

# Why Is This Happening To Me?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Dan's going to read James chapter 1 and verse 1 through 12. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the cross.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the cross.

Blessed 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. Thanks, Dan.

Father, we are grateful to receive your word. We are grateful to have it in our language.

[ 1 : 34 ] Thank you for preserving this text so that we could learn from it together and so that we could be pointed again to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the songs, the hymns, the spiritual songs that we've had the privilege of singing this morning. Thank you for how our hearts are already stirred with your goodness to us, your care for us, your provision and your kindness to us in our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

Blessed Holy Spirit, would you please come now and help me as I preach your word to your people. Help me to have a heart that's overflowing with worship, not caught up with particular words that I think need to be said or the exact phrase that I think it needs to be said with.

Would you help me to communicate those things that are most helpful, most needful, most important for your people to hear this morning. Holy Spirit, would you likewise help your people as they listen.

Help us. Help us to hear your word, to believe the things that we see here and not to be doers only. Not to be hearers only, but doers of your word.

[ 2 : 55 ] Father, we ask this for your glory and our good in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Have you ever looked at your life and thought to yourself, why, why is this happening to me?

I've asked that. I've asked that this week. Why, God? Why are you allowing this?

Why does my life have to be so hard? Why can't I find a job? Why do the people around me have to be so difficult?

Why do I feel loss and loneliness and shame? Why don't other kids seem to like me? Why is my marriage or my relationship so challenging?

Why is this happening to me? why is this happening to you? The letter of James was written to Jewish followers of Jesus.

[ 4 : 06 ] We might today call them Messianic Jews. Because of persecution, they've been forced to flee their homes. They are hated for their faith.

They are living with uncertainty about their future. Maybe they are also wondering if God sees them. And perhaps like you and me, they are asking, why is this happening to me? Scholars date the book of James to the mid-40s.

To be clear, this is not the 1940s. This is the 0040s. In other words, just within 10 years or so after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And if the scholars are correct, that means that James is the very earliest book of scripture that we have. Imagine people like you and me experiencing the pain of a broken world.

[ 5 : 13 ] Learning that following Jesus is hard. Harder than you expected it was going to be. Maybe harder than you were told it was going to be.

And then they receive this letter. To guide their daily life. I love how other New Testament letters start.

Especially 2 Corinthians and Ephesians and 1 Peter. They start with this wonderful tone of worship for God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is missing here from the book of James. He just jumps right in to this question that we are asking. Why? Verse 1.

James. A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the 12 tribes in the dispersion. Greetings. [ 6 : 18 ] Count it all joy, my brothers and sisters. When you meet trials of various kinds. Think with me about this word trial.

It translates a word that includes external tests. As well as internal or external temptations to sin. So external tests. For example, like what Jesus walked through in Matthew chapter 4. When he was in the wilderness and he was tested by the devil.

But it also includes internal, though not for Jesus. Right? Internal or external temptations to sin. Trials are unexpected events that take individuals and the community of Christians to the end. And then beyond what they are able to handle.

[ 7 : 19 ] Some say that trials of various kinds, as you see it there in your Bible, means adversity of every sort.

Every and any type. But notice that James sees benefit in these trials. And since he seems benefit in these trials.

It may be that he is thinking more specifically about persecution. Persecution. And if we scan through the letter. We find clues that suggest the type of persecution that James has in mind. In verse 9, James mentions the lowly. And he mentions the lowly in contrast to the rich. And later on in chapter 1, he commends care for orphans and widows in their affliction.

Chapter 2 begins with a strong warning about showing favoritism based on wealth or social status. And he describes a brother or a sister who is poorly clothed.

[ 8 : 31 ] Doesn't have enough food even to eat for the day. He calls out those with power who refuse to help the poor.

And in chapter 5, he challenges the rich for exploiting their employees. So it seems that the types of trial.

The trials of various kinds. Contextually may refer to socioeconomic persecution. Financial injustice. Poverty. Class-based oppression. This becomes most clear in James chapter 2 and verse 6. It says this.

You have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you? And the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

[ 9 : 35 ] How should followers of Jesus respond? When as employees they are exploited and have no alternatives?

How should followers of Jesus respond when they are poor and given no voice? How should followers of Jesus respond when they barely have enough to live on?

While the wealthy can afford to get away with murder. Literally and figuratively. How should followers of Jesus respond when vulnerable families are trapped in poverty and they are denied opportunities that others take for granted?

How should followers of Jesus respond when the powerful profit by crushing the weak? How should followers of Jesus respond when they are James gives us the answer in verse 2?

Count it all joy. Christian Standard Bible says, Consider it great joy. How does that sit with you?

[ 10 : 54 ] Count it all joy? Is this like fake it until you make it? Is that what he's driving at here? Is this like when life gives you a dumpster fire, you should just roche marshmallows?

Is James suggesting that we just pull ourselves up by the bootstraps? When the going gets tough, the tough get going? Rub some dirt on it?

Because the sun will come up tomorrow? Is this just a platitude like you might find on Hobby Lobby decor? Of course not.

Look again at the text. Verse 2. Count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds.

For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

[ 12 : 03 ] Count it all joy when you suffer economic injustice or financial oppression because of your faith in Jesus.

Why? Because the testing of your faith will produce steadfastness. And steadfastness, and as steadfastness does its work, something is happening inside of you.

You are becoming more spiritually mature. And that maturity, end of verse 4, is in the form of character.

Joyful endurance produces greater Christ-likeness.

Patently enduring various kinds of trials will make you more like Jesus. We want to be more like Jesus, right?

[13:04] I mean, that's the point, right? We want to be more like Jesus. So then, adversity, as a result of our faith, is ironically a reason for joy.

Because as we endure it, it is making us more like Jesus. Now, I don't know about you, but I don't usually think about suffering this way.

Do you know why? Because it hurts. That's why I don't think about suffering this way.

Because it hurts. If we are going to obey this command, count it all joy.

Then we need humility to learn and wisdom to discern so that we think rightly about our suffering. And the wisdom that we need comes from God.

[14:03] Look at verse 5. If any of you lacks wisdom, if you can't make sense of the trial that you're suffering, and you can't sort out, how is it possible that this is going to make me more like Jesus?

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

But 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.

That person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

In order to think rightly about his purpose in our trials of various kinds, we need God's wisdom.

[15:08] wisdom. What does wisdom look like in the book of James? We are going to learn this together, but let me just give you a sampling.

This wisdom is holy. Instead of stirring the pot, this wisdom pursues peace.

It is gentle rather than abrasive. It is reasonable rather than irritable. The wisdom that God gives results in mercy that does good to those in need.

It is impartial. It rejects partisanship. It is sincere, not hypocritical. God's wisdom yields a consistent lifestyle of godly, Christ-like behavior and practical acts of kindness.

to persecuted followers of Jesus who need to discern God's purpose in trials.

[16:22] James says, ask God for wisdom. So that when you're insulted, you don't insult in return.

And when you're threatened, you don't become volatile. And when you're hurting, you don't hurt others. To ask God for wisdom is to ask for the grace to endure suffering with the character of Jesus.

It is to ask for spirit-given strength to do justice, to love mercy, and to live a life of humility we need to ask God for this wisdom.

And especially when the temperature is turned up, especially when the pressure rises, especially when we are tempted to respond sinfully.

we may give hesitantly. We might give begrudgingly.

[17:37] We might give wondering whether the gift that we are giving will be used properly. We might even give out of obligation. But did you notice when you ask God for wisdom, he gives generously, ungrudgingly.

He doesn't question whether you've squandered the wisdom that he gave you last time. He doesn't worry about whether you're going to use the wisdom correctly this time.

When you ask God for wisdom, he responds with single-minded intentionality in answering your request. But here's the catch.

You must ask believing that he will give. We shouldn't doubt his love or provision.

Our faith should not wither or waver under the heat of persecution. When we are ostracized, oppressed, overworked, impoverished, and marginalized, we ought to count it all joy and even celebrate it.

[18:56] Look at verse 9. I just love this. Let the lowly brother, the lowly brother or sister, boast celebrate in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation because like a flower of the grass he will pass away for 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.

Now culturally then as now, it makes sense to be proud if you're wealthy, if you're powerful, that makes sense, to be proud of that.

It makes sense to despair if you're impoverished, if you are lowly. James reverses our expectations. to the rich, I think James' words are somewhat sarcastic, maybe ironic.

It's like he is saying, hey, you rich people, you are kind of a big deal. Enjoy it for now. It is not going to last.

[ 20 : 24 ] You go ahead and you boast in what you have. it is not going to last. Your status, your wealth is temporary.

Just you wait. Like a flower under a scorching sun, you will wither and fall and perish in the pursuit of power and wealth.

But on the flip side of that, those who are marginalized, those who are not financially well off, the lowly ones, they can celebrate.

Why? Because God is using their steadfastness in adversity to exalt them. Joyful endurance produces greater Christ likeness.

And to this exaltation, James adds this wonderful blessing in verse 12. Blessed is the man or woman. Blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial.

[ 21 : 35 ] For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Notice Notice that this blessing is conditional. Do you see that there in your Bible? It is for those who remain steadfast under trial.

It is for those who pass through testing. It is a blessing for those who persevere and loving God. God's promise is not material abundance.

It is not health and wealth. It is not your best life now. It is not political power or social status. God's promise is eternal life.

God's kingdom has come in Jesus and it will come in its fullness.

[ 22 : 44 ] And until that day, those who hope in God remain steadfast under trial. Not because it's easy, not because it's pain-free, but because we remember that steadfastness under trial makes us more like Jesus.

Every trial that tempts our hearts to fear, God will use to give us hope.

If you are not yet a believer in Jesus, then like the rich that are mentioned earlier, you may think that you have your life all figured out.

Maybe you've decided you don't really need Jesus, that your life is just fine the way it is. Could you please hear this warning from James?

No matter what you achieve, no matter what you accomplish, no matter what you acquire, none of it will matter in a hundred years. None of it will matter.

[ 23 : 57 ] rather than boasting in what you have or boasting in who you are, look to Jesus for significance. Let him be your greatest treasure.

Boast in your humiliation in coming to Jesus and receiving the eternal life that you desperately need.

believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Brothers and sisters, there is no shortcut to spiritual maturity.

There's no shortcut to spiritual maturity. There's no easy way to grow in godliness. and any preacher or podcast host or influencer or author who peddles some new experience or a fresh technique or a seven-step plan to quickly becoming more like Jesus is simply offering something they cannot provide.

Spiritual maturity is the result of steadfastness through trials. But get this, steadfastness is not passivity.

[ 25 : 27 ] It's consistency. Steadfastness is the capacity to consistently respond to tests of faith without betraying the character of Jesus.

It is that resolve that refuses the option of physical violence. verbal volatility or reckless rhetoric and instead waits on God to do his work in his time for his glory.

This text should change the way that we respond to trials. Rather than saying, why is this happening to me? believers can confidently say, enduring trials will be difficult.

But becoming like Jesus is so, so worth it. My friend, look to Jesus. Look to the author and the finisher, the perfecter of our faith.

For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. a better question than asking, why is this happening to me? Would be to ask, why did the cross have to happen to Jesus?

[ 26 : 54 ] And the answer to that is because Jesus knew his suffering was filled with purpose. Saving sinners sinners like you and me.

So, ask God for wisdom to discern his purposes in your suffering. Ask the Holy Spirit to lift your eyes off of the trial itself to the outcome of that trial.

Let's be a community marked by joyful steadfastness, godly wisdom, and spiritual maturity. the letter of James reminds us that true faith is tested faith.

Steadfastness through suffering results in the delightful gift of being wiser with Jesus. This wisdom shapes us in humble holiness, gentle reasonableness, merciful goodness, and peaceable kindness. Every word we speak, every choice we make, every burden we bear, every trial we endure becomes an opportunity to show our faith in action.

[ 28 : 22 ] So, let's rejoice in being marginalized. Let's rejoice in being impoverished, in being oppressed. oppressed. It is through that adversity that God is making us more like Jesus.

Let's ask God for wisdom to see his purpose in our suffering, and let's remember the blessing of enduring trials is the promise of eternal life.

By God's grace, grace, let's be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Let's pray. Let's Good Father, your word touches on something that's so very close to our hearts because we feel it. We feel the hurt and the pain. We feel the oppression. We feel the marginalization. We feel what it's like to not have opportunities at the table where decisions are being made.

We feel what it's like when it seems like our voices may not be heard. Father, you know our hearts and you know what tempts us is a desire to seize power, take control, to rise up.

[ 30 : 03 ] These are trials of various kinds and we know them well and we need your help to steadfastly endure trials.

We need your help to persevere in suffering. We need your help to consistently respond to tests of faith without betraying the character of our Savior Jesus.

Would you help us to be these kinds of people and this kind of a community that is marked by joyful steadfastness, godly wisdom, and spiritual maturity?

Father, where we have heard and now freshly understand something from your word, and it has poked at something that was near and dear to our hearts, and we are feeling the convicting power of the gospel.

We're feeling the work of the Holy Spirit. Would you please grant us repentance and faith so that we respond by repenting and believing?

[ 31 : 21 ] Would you please make us doers of your word? Lord, we ask this in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.