

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: Life that Perseveres

Endurance can take many forms. We often think of endurance when it pertains to physical long distance events such as a marathon or a triathlon. Endurance is not merely a physical tool, it is a spiritual one as well. James wrote his letter to Jewish Christians walking through difficult times to examine the relationship between faith and life. James is a very practical letter explaining how a genuine faith produces a unique life. James begins his letter urging endurance in trials.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 1:1-12.

According to James, what should be a Christian's attitude when facing trials? How does the phrase "consider it" help you understand how you come to a place of joy in trials?

What does James indicate God's purpose is in our trials? Can you think of any other way He could accomplish the same thing? Why not?

James advised those facing trials to approach them with joy. When trials are rightly faced, they are avenues to spiritual growth. When faced wrongly, they become temptations to evil. James did not say trials should make us happy or that we should look forward to them. Rather, James wrote with a deep realization that life's pressures have a way of strengthening our character and faith. In other words, they help us develop perseverance. In trials, we learn to grow in His likeness (v.4). We learn to trust in His wisdom (v. 5). We learn to rely on His resources (v. 9-11). We learn to live for His reward (v. 12)."

Why is perseverance important? What reward comes with persevering in the faith?

Read Romans 5:3-5. What two things did Paul say we can rejoice in because of God's grace? Which of Paul's stated reasons for rejoicing is a little tougher for you? Why?

What incident in your life can you look back on and see the truth of verses 3-5?

Christian joy runs deep and endures because its source is the ever-flowing stream of God's grace. This is why both Paul and James could state that we as believers also rejoice in our afflictions. Paul's statement doesn't imply that we somehow enjoy suffering. Rather, it means that we have confidence God will use even our afflictions to bring about His good purposes in our lives. For this confidence, we need look no further than the example of Jesus (see Hebrews 2:10; 12:2).

What does James teach us about the nature of our prayers for wisdom?

What does it mean to be a "double-minded" person? What impact would this have on how a person faces trials?

Don't waste your trials. Draw near to Him. Keep asking Him over and over again. Rely on the resource He provides and keep your eyes on the reward. This is the only way you can walk through trials with pure joy.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 1:13-18.

Why do you think people try to blame God for the temptations they face?

According to James in 1:13-15, who is the real culprit we are to blame for our sins?

What is the chain of events that happen when we act on our temptations?

James placed the responsibility for temptations on the individual. Temptations arise from within the person but in themselves do not constitute sin. Entertaining temptation, however, can set in motion a tragic process. First, the person is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires. Then, joining one's will with evil desire produces sin, and sin leads to death.

What do these verses tell us about God? How can these truths encourage us as we fight against temptation?

James makes it clear that in as much as God cannot be tempted, He does not tempt anyone. Jesus did not mean believers should pray, "Don't let us be tempted." Rather, believers should ask God not to abandon them to temptation that results in their succumbing to it. Followers of Jesus can expect spiritual attacks from Satan, our adversary. Jesus taught us to seek power over and protection from Satan that only God can give. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 How is this verse often misinterpreted? How should it be interpreted?

When we give into the temptation to sin, how is our witness to the world impacted?

We are responsible in our temptation and God is faithful for our salvation. His goodness is unchanging (17). His goodness is undeserved (18). His goodness is unending (18)." Rather than running off to our temptations and doubting His goodness, we should trust Him in our trials and temptations.

APPLICATION

What are some specific ways you've seen God's power at work in your life when you've faced temptations? What role did prayer play in those situations?

Does all this talk about spiritual battle make you feel weary or motivated to fight? Explain.

How does God mean for us, in this group, to help each other consider it all joy when we endure trials?

PRAYER

Thank God He has saved us from our sin and will see us through our sorrow. Ask Him for wisdom in temptation and power to overcome.