

THE WAY TO CONQUER TRIALS AND TEMPTATION

JAMES 01:05–12

Introduction

Trials and temptations are common to us all. We all suffer such trials and temptations as...

- hurt
- anger
- divorce
- cheating
- immorality
- greed
- loneliness
- loss
- sickness
- separation
- pain
- lust
- lying
- disappointments
- emptiness
- accidents
- disease
- death

What is the worst trial that you face — right now? What is the worst temptation — the temptation that just swarms in upon you and overcomes you and leads you into sin?

Is there an escape? Is there a way to overcome the trial? the temptation? A way that can assure victory and deliverance? This is the subject of this passage: *the way to conquer trials and temptations*.

I. Ask wisdom of God (vv. 5-8).

II. Rejoice in one's status (vv. 9-11).

III. Remember the reward for persevering: a crown of life (v. 12).

I. James 01:05–08 *Wisdom to Conquer Temptation*

How can a believer conquer trials and temptations? First, he must ask wisdom of God. Wisdom means far more than just knowledge, far more than just being intellectual about life or some area of life. Knowledge is the grasping of facts, and most people in the world have heads full of facts.

=> Just think of all the schools in the world: schools for children, schools for young people, schools for men and women, schools for tradesman.

=> Just think of the millions of farmers, scientists, business people, tradesmen, mechanics, contractors, physicians and on and on.

Millions and millions of us are knowledgeable. People with heads full of knowledge are very common. But when coping with the trials and temptations of life, something more than a head full of facts is needed. Being a knowledgeable person is not enough in order to be a victorious and fulfilled person in life. Much more is needed: wisdom is needed. What is wisdom? What does the Bible mean by wisdom? Wisdom is not having a head full of facts. It is not only seeing and knowing all about life, it is seeing and knowing what to do about life. Wisdom is not only seeing and knowing the truth, it is seeing and knowing what to do with the truth.

Wisdom grasps the great truths of life. It sees the trials and temptations that surround life and death, God and man, time and eternity, good and evil — the deep things of the universe and of God. But wisdom not only grasps these facts, wisdom knows what to do about them, and it does it. Wisdom not only understands the trials and temptations, but it understands what to do with them and how to do it, and it does it. Wisdom acts and conquers and gains the victory over the trials and temptations.

Now, if we lack that kind of wisdom — if we do not understand — if we do not know how to conquer life or some trial and temptation — then there is one sure way to get the wisdom:

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

Asking wisdom of God is the way to conquer the trials and temptations of life. Now, note two significant points.

1. Note the wonderful promises made to us when we ask God for wisdom.

=> God will give us wisdom.

=> God will give us a generous amount, an abundance of wisdom.

=> God will not reproach or rebuke us — not scold us — for not knowing how to handle the trial of temptation. The idea is that God will not even question us for lacking wisdom and for not knowing what to do.

God loves us: we are His sons and daughters. He is our Father, and He wants to meet our every need. Therefore, God will hear our request and cry; He will give us the wisdom to conquer the trials and temptations of life.

Mat 7:24-27 *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

Luke 21:15 *“For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.”*

Rom 11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

2 Tim 3:15 *And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

Prov 3:13-14 *Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.*

Prov 8:11 *For wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.*

Job 28:28 *And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'*

Hosea 14:9 *Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.*

2. Note a critical fact: we have a responsibility. We must do something, and whether or not God hears us depends upon our doing this one thing. If we do it, God hears us and gives us wisdom to conquer the trials. If we do not do it, God cannot hear us. What is it that we must do? When we ask God to give us wisdom to conquer some trial or temptation, *we must believe and not doubt*. We must believe that God loves us and that He really cares and will hear our cries and prayers and meet our every need. When we pray and cry out to God, we cannot doubt; that is, we cannot ask and then...
- wonder if God really exists
 - wonder if God is really going to hear
 - wonder if God can really do what we ask
 - wonder if we really know God well enough for Him to hear us
 - wonder if the request is the will of God.

Such doubting cannot be heard by God. God cannot answer the prayer of a doubting person. If He did, then He would be rewarding doubt — rewarding those who do not believe or trust Him. He would be rewarding those who doubt, ignore, neglect, question and in many cases curse, deny and fight against Him. God cannot hear and answer a person who wavers in his faith. We must believe that God is, that He exists and that He does love and care for us and that He will hear and answer us when we ask for wisdom to face the trials and temptations of life.

Note what Scripture says about the person who does not believe.

- a. First, the person is just like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed to and fro.
- b. Second, the person shall not receive anything of the Lord. Why? Because a person who wavers back and forth does not know the value of God's gifts. If God granted them, the person would not always use them nor would he use the gifts like they should be used. If God gave the wisdom to a person to conquer the trials and temptations of life, the person might or might not use it or might use it irregularly.

He would not value or use the wisdom or any other gift from God, certainly not to the degree that he should. He would misuse it — terribly misuse and abuse it. Therefore, the person who does not believe will not receive anything from God.

- c. Third, the person who does not believe is a double-minded person, and he is unstable in all he does. A person who does not believe lives a life that is up and down, back and forth. His whole behaviour is unstable and unreliable. He is like a person with two minds: he is not sure; he is uncertain: he feels *yes* and then he feels *no*. He begins and then backs up, then begins again. He believes, then he disbelieves; he acts, then he distrusts and backs up. He is unstable in his prayer and life with God.

Thought 1. What a descriptive picture of so many. This is the very reason so many of us receive so little from God. We either do not ask or else when we ask, we waver in believing that God will hear and answer us. As we face the trials and temptations of life, we must ask God for wisdom and believe that God will hear and show us the way and the power to conquer. When we pray believing, God will hear and answer us.

Mat 13:58 *And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

Mark 4:40 *He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

Luke 16:13 *“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*

Heb 4:11 *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

James 1:8 *He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

II. James 01:09–11 Rejoice in One’s Status in the Lord

How can a believer conquer trials and temptations? Second, he must rejoice in his status in life. It does not matter whether a person is poor or rich, healthy or unhealthy, crippled or sound, he is to rejoice in the Lord.

1. First, the believer in humble circumstances is to rejoice in the Lord. This does not mean that he is to rejoice because he is poor, unhealthy or crippled. It means that he rejoices in Christ despite the circumstances — no matter how terrible. Christ loves the humble person. Christ has saved the lowly and has promised to exalt him as a king and prince throughout all eternity. Therefore, the believer in humble circumstances is to have a spirit that is as strong as the spirit of a king and prince. He is to have the strongest of spirits now, while he is on earth despite his circumstances of poverty or ill health. Jesus Christ has exalted him to rule throughout all eternity in the new heavens and earth. Therefore, the believer in humble circumstances on this earth is

to behave like a prince and a king — all as a testimony to Christ and His power to change lives. (See note, *Rewards*, Lk. 16:10-12.)

Luke 19:17 “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’”

Luke 22:28-29 “You are those who have stood by me in my trials.”

1 Cor 6:2-3 Do you not know that the saints will judge [rule, hold authority over] the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

2 Tim 2:12 If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.

Rev 1:5-6 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Rev 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Psa 91:14 “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.”

Dan 12:3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Thought 1. This is too often not the case with the humble of this world. Too often the poor and unhealthy...

- allow their circumstances to dull, numb or destroy their spirit and joy in life.
- become bitter against those who have more and seek to take some of what they have.
- develop a sense of inferiority and inadequacy and take on a withdrawn or slavish type of behaviour.

This is wrong and destructive both to the humble person and to everyone else involved — including family members, friends, communities, society and the world at large. Every humble person on the face of the earth should struggle and struggle and never cease to struggle to improve his circumstances in life — even to the point that he can help others. This is the clear teaching of Scripture (Eph. 4:28). But no person is to allow circumstances — no matter how terrible — to destroy his joy or make him bitter and inferior or withdrawn and slavish. Every human being, no matter how humble, is needed to make his contribution to society and the world. This is especially true with believers. Believers must never forget God nor the glorious salvation and exaltation to which God has raised them. Rejoicing in one’s status in life — facing it squarely in the face and setting out to conquer it — is one of the ways

to conquer the trials and temptations of life. A humble person who does not allow his circumstances to defeat him, but rather who conquers his circumstances develops a strong, strong spirit. He develops such a strong spirit that with the wisdom of God He can conquer any trial thrown against him.

2. Second, the believer of rich or in high circumstances, is to rejoice in his low position. What does this mean?
 - a. First, a rich or high person is not accepted by God because of who he is or what he has. His rich and high status means absolutely nothing to God. Even if he were the ruler and owner of the whole earth, it would mean nothing to God. What is such status or wealth in comparison to the whole universe? The rich and high have to approach God bare — as nothing and as having nothing — approach Him as a little child, poor and without anything. This is the only way God accepts any person; therefore, the rich and high are no better off than the poor and lowly. All men — no matter their status in life — stand before God as equals. Let the rich and high rejoice in God and in the fact that God accepts him, not in his rich and high status.
 - b. Second, a rich and high person must use all that he has and is — all of his riches and high influence — to help meet the desperate needs of the starving, impoverished, diseased, homeless, sinful, dying and lost of the world. This is a fact that is neglected, ignored, explained away and in some cases denied. Nevertheless, let Scripture be true and every man a liar — as Scripture says. It is the clear teaching of Scripture (see notes, Mt. 19:16-22; 19:23-26; 19:27-30). The rich and high are to give and live just as sacrificially in meeting the needs of the lost and needy of the world as the middle and lower classes of society. This is not saying there is to be a classless society. There is not. A person of high status — a leader or manager of a business or nation — needs larger and more in order to deal with his equals in other businesses and nations, for most of them are not committed to Jesus Christ. They will not do business or respect a leader who holds the world in contempt. But when a person, especially a believer, meets his needs, that is all he is to do. He is not to hoard and bank beyond securing his family. He is to use all to meet the needs of this world — its desperate need for the gospel and for food, water, medicine, education, clothing and housing. Note what this passage says: the rich and high must remember a critical fact:

James 1:10-11 *But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.*

James 4:14 *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

1 Pet 1:24 *For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall."*

Isa 40:6-7 A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass."

Isa 51:12 "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass."

Job 7:6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope."

Job 9:25 "My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy."

Psa 39:5 You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.

Psa 49:12 But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish.

Psa 78:39 He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.

Psa 103:14-16 For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

Psa 64:6 They plot injustice and say, "We have devised a perfect plan!" Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning.

III. James 01:12 The Reward: A Crown of Life

How can a believer conquer trials and temptations? Third, he must remember the reward for persevering. He shall be blessed and shall receive a crown of life. Note exactly what is said.

1. The person who perseveres under trial shall be "blessed" (makarios). This refers to this life, to the here and now. The word blessed means inward and spiritual joy and satisfaction; an inner assurance and confidence that carries one through all the trials and temptations of life no matter the pain, sorrow, loss or grief. Simply stated, the person is secure in this life. He knows that God is looking after and caring for him and is going to deliver him from all the corruption and evil of this life including death, and give him life eternal.

Luke 6:48 "He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built."

James 5:11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Job 17:9 *Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.*

2. The person shall receive the crown of life in the next world. What is the crown of life? In the Greek this is what is called “the genitive of apposition”; that is, *life itself* is the crown (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 17). The believer who endures the trials of life shall be crowned with life itself, eternal life — life that will go on and on, never ending. The eternal life that will be given the believer will shine more brightly than all the earthly crowns that have ever been worn by the rulers of this world.

Thought 1. Just imagine the actual moment when Christ will crown us with the crown of life. Being crowned with the crown of life...

- will fill us with unbroken joy and rejoicing.
- will bestow upon us honour and dignity.
- will give us a deep and perfect sense of victory and triumph.
- will conform us to the image of eternal royalty.

John 14:1-2 *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

1 Pet 4:12-13 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

1 John 2:25 *And this is what he promised us — even eternal life.*

3. The person who endures trials and temptations is the person who will be blessed and receive the crown of life. Endurance is an absolute essential (see note 2, pt. 1, Jas 1:2). A person has to confront the trials and temptations with the spirit of a conqueror; he has...
- to endure
 - to persevere
 - to be steadfast
 - to stand fast

He has to conquer and triumph through Christ Jesus our Lord, and then he shall receive the promises of God. A person has to be tried and tested and has to prove faithful. He has to endure to the end in order to be saved and to inherit the crown of life.

Thought 1. The weakling caves in. Therefore, he does not experience the sense of being blessed. He does not have the confidence and assurance of God’s presence and

care nor of eternity. He is not sure that he will receive the crown of life. And Scripture says he will not receive it.

Mat 10:22 *“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”*

1 Cor 15:58 *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

Ga1 6:9 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time He will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

1 Pet 1:13 *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Pet 2:19 *For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.*

Rev 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

Psa 17:3 *Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.*

4. The person who loves the Lord is the person who perseveres. He is the person who is faithful to the Lord. He follows and obeys the Lord, doing all that the Lord commands. He follows Christ, obeying His commandments and enduring all the trials and temptations of this life.

John 14:21 *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

John. 15:10, 14 *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” “You are my friends, if you do what I command.”*

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Heb 5:8 *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*

Rev 3:10 *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. ■*