

Readings

Scripture

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
- James 1:2-12 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

The main question is “Do you own your pain?” As long as you do not own your pain – that is, integrate your pain into your way of being in the world – the danger exists that you will use the other to seek healing for yourself. When you speak to others about your pain without fully owning it, you expect something from them that they cannot give. As a result, you will feel confused, disappointed, or even further burdened. But when you fully own your pain and do not expect those to whom you minister to alleviate it, you can speak about it in true freedom. Then sharing your struggle can become a service; then your openness about yourself can offer courage and hope to others.
- Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love* (p. 72)

“Prudence is that quality of true spiritual wisdom that defines the purpose of the individual, directs the individual as to how he/she ought to achieve that purpose and distributes right application of that knowledge to every area of life.”
- Author Unknown

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
- Hebrews 12:7–11 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

A New Paradigm - Part 1 James 1:2-12

True Religion
Brad Anderson

What if our trials are in fact the very instrument God uses to make us whole?
(James 1:12)

If that is to become our vantage point in this life, James indicates that certain themes must also become our norm...

Trust in testing... (James 1:2-4, 12)

- This hurts! Pain is what makes trusting difficult.

Trust in praying... (James 1:5-8)

- Is God there? Silence is what makes trusting difficult.

Trust in gathering... (James 1:9-11)

- I will run out! Fear of want is what makes trusting difficult.

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- As a child, what is one birthday or Christmas gift you especially remember getting or giving?
- How does James view hardships? How do you view them? (See James 1:2-4, 12)
- How is wisdom especially needed in those times of hardship? What are the conditions for receiving wisdom? How is God’s generosity described?
- What would a person in humble circumstances have to take pride in? What is “low” about a rich person’s position?
- Concerning a trial you have experienced, what pressures did it bring on your faith? What “wisdom” did you gain through it?
- Given the importance of wealth in modern society, what do verses 9-11 mean to you? What might James say you should “take pride in”?
- Has someone ever used James 1:2-4 a bit too soon?