrows of childbirth, so also the disciples' sorrow would be turned to joy when they saw Him again (John 16:20-22). Of Jesus it is written, "who for the joy set before Him [He] endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2). And the disciples rejoiced "that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). Here also the reader is commanded to consider trials as a basis for joy.

A reason for the joy is that the trials that test the believer's faith will produce endurance (v. 3), which in turn will develop Christian maturity (v. 4). "Knowing" suggests that the readers were not ignorant of that truth, but in times of difficulty they needed to be reminded again that hardships produce character. The "testing" of faith can be understood in one of two ways. It may mean the approved part of faith, hence the genuine part, that part of faith that has passed the test. The idea would be that that which is genuine in faith will produce patience. On the other hand, it may speak of the means of testing: trials are a means or an instrument whereby faith is tested; they cleanse and purify faith. The context seems to argue for the second position. Faith is tested by trials.

Throughout the epistle, James has much to say about a living, vibrant faith. For one thing, genuine faith does not evaporate in the face of difficulties. Meeting obstacles and overcoming them proves the genuineness of faith and molds character. That developing character or virtue is called "endurance." The testing of faith "produces endurance." The present tense indicates a continuous action. "Endurance," or "patience" as it is sometimes translated, is more than passive endurance and quiet submission. It is, rather, that active steadfastness and staying power that confronts difficulties and continues on in faith with purpose and resolve. James uses the same term to describe the character of Job (5:11). His "endurance" allowed him to say, "The LORD gave and the LORD

has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21), and, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” (Job 2:10). The verb form of the word is also used in 1:12: “Blessed is the man who *perseveres* under trial” (italics added).

But endurance or steadfastness is not the end result; it is, rather, an important step toward Christian maturity (v. 4). The readers are challenged to allow steadfastness to have its perfect result. That “perfect result” can be understood in one of two ways. It may mean the development of perfect endurance or the development of perfect character. The second meaning is more appropriate; perfect endurance should result in perfect character. “Result” is the noun form of the verb “produce” (v. 3). As testing produces endurance, so endurance should have its product. The adjective “perfect” is used five times by James (twice here; 1:17, 25; 3:2). It speaks of completeness, maturity, full-grown, brought to its end, finished. Impatience, complaining, or bitterness would not be a “perfect” result. The command is in the present tense, indicating continuous and progressive action. The purposes for testing are being accomplished as we remain steadfast.

The outcome of a proper attitude toward trials is threefold, two positives and one negative: “that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” Paul writes that “tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (Rom. 5:3–4). “Perfect” and “complete” are in some ways synonymous, but are not without their individual shades of meaning. To be “perfect” means to be mature, fully developed. In this setting it could not mean absolute perfection; rather, it is that goal of full development to which every Christian should aspire. It is adulthood as opposed to childhood. The writer to the Hebrews urges his readers to “press on to maturity [perfection]” (Heb. 6:1).

The second term, “complete,” means entire, every part intact. Every part of the Christian character is being developed. In the growth and maturation of the physical body, normal growth means that every individual part of the body is growing to its mature size. So in the development of the spiritual person, every aspect of the spiritual life, in all its parts, must mature. As in the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit, one will not have one virtue without the other eight (Gal. 5:22–23).

Not only will the one who endures testing be perfect and complete, he will also be “lacking in nothing.” To lack is the exact opposite of being complete. All areas of the personality need to grow, and these testings will provide a means whereby growth will take place. No area in Christian development will be in want.

The Christian’s approach to difficulties is the opposite of the world’s. The Christian considers them joy: “For those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb. 12:6), and, “every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2). The one who wants to be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” must endure, being steadfast, in the face of testing.

TRIALS DRIVE US TO GOD, 1:5-8

As the believer encounters trials, he will not always know how to react to them and will need wisdom from above. Wisdom is important in the maturing process of the individual. It could be an area where there is incompleteness. That lack can be met by believing, unwavering prayer to a God who freely gives.

“Lacks” provides the bridge from the previous verse’s “lacking in nothing.” The repetition of a word or its cognate to introduce a new thought or a progression of thoughts is characteristic of James’s style. The technique is used several times in the immedi-

ate context: “greetings” (v. 1, *chairein*) and “joy” (v. 2, *charan*); “endurance” (v. 3) and “endurance” (v. 4); “lacking” (v. 4) and “lacks” (v. 5); “ask” (v. 5) and “ask” (v. 6); and “doubting” (v. 6) and “doubts” (v. 6). That same linguistic style, called *paronomasia*, occurs also in 1:12–15; 21–25; 3:2–8; and 4:1–3.

The lack James addresses here is wisdom. He assumes it as a real need. Verse 5 could be translated, “If any of you lacks wisdom, and he does, let him ask of God.” “Wisdom” is a key word with James. It occurs again in 3:13, 15, and 17. To James “wisdom is ‘the principal thing,’ to which he gives the same prominence as St. Paul to faith, St. John to love, St. Peter to hope.”² For the Christian, wisdom is more than the ability to follow obtuse arguments, to know a series of facts, or to have mental sagacity. It is rather keen spiritual discernment, which enables the believer to make correct moral judgments and face life with its trials in a way consistent with the revealed will of God. Solomon wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). For the Christian, wisdom starts with an acknowledgment of God and a readiness to perform His will. Such wisdom will be in conflict with the wisdom of this world, for the world’s wisdom is “earthly, natural, demonic” (3:15).

The wisdom from above is God’s gift to man, not an accomplishment of human ingenuity or skill. The child of God who senses a lack of and need for wisdom is commanded to express his need to God. The believer has the Scriptures, but he needs the constant illumination of the Scripture that only God can give. “Ask” is in the present tense, meaning “keep on asking.” The same form is used in Matthew 7:7, “Ask [keep on asking], and it will be given to you.” The parable of the importunate widow was given to teach believers “that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1).

The one who seeks wisdom asks of “God, who gives.” “Gives” is a participle with the definite article, and it may relate to “God” in one of two ways. It may be used in apposition, “God, the one who gives,” or it may be “the giving God.” The second meaning implies that giving is part of the nature of God. The present tense of the participle suggests that our God is continually giving. As we are to be continually asking, He is continually giving. The Christian can be assured, though, that whatever the need—wisdom or otherwise—our God is a perpetually giving God. “It is this view of the nature of God which encourages the believer to come boldly to God with his requests.”³

The extent of His giving is “to all,” and the manner is “generously and without reproach.” God’s common grace, like rain and fruitful seasons (Acts 14:17), is for all mankind, but James is addressing not all mankind, but Christians. It is to Christians who ask that God grants the request. The “all” is limited to all who ask. The manner in which it is granted is expressed in a positive and a negative form, “generously and without reproach.” “Generously” has been variously interpreted. It may mean to give simply; to give with a single motive. In that sense God gives out of the single and pure motive of aiding the asker. He does not have secondary or ulterior motives. Or it may mean that God gives without restraint; He gives abundantly and liberally. Both concepts are true. God gives to all generously and He gives wholeheartedly.

Further, God not only gives abundantly, He also gives “without reproach.” Gifts can lose their joy if with them come rebuke, embarrassment, and humiliation. The believer is not continually scolded for misusing a previous gift, nor is the gift given in such a grudging way that one is embarrassed to accept it. God does not humiliate us for our continual lack of adequately or properly using the wisdom He provides. When we ask, He stands ready to

help us again and again. There is no end to His mercy. That does not provide an excuse for negligence or failure to appropriate His grace, but it should encourage us constantly to seek the Lord for wisdom and His other gifts.

The request, though, must be made in faith (v. 6). Faith, for James, is not just a belief in the existence of God. That even the demons confess (2:19). Nor is it merely a body of doctrine. It is a deep conviction that God “is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6), coupled with an acknowledgment of our need for help. We must believe not only in God’s ability to respond to our petition, but also His willingness to do so in conformity to His nature and will. The present imperative “ask” suggests perseverance in prayer. This exhortation on prayer is reminiscent of the teachings of Christ: we are to ask (Matt. 7:7), in faith (Mark 11:24), with perseverance (Luke 18:1-8).

The antithesis to faith is doubt; we are to ask “without any doubting.” “Doubting” speaks not of uncertainty but of internal indecision. It is wavering between two competing desires: self-interests and God’s interests. That doubting suggests a reluctance to commit oneself wholly to God’s care. The same expression was used by the Spirit when He commanded Peter to go visit Cornelius: “Get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings” (Acts 10:20). One may doubt because he is not fully assured that God will respond, or because he is not sure he wants God to answer.

The doubting petitioner is pictured as the unsettled, unstable waves of the sea. The simile is that of a violent, wind-driven, turbulent storm out in the ocean. That is in vivid contrast to the individual resting securely by faith in the Lord. The two participles, “driven” and “tossed,” are in the present tense, suggesting continuous agitation. The passive voice suggests an outside force.

Doubters lack the inner stability to withstand external forces; therefore they are in constant turmoil and indecision.

Not only does the doubter lack stability, he also disqualifies himself from being a recipient of God's special favor (v. 7). He should not imagine that anything different should be the case. By the use of the demonstrative pronoun, "*that* man," James places himself at a distance from such a one. It has a somewhat disdainful savor. The Greek negative implies that that man should stop "entertaining any thought of receiving an answer to his prayer."⁴ "The Lord" could have reference to Christ or to God the Father. "Lord" is a title for Christ in verse 1, but here the nearer context of "God" (v. 5) would argue that "Lord" refers to God the Father.

Translations of verse 8 vary. In the original there is no verb expressed, so some translations add the verb "is," whereas others make the whole verse appositional to "that man." If the verb is supplied, it may read, "Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do" (NIV), or, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (KJV). If it is used appositionally, it would simply follow verse 7, "a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways" (ASV), or, "being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (NASB). The ASV retains the terseness characteristic of James and perhaps reflects most accurately the meaning. It is a further description of that man who lacks faith and conviction in prayer.

"Double-minded" is literally "two-souled," almost as if the man has two personalities in constant conflict with each other. That term is used only here and in 4:8 in the New Testament; perhaps it is a word coined by James. He may have had Psalm 12:2, "with a double heart they speak," in mind. For the Christian, divided loyalty is inappropriate; there must be a singleness of mind. Jesus warned, "No one can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt. 6:24). In the New Testa-

ment the word translated “unstable” occurs only here and in 3:8 (“restless”). Double-mindedness will express itself in unstableness in every area of life, not only in prayer. True Christianity affects every part of our existence. Single-mindedness gives one confidence in prayer and direction in life.

TRIALS FORCE US TO MAKE A PROPER EVALUATION OF LIFE, 1:9–11

The connection between this paragraph and the preceding is along two lines. There is an easy tie between “glory” (v. 9) and “joy” (v. 2). Just as the Christian is to rejoice in the face of trials, knowing the personal benefits that will come, so also he has grounds to glory. There is also a close relationship between the “double-minded man” (v. 8) and the “rich man” (v. 10). As the double-minded man has divided loyalties, so the rich man is torn between his submission to God and his love for earthly possessions. Double-mindedness and instability prevent joyous confidence in God, and keeping an eye on worldly benefits tends to cloud the greatness and glory of our spiritual condition in Christ.

Both rich and poor are found in the church, but neither wealth nor poverty is a determining factor in spirituality. The church is a fellowship of believers from all walks of life and levels of society. We are all equal in Christ. The believer’s attitude toward wealth will say much about his spirituality.

The man of humble circumstances is called a “brother” (v. 9). That subtlety reminds us that the church is a family. In a family, there is a basic equality among the members, even though there may be differences in such areas as aptitude, abilities, and resources. The early church was filled with poor people (Acts 2:45; 4:35; 1 Cor. 1:26–28) and slaves (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22), who in the eyes of the world were nobodies. But they should not resent their

position, for in Christ they have been exalted to a “high position.” That does not mean the brother has become physically rich, but rather that he is spiritually well off. He is a prince.

The word translated “glory” is usually translated as “boast.” It can be used in both a good and a bad sense. It can convey the idea of self-congratulation and arrogance, a bragging about what one is or has achieved. In the good sense, the believer should boast not in himself, but in God (Rom. 5:11; 1 Cor. 1:31), in the cross (Gal. 6:14), in the hope of salvation (Rom. 5:2), and in tribulation and weaknesses because of what God can do through them (Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 12:9). A downcast, insecure, threatened Christian is not the norm. A believer can be justly proud and hold his head high because of his position. Though his outward social status may be viewed with contempt by the world, the poverty-stricken believer can rejoice in his spiritual status, which is based in his relationship to Christ.

The sentence continues with a consideration of the rich man (v. 10). Some feel that the rich man is an unbeliever because of what James says in verse 11, and what he says about the rich in 2:5-7 and 5:1-6. But the oppressive rich mentioned in 2:5-7 and 5:1-6 are not necessarily to be equated with the “rich man” here. In these verses James merely contrasts the rich Christian with the poor Christian. The parallel construction of the two verses indicates that both the noun “brother” and the verb “glory” go with both individuals. Wealth has its dangers (Matt. 19:23; Luke 18:22-27), but it can be used properly and beneficially (Acts 4:37; 11:29; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; 1 John 3:17). Rich Christians can be a blessing to the church, but they must have the right inner attitude toward wealth. The humiliation of the rich man is figurative, indicating an attitude of heart. As the poor man is spiritually elevated, so the rich man is spiritually humbled. His former pride in wealth is

shattered as he realizes its true worth. Lenski writes, “As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches.”⁵ James follows with the general truth applicable to all who put their trust in riches: the fleeting, transitory nature of human existence. He quotes from Isaiah 40:6–7 to emphasize that physical life is brief in contrast to more lasting spiritual values. Paul fully recognized that reality when he wrote of his experience, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8; cf. Jer. 9:23–24).

The imagery used for the brevity of life is the “flowering grass,” a frequent figure in Scripture (Ps. 90:5–6; Isa. 51:12). Four verbs—“rises,” “withers,” “falls off,” “is destroyed”—describe the rapid demise of the flowering grass when the hot desert wind, the *sirocco*, blows on it (v. 11). The grassy hillside with all the wild flowers can be a sight of immense simple beauty, but the sudden dry desert wind blowing from the Negev will almost instantaneously reduce the vegetation from its former glory to withered grass and blowing petals. In like manner, the rich man will fade away.

The verse ends in a similar way to the ending of verse 10. But here the added emphasis is on the rich man “in the midst of his pursuits.” “Pursuits” may refer to literal travel, or it may have the metaphorical meaning of “business.” The idea seems to be that the rich man will pass away in the midst of his restless business pursuits. Physical death will overtake him as he chases the elusive dollar.

THE ENDURANCE OF TRIALS BRINGS THE CROWN OF LIFE, 1:12

James now draws a fitting conclusion to what he has said about trials. It also serves as an introduction to what follows. Because

“trial” (*peirasmon*; cf. v. 2) may mean either trial in the sense of an adversity or affliction, or temptation in the sense of enticement to sin, the reader is left to decide which of the two James meant. Is it the one who endures temptation that is blessed? Or is it the one who endures adversity? This verse seems to provide a bridge between those two meanings. The trials faced (v. 2) can actually become a temptation (v.13). The believer can endure trial, come forth victorious, not yielding to the temptations of the flesh that spring forth in time of adversity. God always provides an avenue of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

“Blessed,” meaning “happy,” is the same word used in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3–11; cf. Luke 6:20–23). It denotes an inner quality of life, a peace, contentment, or satisfaction that can be sustained in spite of adverse external difficulties. It is not so much an emotional feeling of happiness as it is a state of blessedness experienced in this life by citizens of God’s kingdom and to be more fully realized in the future life. That blessedness comes not in freedom from trials, but rather through the endurance of testings. “Persevere” carries the idea of endurance, to hold up under pressure, to be steadfast, to stand firm. The noun form of the verb is used in verses 3 and 4. The believer is to consider it joy when he encounters trials because of the resultant endurance produced (v. 3); now he is said to be blessed when he endures. The results of endurance in the earlier verses are spiritual growth and maturity in the present life.

“Approved” was the term used for the testing of coins when determining their genuineness (the noun form is used in v. 3). The aorist participle suggests that the test is over and the person has been demonstrated to be a genuine believer. As the believer steadfastly endures each trial and temptation that comes his way, there is increased proof of his faithfulness to God and the genuineness of his character.

The crown of life is the reward. The Bible often speaks of rewards to be received at the end of this life. Of the persecuted Jesus said, "Your reward in heaven is great" (Matt. 5:12). Paul speaks of one's reward as being in accordance with one's work (1 Cor. 3:14). Often the reward is expressed as a victor's crown or trophy, an award that would come to the winner of an athletic event (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4; Rev. 2:10). The trophy mentioned in this context is the crown or trophy of life. "Life" is appositional, in other words, the crown that is life. It also has the article, the crown of *the* life, indicating the eternal life that awaits the believer.

That crown that is eternal life has been promised to those who love Him. The name "Lord" is not in the original, though it is self-evident that James has the Lord in mind as the one who made the promise. There are many biblical promises of life in Scripture, but this specific promise is noted elsewhere in Scripture only in Revelation 2:10. James may have had reference to the general tenor of Scripture, or perhaps he had in mind a saying of Jesus not recorded in the gospel accounts (cf. Acts 20:35). Eternal life is assured, for it is "promised." The God who cannot lie has given His word. He cannot be unfaithful to His promise (2 Tim. 2:13; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). It is "those who love Him" who are the recipients of this promise of life. That is a frequent designation of the people of God; of the Old Testament saints (Ex. 20:6; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 145:20) and the New Testament believers (Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9). Implicit in the concept of love is obedience. To love God is to obey Him (1 John 2:5–6; 5:3). The Christian who is undergoing difficult times can rejoice on two counts; in the present life he is being perfected, and for the future he has the promise of life.