

JULY 19, 2026

# THE LETTER OF *James*

## Choosing Joy

JAMES 1:2-8

James addressed his letter “to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad”—Jewish believers scattered throughout the world because of persecution. These Christians were facing hardship, uncertainty, and suffering. James knew that trials were not the exception but the expectation for those who follow Christ.

It has often been said that God tests His children to bring out the best in them, while Satan tempts them to bring out the worst. God uses the difficulties of life as opportunities for spiritual growth.

Someone has wisely observed, “God’s providence gives believers daily quizzes and periodic final examinations in Christian living.”

James encourages us to see our trials from God’s perspective. Rather than viewing them as interruptions, we should recognize them as opportunities for Christian maturity.

**Key thought:** By viewing trials as opportunities for spiritual growth, believers can face life’s difficulties with genuine joy.

### I. The Reality of Trials (v. 2)

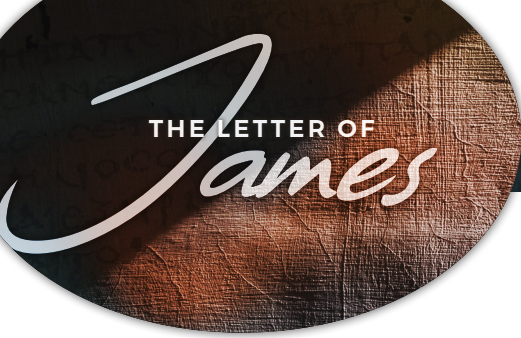
“When you encounter various trials...”

Notice James says *when*, not *if*. Trials are inevitable in the Christian life. The word *trials* refers to tests that reveal and strengthen Christian character.

Joel Gregory writes: “The word *trials* indicates a test that discovers the nature or quality of the person being tested.”

The Greek word also carries the idea of unexpected attacks. Like pirates who ambush unsuspecting travelers, trials often come suddenly, attempting to rob believers of their joy.

Outlook determines outcome. How we view our trials greatly influences how we respond to them.



James describes them as “various trials.” “Various” means:

- Different kinds of trials.
- Multiple trials.

The word literally means multicolored or many-colored, reminding us that trials come in countless forms. William Shakespeare famously wrote, “When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions.” Sometimes it seems that when one problem ends, another begins.

God customizes trials according to His purpose for each believer.

- Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac—not Moses.
- The rich young ruler was asked to surrender his wealth—not Nicodemus.

Our trials differ because God’s work in each of us is unique.

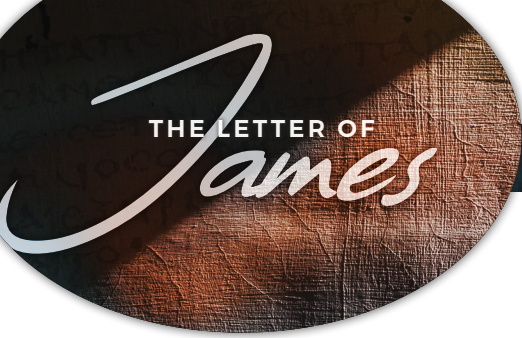
## **II. The Response to Trials (v. 2)**

“Consider it all joy, my brethren...”

James is not telling believers to enjoy pain or pretend suffering isn’t real. Rather, he calls us to choose a joyful perspective because we know what God is accomplishing through our hardships.

Within the first twelve verses of James 1, he repeatedly teaches that believers should rejoice even in adversity.

Joy is not based on circumstances. Joy is based on confidence that God is working through our circumstances.



### III. The Reason for Trials (vv. 3–4)

“Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

God’s purpose in trials is Christian maturity. Faith that is never tested is faith that is never strengthened. Peter echoes this truth:

1 Peter 1:6–7 “These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold...may be proved genuine...”

Job testified:

Job 23:10 “When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”

God’s refining process produces:

- Endurance — the ability to remain faithful under pressure.
- Maturity — becoming spiritually complete.
- Wholeness — lacking nothing that God intends for our character.

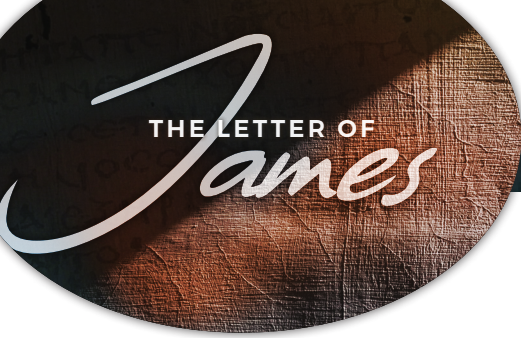
James describes this maturity with three expressions:

- Perfect
- Complete
- Lacking in nothing

Peter gives the same promise:

1 Peter 5:10 “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace...will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

There are no shortcuts to spiritual maturity. The refining fires of life produce a faith that comfort and ease never could.



## IV. The Resources for Trials (vv. 5–8)

God never sends His children into trials without supplying what they need.

### A. Wisdom (v. 5)

We often ask, “Why is this happening?” A better question is, “Lord, what do You want to teach me?” God promises to give wisdom generously to those who ask.

### B. Prayer (v. 5)

James reminds believers to bring every trial to God in prayer. God gives generously and without reproach.

### C. Faith (vv. 6–8)

We are to ask believing that God hears and answers. James warns against divided loyalty. The doubting person is like the waves of the sea—driven and tossed by every wind.

A double-minded person is unstable because they attempt to trust God while simultaneously relying on themselves or their circumstances. Faith rests confidently in God’s character even when His purposes are not immediately clear.

## Conclusion

To produce quality steel, craftsmen heat raw metal until it glows red hot before plunging it into oil or brine. The process creates an intense hiss, but only then does the steel gain a strength it could acquire no other way. God often strengthens His people through similar refining fires.

Jesus reminded His disciples:

John 16:33 “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Remember:

It is the irritant in the oyster that produces the pearl.

The strongest steel is forged in the hottest fire.

The crushed flower releases its sweetest fragrance.

Likewise, God often does His deepest work in us through our greatest trials.

When trials come—and they will—we can choose joy because we know God is using every difficulty to make us more like Christ. The testing of our faith is never wasted; it produces endurance, maturity, wisdom, and a deeper dependence on the Lord.