

INTRODUCTION.

AS WE BEGIN THIS A.M., ~ LET'S ONCE AGAIN NOTE JAMES' EXHORTATION ~ IN VS. 2.

▶▶CSB: Consider it ~ a great joy, ~ my brothers and sisters, ~ whenever you experience various trials.

WHY CAN BELIEVERS REACT TO TRIALS ~ WITH A SEEMINGLY ~ STRANGE AND unexpected response?

BECAUSE WE KNOW ~ THAT GOD USES TRIALS TO ~ ¶¶

▶▶perfect our faith ~ and ~ make us stronger Christians.

▷▷So runs James's answer ~ in *verses 3-4*.

AS NOTED LAST TIME, ~ IN VERSES 2-4, ~ ¶¶

▶▶James wants us to see ~ a progression of events ~ in the following pattern.

▷▷Trials ▶▶ Testing Of Our Faith ▶▶ Endurance ▶▶ Spiritual Maturity.

↪↪This ~ is the spiritual reality behind trials.

→→View through this grid.

TRIALS, ~ JAMES EXPLAINS AT THE BEGINNING OF VERSE 3, ~ INVOLVE A TESTING of faith. ¶¶ 1/10

BUT JAMES PUTS THIS OUT THERE ~ WITH NO ADDITIONAL DETAILS.

▶▶ So we really have to think through ~ what James is talking about.

"TESTING" ~ TRANSLATES A RARE GREEK WORD, ~ δοκίμιον.

▶▶ This word is found elsewhere in the NT ~ only in 1 Pet. 1:7.

▶▶ It is also found ~ in the Septuagint ~ only in Ps. 11:7 ~ [ET 12:6] ~ and Prov. 27:21.

NOW, ~ IT'S POSSIBLE ~ TO LOOK AT THIS WORD ~ ONE OF TWO WAYS.

▶▶ Peter ~ apparently uses the word ~ to denote ~ the result of testing.

▷▷ I.e., ~ trials test ~ the genuineness of faith, ~ revealing whether or not ~ ¶¶

↳ ↳ our claim of saving faith ~ is authentic.

▷▷ It's possible that ~ James is referring to the same thing.

↳ ↳ But I think that's doubtful ~ since he deals with the genuineness of faith ~ later in the letter.

▶▶ The two ~ OT occurrences ~ both denote ~ the process ~ of refining silver or gold.

▷▷ Ps. 11:7 ~ [ET 12:6], ~ The words of the Lord ~ are pure words, ~ like silver refined ~ in a furnace on the ground, ~ purified seven times.

▷▷ And Prov. 27:21, ~ The crucible is for silver, ~ and the furnace is for gold, ~ and a man is tested by his praise. ¶¶ 2/10

▷▷ This ~ is probably ~ the meaning intended by James.

↳↳ For one thing, ~ his Jewish flock would be very familiar ~ with this usage of the word.

(VS. 3) ~ THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE ~ ARE INTENDED BY GOD ~ to refine our faith.

▶▶ Heating it ~ in the crucible of trials. So that ~ impurities might be refined away.

▷▷ And so that ~ our faith ~ might become pure and valuable ~ before the Lord.

▶▶ The "testing of faith" here, ~ then, ~ is not intended ~ to determine whether a person has faith or not.

▷▷ It is intended ~ to purify faith ~ that already exists.

▶▶ The old hymn ~ sums it up quite well.

▷▷ 'When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, ~ My grace, all-sufficient, ~ shall be thy supply; ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ The flame shall not hurt thee; ~ I only design ~ Thy dross to consume, ~ and thy gold to refine.

AND THIS REFINING PROCESS, ~ JAMES CONTINUES IN VERSE 3, ~ ALSO PRODUCES ~ endurance.

THE GREEK WORD ~ DESCRIBES THE PERSON ~ ¶¶

▶▶ who bravely ~ remains upright and firm under adverse circumstances ~ without collapse or cowardice. ¶¶ 3/10

▷▷ The word was used by Paul ~ to describe his own performance of apostolic signs ~ ¶¶

↳↳ in the midst of opposition (2 Cor. 12:12).

▷▷ It described ~ the endurance ~ with which Christ faced His enemies (2 Thess. 3:5).

▷▷ James used the word later in this letter ~ to describe ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Job's continuing faith in God ~ in spite of the most crushing troubles.

▶▶ The NT repeatedly emphasizes ~ the need for Christians ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to cultivate this quality of perseverance when facing difficulty.

↳↳ But James suggests ~ that trials ~ can also produce ~ the quality of endurance.

▶▶ Like a muscle that becomes strong ~ when it faces resistance, ~ so Christians learn ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to remain faithful to God over the long haul ~ only ~ when we face difficulty.

▶▶ Expand on muscle analogy for a minute.

▷▷ Our muscles will atrophy without exercise.

↳↳ Working out by lifting weights ~ tests the muscles, ~ actually tearing them.

→→ As they heal, ~ the muscles become stronger ~ and are able to endure more strenuous workouts. ¶¶ 4/10

▷▷ Likewise, ~ we mature and grow stronger spiritually ~ when we face trials ~ and choose not to give up.

↪↪ And we are able to withstand ~ more and more intense trials.

TO NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FOREST FOR THE TREES.

TRIALS ➤ TESTING OF OUR FAITH ➤ ENDURANCE ➤ SPIRITUAL MATURITY.

AND TO DISCUSSING THIS ULTIMATE GOAL ~ WE NOW TURN, ~ VERSE 4 (CSB).

AND LET ENDURANCE ~ HAVE ITS FULL EFFECT, ~ SO THAT ~ YOU MAY BE ~ MATURE and complete, ~ lacking nothing.

▶▶ 3rd person imperatives

▷▷ You ~ must ~ let endurance have its full effect, ~ so that ~ you may be mature and complete, ~ lacking nothing.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ the present tense of the verb ~ conveys the aspect ~ 11

▷▷ of habitual practice, ~ rather ~ than behavior ~ in a specific situation.

▷▷ I.e., ~ continuing duty ~ to enable endurance to achieve ~ its intended goal.

OK, ~ LET'S UNPACK VERSE 4.

▶▶ With his present tense imperative, ~ James is letting us know ~ 11

▷▷ that it is our continuing duty ~ to enable endurance to ~ finish its work, ~ to ~ achieve its intended goal. 11 5/10

JAMES ~ DOES NOT WANT BELIEVERS ~ TO SHORT CIRCUIT ~ THE PROCESS ~ OF spiritual maturity.

▶▶E.g., ~ we can do this ~ by impatience; ~ ~ 77

▷▷or by ~ abandoning long-term obedience ~ for the sake of comfort; ~ ~ 77

↳↳or by ~ an inappropriate escape from testing.

WELL, ~ LET ME STATE THE OBVIOUS ~ TO MAKE A POINT.

▶▶James is telling us ~ that we have the power ~ to short circuit ~ the spiritual maturity process.

▶▶We have that choice.

▶▶When trials hit, ~ we have a choice ~ between two alternatives.

▷▷#1, ~ we can adopt an ~ "under the sun" ~ viewpoint

▷▷Or, ~ #2, ~ 77

↳↳we can choose ~ to look at trials ~ from the bright side, ~ as capable ~ of being turned ~ to our highest good.

→→And then ~ trust in ~ and rely on ~ God's enabling grace ~ to empower us to ~ look at them that way.

JAMES SAYS, ~ YOU MUST ~ LET ENDURANCE HAVE ITS FULL EFFECT.

▶▶James does not define ~ "full effect." 77 6/10

▶▶ But more than likely, ~ "full effect" ~ refers ~ to the development ~ ↴↴

▷▷ of spiritually mature character ~ as endurance is allowed ~ to work out ~ its intended effect ~ in our lives.

▶▶ Maturity of character ~ is not the result ~ of the number of trials encountered.

▶▶ Rather, ~ it is the result ~ of the way in which ~ those trials are met, ~ ↴↴

▷▷ allowing them ~ to achieve their divinely-intended impact on us.

▶▶ Spiritually mature believers ~ are the end-product ~ of testing.

A DOUBLE PURPOSE-CLAUSE ~ STATES THE FINAL OUTCOME WE MUST ACHIEVE (vs. 4).

▶▶ So that ~ you may be mature and complete, ~ lacking nothing.

▶▶ The phrase ~ so that you may be ~ indicates ~ that the intended outcome ~ is in the realm ~ of character development.

▶▶ The present tense "may be" ~ implies ~ that this involves ~ a present, ~ progressive attainment.

UNDERSTAND, ~ FULL SPIRITUAL MATURITY ~ WON'T HAPPEN ~ until our resurrection and glorification.

▶▶ And I am certain ~ that God, ~ who began the good work within you, ~ will continue his work ~ until it is finally finished ~ on the day ~ when Christ Jesus returns.

▶▶ But we don't ~ passively ~ wait for that day. ↴↴ 7/10

▶▶ The NT makes it clear ~ that, ~ throughout our lives, ~ we are to be ~ continually moving toward ~ that full maturity.

▷▷ Grow ~ in the grace and knowledge ~ of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

▷▷ Continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence (NET).

(VERSE 4) ~~ SO THE INTENDED OUTCOME OF ENDURANCE ~ IS THAT ~ ¶¶

▶▶ we be ~ mature and complete, ~ lacking nothing.

THE ADJECTIVE ~ "MATURE" ~ IMPLIES ~ ¶¶

▶▶ the ethical character ~ of the spiritually mature believer.

▶▶ It denotes ~ something that has attained ~ its proper goal.

▶▶ In connection with animals or people, ~ it indicates ~ adult growth and maturity.

▷▷ The opposite ~ of babyhood.

▶▶ Thus James is thinking ~ of a personality ~ that has reached full development.

▶▶ The word describes ~ a maturity, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ a ripeness and richness of knowledge and character, ~~ such as might be supposed ~ to mark the full-grown believer, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ as contrasted ~ with the babe in Christ. ¶¶ 8/10

BELIEVERS ~ ARE NEVER ~ TO REMAIN SPIRITUAL INFANTS.

▶▶ Paul rebuked ~ the Corinthian church ~ for their spiritual immaturity (1 Cor. 3).

▶▶ Likewise, ~ the author of Hebrews ~ reprimanded his original readers ~ for *their* spiritual immaturity.

▷▷ He ends his reprimand by saying, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Therefore ~ let us move beyond ~ the elementary teachings about Christ ~ and be taken forward ~ to maturity. (Heb. 5-6)

(VERSE 4) ~ THE TERM FOR ~ COMPLETE ~ DENOTES ~ ¶¶

▶▶ "that which retains ~ all that was allotted to it."

▶▶ It was used for things that were ~ complete and intact, ~ such as animals that were ~ ¶¶

▷▷ sound and possessing all their parts, ~ and thus acceptable ~ for sacrifice on the altar.

▶▶ Here James uses it ~ in an ethical sense ~ to include ~ all those virtues ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that should characterize ~ the mature believer.

▶▶ IOW, ~ endurance ~ will bring about ~ a well-developed Christian personality in the believer.

▶▶ I.e., ~ a believer ~ who possesses ~ all the virtues ~ that characterize ~ spiritual maturity. ¶¶ 9/10

THE PHRASE ~ LACKING NOTHING ~ MAY PICTURE JAMES'S CONCERN ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that in ~ no area ~ of our spiritual development ~ should we fail ~ to reach the goal.

▷▷ And that no part of our personality ~ should fail to develop, ~ leaving us ~ in an unbalanced state.

↪↪ Jesus wants us to become ~ fully developed spiritually.

CONCLUSION.

TESTING, ~ JAMES SUGGESTS, ~ IS INTENDED TO PRODUCE, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ when believers respond with ~ confidence in God ~ and determination to endure, ~ a wholeness of Christian character ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that lacks nothing ~ in the array of virtues ~ that define Godly character.

▶▶ This concern ~ for spiritual integrity and wholeness ~ lies at the heart ~ of James's concern.

PRAY 10/10