

Jas05 – Faith Proven Genuine James 1:12

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Open your Bibles. Turn them to James. Title of the message, “Faith Proven Genuine.” All week I was meditating on the section of verses 12-15, planning to teach on this section all the way to verse 15. However, when I sat down to write yesterday I could not get past verse 12. Could not do it. Couldn’t even start writing about verse 13. So, will you settle in and take one more good hard look at what God actually says about our trials, through James?

James 1 verse 12 is a summary verse of everything that we’ve learned since verse 2 and I was going to summarize what we’ve been studying about trials and move right on to the next section. But I just couldn’t do it. It’s too big a subject.

Trials – for Christians today – is too big a subject. We must handle it as clearly as we possibly can. It’s partly because there is huge false teaching about trials in a Christian’s life. Such as, if your faith is strong enough, or if you send the televangelist enough money you won’t have any trials. That’s heresy. That false teaching plays right into our sinful, human logic. This is what causes so many church “attenders” to question God. “God why have you done this to me? God why haven’t you fixed this? I’ve attended church three times this year. And you still haven’t fixed my problems.” This is the sinful human logic which causes so man to question God when they find themselves in a trial. Because they really believe God’s biggest job is to fix their circumstances, they thought that is what they signed up for. We will deal more specifically with questioning God next message.

This message we are going to see that *our trials are the number one way that our faith is proven genuine.*

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, we need to receive your word. Living, powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, but only if we’ll receive it. We open ourselves up to you, Lord, and say, “Speak. Word of God, speak.” We want to hear you, Lord. We want to crucify our life, our preconceived notions, our desires, our sinful leanings and we want to receive your word. We want to receive it for life today. We pray you would do it, Lord, in Jesus’ name we pray, amen.*

James 1 verse 12 is a summary of all James has taught since verse 2. So we’re going to point back to what we’ve learned so far. But it is also a stand alone, powerhouse life changing promise from God. It is also a strong challenge to all who claim faith in Jesus Christ. It is one of the strongest challenges in the book of James, which is why I could not

gloss over it as a summary. If you claim to have faith in Jesus Christ, I want to show you today how James says that faith is proven to be genuine.

James 1:12 (ESV)

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Who senses the power in that verse? C'mon. That is a powerful verse. Let's break it down into five parts, to help grasp the importance.

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial . . .

Back in verse 2 of James we said that to “count it all joy” was to make a deliberate decision to choose joy in the midst of your trials, to believe that you are blessed, truly blessed, in the midst of any trial. And James goes back to that same thought here in verse 12. In verses 2 and 3, James says you can choose joy - ***knowing the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.***

Here, James says ***Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.***

James borrows “blessed is” from the Beatitudes of his half-brother, Jesus, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Last message we talked about “A Paradox of Perspective” and we said a paradox is “a statement that seems contradictory, yet is true.” Jesus was even more paradoxical in the Sermon on the Mount. From Matthew chapter 5 we read:

Blessed are the poor in spirit

Blessed are those who mourn

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake

Blessed are you when others revile you

James says ***Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial***

In Christ we are blessed right in the midst of our trials and even because of our trials. Blessed is sometimes translated “happy” (Oh how happy), but happy sells the word short because we associate happy with good circumstances. But God's blessing is so much more than just being happy in our circumstances.

Being blessed is receiving God's favor. It's an inner joy and contentment only the Lord can provide. It's the Lord smiling on us in a way that makes our life right, no matter what our circumstances are. And here James say (specifically) ***BLESSED is the person who REMAINS STEADFAST under trial***

Other translations say:

“Blessed is the one who PERSEVERES under trial”

“Blessed is the one who CONTINUES STRONG under trials”

“Blessed is the one who REMAINS FAITHFUL under trials”

The person who remains steadfast, perseveres, continues strong, remains faithful... that person receives God’s favor. That person receives an inner joy and contentment that only the Lord can give... the person is blessed. That is the person who can expect supernatural joy, contentment and God’s favor upon their lives.

Let’s see why that person is blessed. Continuing in verse 12:

James 1:12

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test

...

This may be the most important part of this verse to understand. Again, back up in verses 3 and 4 we read: *the testing of our faith produces steadfastness . . . and when steadfastness has its full effect . . . we will be perfect (mature) and complete*

Verse 4 says *When Steadfastness has its FULL EFFECT*

Verse 12 says *When you have STOOD THE TEST*

What does that mean? When you have stood the test? It’s one word in the Greek: **DOKIMOS**. It means literally, “proven by testing” or “proven as genuine,” as in not counterfeit. This is why our title today is “Faith Proven Genuine” because that is what this word means. It’s a word used for the testing of precious metals. As in, when the fire is turned up and you see if the gold is really gold. This is testing, as in refining by fire. As fire tests and refines gold, so trials test and refine our faith.

The most dramatic use of this word is in 1 Peter 1:6-7. We’ve read it before in the study of trials, but let’s read it again.

1 Peter 1:6–7 (NLT)

6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.

7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

Do you think your faith can be proven genuine without the refiner's fire of trials in your life? Have you ever met someone who has a "Praise the Lord" faith – right up until the going gets rough? And when the going gets rough, they get right on to something else. For that person, the trial proved (to them) that their faith was counterfeit. 1 Peter 1:7 says ***Our trials SHOW that our Faith is GENUINE***

When we remain steadfast in our trials.

When we have stood the test of going through our trials.

True faith does not get us around or over or under our trials. True faith does not skirt trials, does not justify or rationalize "running away" from trials. True faith carried us tight through the middle of our trials.

My dad flies private planes and I was flying with him back into San Diego one time, and a pretty serious storm developed between us and the airport. It was too high to fly over, too low to fly under and too wide to fly around. And he said "Guys, we're gonna have to fly straight through this storm. So tighten up your seatbelts and let's pray." Have you ever said that? "We're going to have to fly straight through this storm, so tighten up your seat belts and let's pray."

When we pass through our trials with our faith intact, not only is it a testimony of the genuineness of our faith, but it strengthens and matures us for our good and God's glory.

Commenting on Paul's thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12:9 Charles Spurgeon says this:

Charles Spurgeon:

God's grace is illustrated and magnified in the poverty and trials of believers. . . The patience of the saints [in trials] proves the power of divine grace. If then, yours be a much-tried path, rejoice in it, because you will the better show forth the all-sufficient grace of God.

There is a life in God that is of eternally higher value than simply avoiding trials. There is a reward from God that is of eternally higher value than him just fixing your circumstance. We see that reward; we see that life as we continue in James 1:12.

James 1:12 (ESV)

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life . . .

The word used for crown here is the victor's crown as opposed to a royal crown. It's the word Paul uses when he compares the effort of an athlete to the effort a Christian should be putting into their life. And he says in 1 Corinthians 9:25 (comparing)

1 COR 9:25 (NKJV)

25 . . . they (athletes) do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

The crown is the reward at the end of the race and James is doing all he can to encourage believers to hold on to our faith in the midst of our trials with eyes firmly set on receiving God's promised reward.

Is it worth it?

When a spouse is unfaithful and abandons a marriage, is faith in Christ still worth holding on to? When financial ruin comes, is Jesus still worth trusting? When health is declining, is Jesus still worth loving? When the life of a loved one is lost, is Jesus still worth serving? If you and I lose everything else, is Jesus Christ still worth honoring? Is the crown of life worth remaining steadfast in your faith? Yes. Yes. Yes. Absolutely 100% without question, yes!!!

Blessed is the person who remains steadfast under trial, for when you have stood the test you will receive the crown of life . . .

It is worth it. ***remain steadfast under YOUR trial, & when you have stood the test - you will receive the crown of life***

But the way James 1:12 is written the crown is not the reward, the crown is a reference to the reward. James 1:12 most literally says: ***when you have stood the test You will receive the crown - WHICH IS life.*** The reward here (symbolized by the crown) is life itself. True life. Eternal life. Real life – meaning with God.

But that does not mean that James is teaching you can earn your salvation by keeping your faith under trial. Your salvation is 100% a gift given by God's grace and received through your faith alone. It cannot be earned. It can never be deserved. It can only be received and believed by faith.

John 5:24 (ESV)

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word (with intent to obey) and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

whoever hears my word - with intent to obey and believes him who sent me . . .

ALREADY HAS Eternal life

ALREADY HAS Passed from death to life

And so this crown, which is life, is reserved for all who have genuinely put their faith in Jesus Christ and that faith is proven genuine by the testing and refining of our trials. James puts it a little more simply and a little more powerfully at the end of the verse.

James 1:12 (ESV)

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

God has promised this crown, which is life, to those who love him. He has promised it. He has guaranteed it. It is sure, it is steadfast. It is reserved for you in heaven – if you love him. The question is not can you earn this crown of life by enduring your trials, the only question is – do you love him? If you indeed love him, the crown of life and all of God’s indescribable eternal rewards are securely waiting for you while you are kept here until you receive your salvation. The only question is – do you love him?

In John 21 after the Resurrection Jesus made Peter breakfast by the sea. This was after Peter had so bitterly denied Christ three times and in that transforming moment Jesus asked Peter one question – “Do you love me?” And Peter said, “Yes Lord. I love you”. Three times Peter had denied Christ and three times Jesus asked the same question. “Do you love me?” And in brokenness and humiliation Peter said, “Lord you know I love you”. And in response Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” But Jesus knew what that would mean for Peter’s life. It would mean hardship, trial, persecution and martyrdom. Peter was crucified upside down because he didn’t feel worthy to die the same way Jesus died. The question was, “Do you love me?” But Peter’s genuine answer was given over the remainder of his life. His love was proven genuine in trial after trial until Peter received the crown of life in eternity.

Peter had *said* he loved Jesus before he denied him. In fact, just before Jesus prophesied Peter’s denial, Peter said, ***though all the others fall away - I WILL never leave you***

Peter talked a good talk before his failure. But after Jesus looked into Peter’s soul and asked, “Do you love me?” Peter’s love and his faith were proven genuine in his trials during the remainder of his life; every trial refining, approving, making more genuine his faith and his love for his Savior.

And it is no different today. In the midst of our trials Jesus says, “Do you love me?” And the genuineness of our answer is proven in the midst of our trials. Not proven to God, rather, proven to us. Jesus knew Peter was going to deny him. He told Peter that. Peter’s denial wasn’t to reveal Peter’s heart to God. It was to reveal to himself his own heart. Peter’s trial by the fire when he denied Christ showed Peter his faith and love were lacking. But by God’s incredible love and mercy, there is repentance and there is restoration for Peter and for us. And for the remainder of Peter’s life his trials in the fire of persecution and difficulty proved Peter’s faith and love for his Lord, beyond all question.

I can’t imagine how many times Peter must have thanked the Lord for that three question challenge by the sea that morning when Jesus said with the power of God – “Do you love me?” Peter answered yes in the midst of trials of many kinds; each trial refining the genuineness of Peter’s faith and love for his Savior and Lord.

God has promised the crown of life to all who love him. The crown of victorious, indescribable, eternal life. The question from Jesus is, “Do you love me?” And the genuineness of our answer is proven in the midst of our trials!

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, we’re at wits end. We’re at a loss. We’re desperate. Lord we say, “we love you Lord. Help us love you more. We believe, Lord. Help our unbelief.” Lord we come to you but we want to come more and more because we love you. And so we say Lord, just crush us like you crushed Peter. Pierce us through so we can see if we are playing games with you. And if we are we ask for your mercy and your grace. The existence of repentance and restoration and the opportunity to be reconciled to you while we are still breathing air on this side of eternity. Jesus we love you. And we will hold on to you in the midst of the trial no matter what. We will remain steadfast. We will not try to escape. We will not avoid, or deny, or turn aside, or run away, but we will stand in the fire until we see you there with us. And we know that we will come out like the Hebrew boys, not even smelling like smoke, Lord. We will walk through the valleys because we know you are with us. Because your rod and your staff strengthen us. We’ll love you Lord, not in word, but in deed and in action. We’ll love you when it’s hard, because you’re worth it, Jesus. We love you so much Jesus. Go with us this week as we remain steadfast in our trials. Amen.*