

Truth About Troubles

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. **Quick Announcements:** Feb 1- Ladies Bible study will begin (more details coming). Sunday, Jan.31 *during both services*, **Justice Matters 10: Let Justice Roll.** CMCS is looking for a **Performing Arts Director**. Looking for someone w/musical experience to lead our **elementary and jr high band & choirs**, while instilling a passion for music and a love for Christ. Contact the school office for details.
- B. **Slide2 Perspectives Course:**

II. Slide3 Intro: Truth About Troubles

- A. **Faith & Good Works** are **2 oars on a row boat** (if you only use **1**, you go in circles).
- B. **The Bible** has **2** prominent themes and it's 66 books. **The Way To God & The Walk With God**. The 1st directed to **the lost**, the 2nd directed to **Christians**. We place **James** at the head of the 2nd category.
1. The subject is **Christian Living**. The book of James **isn't** about doctrine.
 - a) The name of *the Lord Jesus* only peers once. He never mentions *the cross, the resurrection, or the Holy Spirit*. It is a practical look at the **basics** of faith and how to **live out** the truth.
- C. In ch1 an important distinction is drawn between: **Trials** which may have **positive effects & Temptations** which is **enticement to evil** w/in the human heart.
- D. **James** (יַעֲקֹב, ya'aqov/Jacob). The ½ brother of Jesus. **was a devout Jew**. a leader in the Jerusalem Church. **A.K.A. Camel Knees** because of his prayer life. [prob oldest NT]
1. You can call him **James the Challenger**: as there are **54 Imperatives** (commands) in just **108 vs. Wow!**
- E. **James** gives plenty of practical advice on Christian living. From being the top pastor in Jerusalem, **and** growing up in the same house with Jesus.

1. It's the NT's book of Proverbs. You'll hear bits of *the Sermon on the Mnt.* And you'll see many OT word pictures & references. [James refers to: *Abraham, Isaac, Rahab, Job, Elijah* & alludes to 21 OT books]

F. Slide4 It's main point: *True Faith, is a Faith that Works.*

G. It deals w/the *crucial relationship* between faith & active works.

1. It's *balancing right belief w/right behavior.* [Practical religion]

2. Christianity must not only be **believed**, it must be **lived**.

H. *The true seed of saving faith is verified by the tangible fruit of serving faith.*

III. Slide5a **PERSPECTIVE of the believer (1-4) READ**

A. Slide5b TRIALS: Not If *but* When (1)

1. Trials *change* but never *end*. Never a season when you don't have them.

B. *When we were young we were full of bruises & scrapes on our knees, when we grow older they simply move inside.*

1. Unfaithful marriage partner, crippling accident, sudden death of someone close.
2. We may have traded *climbing trees* for *climbing the corporate ladder...but* it still hurts when we fall.

C. The Jewish Believers (12 tribes) were **literally** bruised with adversity.

1. So James goes to work re-setting *fractured feelings, disjointed depressions, re-aligning attitudes, & binding bruised spirits* w/the Great Physicians *Truths about Troubles.*

D. *Troubles in a Christian's life...why do they exist?* Are they a form of punishment from God? Do they go away once you reach a certain level of maturity? Are they a figment of our imagination, *like the boogeyman.* *Let's hear what James has to say.*

E. Slide5c **They are Inevitable**

1. Note not *if* but *when*. Peter said, *beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.* 1 Pet.4:12

F. What kind of trials await us?

1. They will be various. [ποικίλος *poi-kee-los*] diversified. many colored. multi-faceted. We can expect our lives to be spotted & spattered w/trials of all sizes & shapes.

G. Slide5d They are Purposeful

1. Experiences that come our way are *not accidents*.
2. We have a loving Heavenly Father who **controls** the affairs of this world.
3. We have a loving Heavenly Father who **has a purpose** behind each event
4. **Stop** viewing troubles as simply *bothersome offenses* & start seeing them as **tests**.
5. God is **not** interested in watching our faith get *torpedoed* by trials.

H. We must understand testing.

1. It comes from a Greek word *dokeymeon*, which means approval.
2. It's a word found on the **underside** of many ancient pieces of pottery unearthed by archeologists in the Near East.
 - a) This mark meant that the piece had gone through the furnace w/o cracking. It had been approved. God's desire is to help the clay vessels created in His image to mature in the furnace of trials ... *w/o a crack!*
 - b) *Illust:* In my pottery class in HS, I waited in anticipation of getting my work out of the oven. I was never hoping all my time invested *was a waste*.

I. God's initial purpose? Steadfastness/Endurance (patience) - Lit. *to abide under*.

1. *Dokeymeon* is applied only to those who persevere, or abide under, the tests He sends

J. Slide6 Nietzsche said, "*He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.*"

1. James gave us our why ... *Purpose*. Now we can do more than just *bear them*, we can choose to *grow through them*.

K. Perfect (mature) & Complete.

1. Slide7a Maturity is developed only in *the laboratory of life*.

a) *Joseph*: 13 years of testing, to raise up the Prince of Egypt.

b) *Peter*: spent 3 years in the school of testing to be changed from *sand to rock*.

c) *Paul*: went through many testings & each one helped to mature his character.

L. Slide7b Trials can strip away *everything*, but our attitude toward them. 3 attitudes:

1. 1st, *Joy* (3) - *not deny* the pain & sorrow you feel in a trial. *not* think positive. *not* the shallow advice to *grin & bear it*. *not don't worry be happy*.

a) And he *does not* say that *a trial is all joy*, but that we are to *consider it an opportunity for great joy* (NLT). It's the ability to see them rightly.

b) So we are *not* to *enjoy suffering*, that's a type of *low-grade masochism*. But *in the trial, in the suffering, there is a well in which to drink*.

2. 2nd, *Know* (3) - knowing they're designed by God for good, not evil.

3. 3rd, *Let* (4) - meaning cooperate. Give in to the testing. Allow it to do its job in your life.

IV. Slide8a **PETITIONS of the believer (5-11) READ**

A. Ever flunk any trials? We flunk trials because of *wrong responses*, resistant attitudes, & because of *temper tantrums* demanding instant relief.

1. This only advances our *immaturity* & *misery*.

2. Why do we have these attitudes? Because we *lack wisdom* & *lack faith*.

B. Slide8b **Lack Wisdom**. *Ask of God*.

1. When tests come, especially pop-quizzes, James says, *immediately pray for help*.

2. This is **not** prayer for *wisdom in general*, **but** for *the ability to view a test from God's perspective*. (context, context, context)

C. **Slide8c Lack Faith**. *Ask in faith w/no doubting*.

1. James is **not** referring to *saving faith*, **nor** to a general kind of trust. He's advocating a **sustaining faith** that involves complete abandonment to God & His purposes in our trials.

2. *The opposite? is a double-minded man*. Someone who wants **his or her own will and God's** at the same time.

a) *It's the little field mice* that runs out into the street. stops goes back. stops goes back into the street. **Then** your car passes right over him.

b) I have a skill you might not know I possess, I can kill a fly w/my hands nearly every time: *The key is coming at it from both directions at once*.

(1) The fly's *central-nervous-system circuitry* is geared to avoid approaching movement, **in only 1 part of its visual field at a time**. 2 simultaneously approaching threats render the fly immobile, **for** its *central nervous system* now cannot compute at which angle to take off.¹ [maybe **Satan** knows we're wired the same way. **We can't** function well being *double-minded*]

D. **Trials benefit both groups, rich & poor**. [*a particular trial* - he calls both to look to the future]

1. **Trials remind the poor** they are *rich in the Lord* & therefore can lose nothing. **Trials remind the rich** they dare not live for riches or trust in them.

V. **Slide9a PROMISES of the believer (12) READ**

A. (12) **1st Promise**. **Blessed** - Happiness, genuinely happy. In the OT it is always in the *plural*, signifying being happy many times over.

1. This kind of happiness is impossible, **if** it's dependent on circumstances.

¹ Fly-neuroscience. Dr. Edward Gray of England's University College, London.

B. **Slide9b** (13) **2nd Promise**. **The crown of life** - not only a future crown to be received, **but** also the crown of *a rich & full life* enjoyed here & now.

In the ancient world crowns (stephanos) had at least 4 great associations:

1. The crown of flowers was worn at times of **joy** (a sign of happy/festive joy)
2. The crown was the mark of **royalty** (worn by kings & those in authority)
3. The crown of laurel leaves was the **victors** crown in the games (athletes coveted it above all)
4. The crown was the mark of honor & of **dignity**.

a) **Slide10** The Christian has a **joy** no other man can ever have.

The Christian has a **royalty** that no man has ever realized.

The Christian has a **victory** which others cannot win.

The Christian has a **dignity**, for he is ever conscious that God thought him worth the life & death of J.C. *William Barclay*

5. **Oyster**: A **pearl** is simply a **victory** over an **irritation**. *The more irritations life flings at us, the more pearls we will have.*

C. A reminder for your **testings**, Job said, *though He slay me, I will hope in Him*. 13:15

D. **Keywords**: Truth, troubles, faith, works, christian living, trials, James, testing, endurance, wisdom, blessed, crown.