

**James 1:1-4**  
***The Good That Trials Produce***  
**J.D. Farag**

All right, good morning and welcome to our Second Service on Sunday mornings. We have two, the first of which is the Bible Prophecy Update that we do weekly. And then second service, which is now is the verse-by-verse study through God's Word. And while you see it there on the screen, you know this is the book now that comes after the book of Hebrews.

You know why, right? Because we finished the Book of Hebrews last week. Oh, you weren't here? Well, we finished the Book of Hebrews last week, so we're going to start in the Book of James. I have been so looking forward to this book. I know I say that about every book in the Bible, but particularly this book as I think you're going to see here shortly.

So James Chapter 1, beginning in verse 1 and the first four verses is going to be our text today. And I'll ask those of you that are here, if you're able, you can stand follow along with me as I read, if not where you're seated is fine.

James by the Holy Spirit writes, verse 1, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because [verse 3] you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

Let [verse 4] Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

All right, let's pray. If you would, please join with me. Oh Lord, thank You so much for Your word. And Lord, thank You for James, for inspiring James by the Holy Spirit to write this letter that we have before us today in our Bibles.

Lord, we know that there is so much here just within these first 4 verses that You want to minister to us and show to us and reveal to us. That's why we're here, Lord. We want You to speak into our lives in and through Your Word, as You always do.

You're always so faithful to and as only You can, especially when it comes to this matter of trials. I don't think there's a one of us here today or even watching online that isn't struggling, hurting, weary with all the trials, especially with everything that's happening in the world today. Lord, thank You so much for this because this is life for us, this is a lifeline for us.

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So Lord, thank You in advance for what You're going to do in our time together in Your Word. Today we pray in Jesus' name, amen and amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you today about the good that trials produce in our lives and why it is that we should actually welcome them. I'm not feeling the love on that one, but... Not only welcome them, but even consider them pure joy, not just joy, pure joy.

However, before we do that, we need to first know a few things about this amazing man James. This man, James, who God inspires to write this letter and the reason is, is because it's going to be germane to our understanding of this particular epistle, which is full, I mean full of powerful and practical wisdom and instruction.

So if you'll kindly indulge me what follows are several things that we need to know about James, and they all speak to the life of this man who knew the Lord intimately and personally, quite literally. He was the younger half-brother of Jesus, born to Joseph and Mary. Oh, stop right there, Pastor. I was told and taught growing up that Jesus did not have any other brothers and sisters. Well, you're wrong and they were wrong to teach you that because Joseph and Mary had more children after the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord. And James was the half-brother, biologically born to Joseph and Mary. And we know this because of the gospel of Matthew, actually elsewhere as well, as we'll see.

Matthew 13, beginning in verse 53, "When Jesus had finished these parables, He moved on from there. Coming to His hometown, He began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?,' they asked. 'Isn't this the carpenter's son?'

I knew Him when He was in diapers! That's not in the text; I just mean, that's what they're saying.

'Isn't His mother's name Mary, and aren't His brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?' No! Hold on to that. We'll come back to Judas in just a moment.

'Aren't all His sisters with us?'

Oh, he had brothers and sisters? Yeah.

'Where then did this man get all these things?'

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And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.

' And [we're told verse 58] "He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith." [Their unbelief] How sad is that?

Well, we got an issue here; we got to deal with this Judas. It's not the same Judas that betrayed Jesus. In fact, did you know that the book in the Bible, very short book, Jude, is actually short for Judas?

You okay?

Yeah.

Jude 1, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and [watch this] a brother of James. To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ."

Okay, secondly, James didn't even believe that Jesus was the Messiah until what many believe was actually after Jesus was resurrected and appeared to James personally.

We know that His brothers didn't believe in Him before the crucifixion and resurrection because of what's recorded in the Gospel of John Chapter 7, beginning in verse 3. "Jesus' brothers said to Him, 'Leave Galilee and go to Judea so that Your disciples there may see the works You do. No one who wants to become a public figure [this is interesting] acts in secret.'

I'm thinking about when Jesus said, "Don't tell anybody, yet."

This is how the world thinks, right? Hey, we need to get the word out. Don't you want to be a public figure? I mean, we've got to start posting on social media. Okay, you get the point.

"No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since You are doing these things, show Yourself to the world." And then we're told, "For even His own brother's did not believe in Him."

Fast-forward to after the resurrection, and the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians when he explains the gospel and brings up James.

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Chapter 15:3, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: [And here's the gospel] That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve.

After that, He appeared to more than five hundred. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred, most of whom are still living, though some have [died or] fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born."

That's another topic for another time. The third thing we need to know about James, and by the way, every single one of these are very important to our understanding of what we're going to see here in these first four verses.

James was a prominent leader in Jerusalem, specifically when it came to the account of the council, as recorded in the Book of Acts Chapter 15, beginning in verse 12. "The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

When they finished, James spoke up. [Shh. It's James] 'Brothers,' he said, 'listen to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for His name from the Gentiles.'"

It's almost as if James had the final word, even over and above Paul and Barnabas of all people. Lastly, and this is important, James was a man of prayer and James knew the word of God, and it's evidenced by some 45 references to the Old Testament in his short letter, and it is a short letter.

Also, according to church historians, he was such a man of prayer that his knees had large, thick calluses like knees of a camel. I wonder where he saw that and learned that and witnessed that. What do you think? He watched his brother, God incarnate, throughout His life on His knees.

You know it's interesting, church historians also record that he was martyred by being pushed off a high point in the temple there in Jerusalem, which didn't kill him. So they

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proceeded to bludgeon him to death. And what does James do as they're bludgeoning him to death? Oh, he prays for them.

Hmm. I wonder where he saw that, and learned that, and witnessed that? He learned it from Jesus.

All right, I think it's with this introduction and understanding that we're now better able to take and tackle this very tough book, and by the way, it is a tough book. James, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes with a sanctified strength, a holy boldness and a holy bluntness, if I can say it like that.

And when you understand who this man was, you get a better appreciation, for how he writes what he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I mean he pulls no punches. Well, could you imagine growing up with your half-brother being God and perfect?

I mean, that'll do something to you, right? I mean, can you imagine? Jesus always kept His room perfectly clean. Why can't you be like your brother? He had a chip on his shoulder, and it kind of comes out a little bit here in this epistle. I mean, it's in a sanctified way, of course.

Well, in just these first four verses, true to form, James has a very strong, very firm exhortation concerning trials. And I would venture to say that James knew a thing or two about trials in his life. And inspired by the Holy Spirit, he, I mean, verse 1, introduces himself, who he is, verse 2, gets right down to business. And that's what we're going to see: the good that comes from those trials.

The first one in verse 1, trials make me humble and teachable. I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of what James writes here, just in this first verse concerning his title. "James, the blond servant, the bond-slave of Jesus Christ."

I wouldn't have written that. You know what I would have written? JD, the biological half-brother of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. I would have wrote books and went on tour.

But not James. He doesn't introduce himself as the half-brother of Jesus Christ, he introduces himself as the bond-slave, "doulos" in the original of Jesus Christ.

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You have to understand that a bond-slave was a slave, literally in every sense of the word, but this was a slave who of their own volition chose out of love for the master to remain a slave to that master, *doulos*, bond-slave. They were bound for life, and they even had a ceremony where they would pierce the ear on the doorpost as a symbol of their commitment to, as a servant of their master out of love.

That's what James is introducing himself as. Oh, would to God that this kind of humility and teach-ability would be said of us.

Now, I point this out because again, when you know and understand who James was and you know that he was a humble man and a teachable man, it serves this purpose in a way of earning the right to say what he's going to say and teach what he's going to teach and exhort what he's going to exhort.

Because if you don't see him this way, you're going to be really taken back by his bluntness. Oh, and by the way, spoiler alert, it gets worse from here. I mean, this is actually really tame. But when we get further into this book, I mean, he does - I mean, "You adulterers."

Oh! James, bring it down a notch. Why are you so in our face? He just called me an adulterer because I'm too friendly with the world and I am at enmity with God. And he goes on, I mean, well, okay, I'm getting ahead of myself.

That's when we get there. That's what trials do though, right? They break us, and it's a good breaking. They humble us, and they make us teachable.

The second one is in verses 2 and 3, and it's that trials make us faithful and joyful. I want to spend a little bit of time on this. But here again, James, true to form as we get to know him, you're going to love this about him, but I mean, he wastes no time.

See, I would have drug out the introduction just a little bit longer. I mean, at least a couple three verses. You know, James, half-brother of the Savior of the world and bond-servant. That's fine. And you know, I'm one of the leaders in Jerusalem and here's my resumé. And then I would have gotten into the meat of it.

But not James, he gets right into it. And he says to them, as he says to us now by the Holy Spirit, that we can actually consider those different kinds of trials in our lives pure joy.

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How? Because I'm not joyful in trials, I'm miserable in trials. How is it possible, James, that I can consider this trial pure joy?

Oh, I'm glad you asked. You can consider it pure joy by knowing where God's going by allowing the trial in your life. Okay, keyword: Know. Know.

You can consider it pure joy because you know.

I know?

Yeah, you know.

Okay, I know what?

You know what God is doing, what God is accomplishing in and through that trial. Well, no wonder He's not getting me out of the trial as I've been praying. He's not going to get you out of the trial, and truth be made known You don't want Him to get you out of that trial because you're going to have to retake the test if He does.

No, you want Him to get you through that trial because what you need to get through that trial will only come when you get through that trial. I hope you got that because I'm going to try again to say that.

What do you need to get through that trial?

Perseverance.

How are you going to get the perseverance?

By going through the trial.

Wait a minute. You're telling me - actually, I'm not telling you, God's Word is telling you. I need to get through this trial, I need perseverance, I need patience and I mean, forget joy, I haven't even got the joy yet. I just got to get through this thing.

Well, how are you going to get through it?

By getting through it. I need to get through it. Well, you need perseverance to get through it, and the only way you're going to get perseverance is by going through it.

Okay, can you help me out here? How does this work?

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Because the testing of our faith produces it. The trial produces the very thing you need to get through the trial. I wish that were not the case. Oh, believe you me, if I could stand up before you today, as is my privilege to every week and say to you, Hey, seven keys, seven secrets to perseverance.

Oh, how much?

Well, I'll sign it for you for \$99.95 or whatever.

No, it comes vis-a-vis the trial that you're in. And knowing that the perseverance you need to persevere in that trial comes in the trial, then maybe you should just say, Okay Lord, let's get this show on the road.

And it's not, Man, I sure hope so.

No, it's you know. You know, this is a truth that you know. You know, the good that is going to come from the trial you're in and that's why you can consider it pure joy.

Now, joy is an interesting word. I think it gets a lot of bad press, actually, if I can say it like that because we somehow have made synonymous joy with happiness, and they are not the same.

In fact, happiness comes from the word happenstance, circumstance, meaning that, you know, when things are going good, I'm happy. But when things are not going good, I'm not happy.

Now, if you live your Christian life based on how things are going in your life, and you're only happy when the circumstances are such that you can be happy, well, I'll just speak for myself. I'll be happy maybe a minute and 30 seconds a day, if that, on a good day. If you're telling me that my happiness is predicated upon the circumstances in my life, I'm not a very happy man.

Let's talk about joy now, conversely. Joy is not predicated upon what's happening in your life. In fact, you can have this joy regardless of what's going on in your life. As difficult as it may be, you can still know this joy, pure joy.

And this is not pie in the sky. This is attainable, this is reachable. You'll never see anything in God's Word where God says you can have this if it were not possible. You can have joy, pure



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joy even in the midst of that trial. And the only way you'll taste from that cup of joy is knowing, knowing, knowing, oh, God's doing this, and He's building in me and producing in me in and through this trial, the very thing I need to get through this trial.

Have you ever prayed for patience? It's a very dangerous prayer.

Oh ,God, make me a patient man.

I just picture the angels in heaven given charge concerning me going, Don't pray that. You know not what you ask.

So God's going, Did he just say he wants patience?

Yeah, he did.

Okay, give him kids. That'll teach him patience right there.

[ Laughter ]

Get him stuck in traffic. That'll do it.

How am I going to learn patience that way?

Oh, because it produces in you the patience and perseverance by going through it. So consider it pure joy. You're getting a pretty good deal here. You're coming out of this; at the end of this you're going to be patient.

Yay, had I know that...

But notice, he says that it's the testing of our faith. Oh, now that takes it to a whole new level, doesn't it?

What do you mean the testing of my faith?

Well, your faith needs to be tested and proved. Ask Peter about that.

I can't wait until we get to Peter too. I think the Rapture is coming first, at least I hope it is. He talks about our faith being like gold that's purified, tested in the fire, those fiery trials. You know what the goldsmith does with that gold, like our faith?

He takes that gold and he subjects it to intense heat, I mean, intense heat.

What happens to that gold?

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Well, all of the impurities that are in that gold rise to the surface and then the goldsmith takes and scrapes them off. And he knows he has pure gold when he can see his image reflected in that gold. Does that sound a little familiar?

You know, we love Romans 8:28, nothing wrong with that. But we conveniently forget about Romans 8:29 because 8:29 explains 8:28. "That we know [there's that word know again] that God works all things together for the good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose."

Oh, I like that. I think I'll put that on my wallpaper.

Well, you might want to add verse 29 to that wallpaper because we're told in verse 29 what that purpose is. It's to make us - this is God's purpose in that trial, is to make us like Jesus.

Oh wait. That doesn't sound very good. That sounds like a process.

Oh, yeah.

Sounds like a painful process.

It is.

But faithful is He who began that good work in you to make you like Jesus, to complete and perfect and finish that work. You know what the workman, the artist does when they're finished with their work of art? Poema in the original language where we get our English word for poem. We're His workmanship we're His work of art. He's perfecting us and making us like Jesus.

And when He's done, finished, He puts His name, you know, like an artist will put their name on their workmanship.

Oh, that's His work.

Yeah.

What do you think?

That's pretty good, the finished product.

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Well, that's what God's purpose is. That's what God has called us to. So He has to test and prove our faith. He has to take our faith and put it into the furnace, those fiery trials so that He can purify us.

And as far as the joy is concerned, you know that you've tasted from the cup of joy, pure joy when everything around you is falling apart and you are just, I mean, in the Lord and you have joy. In fact, I know in my own life when I've tasted from that cup, it's almost one of these things of I have nothing to be joyful about.

Look at what's happening. I mean, this is odd. I'm at peace, I have joy. I'm trusting the Lord, and the Lord's doing a work, and I know that He's going to work it out for the good. And He's producing in me the things that I need like perseverance and patience and all of these - Oh, by the way, fruits of the Holy Spirit as we affectionately refer to them.

I'm joyful in the midst of it, and I'm almost feeling a sanctified guilt like, man, I should be morose and I should be worried and fearful and not joyful. No, I'm joyful.

If people look at you funny, like, What's the matter with you? No, I just - God's got this, man. God's got this.

And this joy; how can you have that joy?

Because I know, I know that God is doing something here. I know where God's going with this. I know what God is doing in this.

This last one in verse 4 we'll spend the remainder of our time on. It is, I'm hoping, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, I'm hoping that it will just all fit together and come together and the Holy Spirit will just bless this to your heart.

Trials make us mature and complete. Now what James says here is interesting for a number of reasons, chief of which is he infers that we can let it finish or fight it to the finish, keyword 'let'.

Now stay with me.

He says, "Let Perseverance finish its work."

Wait a minute; it's on me?

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Yeah.

Are you saying that I can actually hinder perseverance from finishing its work?

Oh yeah, in fact, you do it all the time.

I do?

Yeah. You fight it.

Here you are in this trial, kicking, fighting, biting, scratching, screaming, complaining. Lord, what are you doing? It's right here. This is what I'm doing.

Why are you allowing this?

That's the wrong question by the way. We talked about that Thursday night. It's not, God, why are you allowing this trial in my life? The question should be this: Lord, what - what, not why. What are you doing in me by allowing this trial in my life?

Apparently, I'm lacking something, and the only way for You to produce in me that which I lack is by allowing the trial. In fact, James says that if you'll let Perseverance finish its work, you'll be mature and complete and there won't be anything you lack, for the next trial.

Oh, why did you have to say that?

Because think about it, you're either coming out of a trial or going into a trial. Have a nice afternoon. Am I right?

But here's the thing: I am not going to lack that which I need in that trial because God has produced in me that which I need so I don't lack it.

What do I lack?

Well, perseverance, patience, strength.

How about joy?

I lack joy. I'll admit it. I'll be the first to admit it. I remember as a young Christian when I read James 1 for the first time, I thought surely this has to be a mistranslation from the original language. Really, consider it pure joy?

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I think in the original, it's more along the lines of, consider it pure hell when you encounter trials of various kinds because that's my experience. Well, if that's your experience, that's because you're immature, incomplete and you lack, and God does not want you to lack what you need, so He's going to provide you what you need.

And the only way He can provide you and mature you is by allowing you to go through that trial. Let me ask you a question. Think this through with me. Think about those trials in your life that God, as only He can, got you through.

And I mean, you were thinking, there's no way. This is how it ends. I'm not getting out of this one. And then God says, Oh really? It seems like you lack some faith here. So we need to – you lack faith, you lack hope, you lack joy, you lack perseverance, you lack patience. So you're going to need that.

So He gets you through and you come out on the other end. And here's what that sounds like: Man, I don't know how people who don't know the Lord get through stuff like that.

I just picture the Lord going, He's starting to get it.

[ Laughter ]

Wow, Lord, thank You. You got me through that.

And then here I am now, and I'm like, Hey, I got through that, the Lord got me through that. All right. Not in a - you know what I what I'm saying here. Don't start getting all that because then, whew, that's a different sermon on pride, by the way, and we're getting there.

No, in the Lord. You're like, man, if the Lord can get me through that, the Lord can get me through anything.

I remember my wife and I after our daughter, Noelle, died, we were just having this conversation about, man, I mean, that was so painful. But, you know, after that, it was like, If the Lord can get us through that, is there anything the Lord can't get us through?

I think about the prophet Jeremiah, he says, you know, if you can't handle it when the footmen come, what are you going to do when the horsemen come?

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And keep in mind that God knows the end from the beginning and He knows what's coming and He wants to prepare you for that which is prepared for you and He doesn't want you to be blindsided when it happens.

So He's going to provide you, equip you, prepare you as you would as a parent your child. You're going to do everything you can to prepare them, to equip them so that they can handle whatever it is because they lack in that area, and you don't want them to be lacking in that area. And they don't really possess the maturity in the physical sense to be able to handle that.

Well, so too more so is this true in the spiritual sense. God wants us to be mature and complete, not lacking anything so that when, not if, those trials hit, and those trials hit we're steady and we're ready.

And you'll forgive me, I say this in a sanctified way. You're like, Bring it. It comes knocking on your door. I've been expecting you. Come on in. Let's have a drink of joy from my cup. Pure joy on the bottle. I probably shouldn't use that illustration, but you get the idea, right?

But see, you would never be able to do that or say that or be like that had it not been for what God did in and through that trial. At the beginning I mentioned that we can actually as Christians, not only consider those trials to be pure joy, but we can actually welcome them in the sense that when, not if they hit, we actually can say, All right, Lord. I mean, clearly You've allowed this for a reason. I'm really excited to see what You're going to do in and through this one.

Well, Pastor JD, Hey, with all due respect, that's very foreign to me. I don't have the foggiest idea what you're talking about. I know in my own Christian life I've never experienced that.

Well, you can, you can.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not standing up here saying, Hey, go looking for a trial. You don't need to. They'll find you, they'll find you. Don't worry about that. You don't have to look for them.

What I am saying is, trials are good. Trials are good.

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Here's an illustration. Just real quick, and I'm almost done. There's actually a condition for - it's a medical term. I forget the name of it. I probably couldn't pronounce it anyway if I did remember it. But it's this condition where you cannot feel pain. You cannot feel pain.

And as infants, this is very serious and potentially fatal because you have an infant who is sucking their thumb, if they can't feel pain, they'll chew their thumb off. If they sustain an injury as a child or a toddler and cannot feel pain, they could be bleeding internally and bleed to death. That's how serious it is.

So, you know, here we are: I'm like, Hey, I'd like to just have that for a day where I don't feel any pain. That'd be great. Just a week, can I get a week, just no pain? I don't want to feel pain. That's not a good thing. That's a bad thing because pain is good. Because the pain says, something's wrong, something's going on. I need the pain to get my attention. Something needs to be done about this. We need to correct this. We need to do something about this.

So when those trials in our lives that are so painful, that's a good thing. That pain is a good thing because that's God's way of saying, let's get to the source of the problem. This is what's causing the pain. Now let's take care of it. Let's take care of it.

And so you would think that we would welcome it, and certainly when it comes, let the Lord do what He's going to do. Let Him, just let Him finish it, man, get it over with. Why do you want to unnecessarily prolong the trial?

How do I prolong the trial?

By not letting perseverance finish its work. Let, let, let, let it finish, so that you will be complete and lacking nothing and mature.

Okay, this is the last thing. Actually, Kaponi come up, that way it has to be. And why don't you stand up? That way, it really needs to be the last thing.

You know, it can really be that which changes the whole complexion of whatever it is that you're going through when you don't see it so much as just this pain and the suffering and Lord, how long, and Lord, please!

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When you really understand that God is doing a work in you in and through that trial, and then you just say, Okay, Lord, so be it. And then you just quit fighting the Lord.

In fact, instead of praying, Lord, get me out of this, pray this instead: Lord, get me through this, and don't just get me through this, do what You're going to do in me in those areas that I lack as You get me through this because clearly You're allowing me to go through this because of what You want to do in and through this trial that You've allowed in my life.

It will change the whole complexion of how you view that trial you're in. If you are fighting the Lord instead of letting the Lord do what He's doing, you - how do I say this - I'll just say it. You're playing right into the hands of the enemy. You couldn't make him happier. He's loving every minute of it. It is unnecessary and needless.

Hey, how about this? You really want to make the enemy mad?

I do. How?

Oh, just start rejoicing. Start considering it pure joy. He's like, Well, that's no fun. I'm out of here. I'm going to go find somebody else. Yeah, go, Aloha.

[ Laughter ]

Okay, Lord, praise You, Lord. Praise You, Lord.

Like Job would say, Lord, even if you slay me, yet will I praise You. And, Esther. How about Esther, wow! If I perish, I perish. I mean, it's win/win If we don't make it through, we're with You! And if we do make it through, we're stronger and more mature in You.

So Lord, forgive us for fighting You. We're going to resolve this day by the power of the Holy Spirit to let You do what You're doing. And Lord, please just finish the job. Let's get this done, and I'll get out of Your way, Lord.

And thank You, Lord. Thank You for the trial because I need this. Thank You for the trial because I need this. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.