

LIFE AFTER FAITH
A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF JAMES

LESSON 6 – THE PRIZE FOR PASSING THE TEST – JAMES 1:12

Here in this verse of James chapter one, we find a beatitude that speaks to us of the value of successfully passing the tests of life. One translation actually says, “When he has passed the test.” James has already written about the “trials of many kinds” and “the testing of your faith” earlier in the chapter. Here, he returns to the subject of those testing and trying experiences that we will inevitably encounter in life, and he teaches us there’s a prize for those who pass these tests. Looking at this wonderful verse, there are some truths James gives us that encourage us to endure our trials while keeping our eyes on the prize that awaits us.

The Result That Is Possible from Your Trial

There are two words in verse 12 that don’t seem to go together. They are the words “Blessed” and “trial.” Just as it was strange to hear James say, “Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds...,” it’s also strange to hear him declare that a person is blessed who has to endure a trying time in this life.

The word translated “blessed” is a word that literally and simply means “happy.” It’s the same word Jesus used in His Sermon on the Mount, when he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek...” James teaches us in this verse that it IS absolutely possible that the experience currently trying your faith will result in your eventual happiness. Now, it may be hard to see our tests and trials that way, but notice a couple of things James teaches us about the possible result of our trials.

Trials can be a surprisingly blessed experience – James says, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial.” Again...this strikes us as a silly statement. We think of blessings as coming to us in the form of good things and pleasant things. We talk about the blessings of health and family and jobs. You don’t hear someone say, “I want to thank God for being sick.” Or, “Praise God...I lost my job today!” We don’t say things like that, nor is that what James is encouraging us to do. What he is saying though, is that the burdens of life can very often prove to be some of the blessings in our life.

Have you ever seen someone go through a crisis in their life, and then look back on it and say, “Even though that was a difficult experience, I am glad it happened?” What they discovered was their difficulty was a surprisingly blessed experience. Was it hard? Yes. But it was also helpful, and something for which they could look back and thank God. Next James teaches that...

Trials can be a spiritually beneficial experience – When verse 12 says, “having stood the test,” it speaks of the process of testing something in order to authenticate and validate it. So, we can read that part of the verse like this... “When we have been approved...”

Most people are really worried about what others think about them and will do as much as possible to get the approval and acceptance of those around them. Remember this...what matters most is not the approval and acceptance of other people but the approval and acceptance of God. His approval comes as He brings us through tests and trials and we demonstrate the reality and strength of our faith in Him.

The Resolve That Is Paramount in Your Trial

There is an important link in the chain between a trial and a blessing. That link is the word “persevere.” James says, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial.” We have to understand that the presence of a trial in our lives does not guarantee a future blessing. The blessing of a test is only found in passing it...and to pass the test means that we endure the trial. It is of the utmost importance...it is paramount...that we resolve to remain faithful to the Lord in the face of our trials.

James says that a person is blessed who can endure trying circumstances and pass the tests of life. Within that truth is the realization that these tests and the trials are not permanent things. In other words, part of endurance is the understanding that there will be a point when the thing we are enduring will be over. Your trial can end up as a blessing in your life, but only if you have the resolve to patiently and prayerfully endure what God sees fit to allow in your life.

The Reward That Is Promised After Your Trial

Look again at the end of verse 12. “That person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” The primary reason that our trials can eventually become a blessing is because of the reward that is available for those who pass the test. James says that a crown awaits those who endure their trials and pass the test. This is a reminder that one day we are going to finish the race of our Christian life. If we endure through all our challenges, when we cross the finish line, there is a victor’s crown awaiting us. He reminds us that when the warfare and struggle of this life is over, those who have stood strong through the battles will be awarded a conqueror’s crown.

Maybe Paul and James had discussed this when Paul wrote these words from 2 Timothy 4, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

The Bible teaches that we will receive crowns and rewards in heaven...which we will in turn lay down at the feet of Jesus. I’m not sure, however, that James is talking about a literal crown here in verse 12. Rather than a literal crown, James says the reward for us is the life we receive after we’ve passed the tests of this life.

James is telling us that when we patiently endure the trials and tests of this life, we will be rewarded with a trial-free, gloriously and eternally blessed life throughout all eternity. James is trying to inspire us by reminding us that the few and fleeting days in which we must endure our trials will seem like nothing once we’re enjoying the timeless eternity of heaven.

There’s an old song entitled, “I Will Trade the Old Cross for a Crown.” It was written by Johnson Oatman Jr. who also wrote the more famous song, “Count Your Blessings.” The last verse of the song says...

Every cross that I bear for my Savior will at last, when He calls, be laid down,
And my sorrows will all be forgotten when I trade the old cross for a crown.

The cross of your present test or trial might seem heavy, but don’t let the difficulty of life cause you to forget the prize that is promised for those who pass the test. Look beyond the battle and see the blessing that can result from your testing. Stand firm in the midst of your trial and wait patiently for your crown of the life.