



# VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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## **STUDY 2: TRIUMPH OVER TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS**

Text: James 1:2-5,12

Writing to persecuted and scattered believers, James started his epistle by encouraging believers on how to handle the diverse temptations and trials that come their ways. Temptation is sometimes used in the Bible to describe enticements or solicitation to do evil, but at other times it is also used for outward trials, troubles and testing that prove the genuineness of our salvation. It is in this later sense that James uses the word temptation in this text. Nobody welcomes trials as it has a tendency to disrupt, disappoint, or create adverse situations and circumstance that bring sufferings, hardships, sorrows, etc; however triumphs in them develops and deepens our relationship with God. Just as the quality of precious metals such as gold, silver, diamond are enhanced through tests, similarly, God uses trials to refine and develop the spiritual quality of our lives and relationship with God through the process that strengthen faith / fervency in prayers; as well as increasing our love / commitment for God (Job 5:6,7; 14:1; Psalms 22:11; Ecclesiastes 2:22,23; John 16:33). From James discourse we gain insight on the purpose of, profit from and progress through trials and temptations. As Jesus overcame in every temptation, every believer can also triumph (Hebrew 2:18). God's promises are and the presence of Jesus assures us constant victory (Isaiah 43:1,2; 2 Corinthians 2:14).

### **PURPOSE OF TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS** James 1:2,3

Suffering through temptations and trials are integral parts of the Christian life (II Timothy 3:12). Moses' vision of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-10), is a salient reminder of the continual suffering but indestructibility of the church. Paul's continual thorn in the flesh (II Corinthians 12:7-10) should remind all that God's grace is sufficient to sustain any believer through days of sorrow. Troubles and afflictions may be the lot of the best Christians (Philippians 1:29) and good people may be scattered. The devil's intention in tempting is to draw men to sin, to deter and unfit them for service through sufferings; but in God's hand those very temptations may be turned into trials for the improvement of our graces and the refinement of our faith. When we hold fast to the Lord and his word in hard times and in times of trials, that is a proof of our love for God. The psalmist recognised that "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word" (Psalms 119:67). As soldiers and athletes are tested in their fields, so also are believers tested through trials. Temptations and trials are diverse (in nature and source e.g. Satan, evil system of the world, human corruption, etc) and they may follow in quick successions - thus one must watch at all times and be always well equipped. God only allows the devil to tempt us to the level we can bear (I Corinthians 10:13) and as He (God) designs trials for specific purposes, it follows that these can only best be born by those they are sent.

### **PROFITTING FROM TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS** James 1:2

James exhorted the believers to "count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations". God would not ask believers to be joyful in things that do not benefit him. So what benefits are there in trials? Scripture teaches, and it is true, that all things work together for the good of believers (Romans 8:28). Trials are sometimes like crisis - they have the potential of making one better if he does not grow bitter; but they never leave one in the same state as they met him. Trials teach us who we are and what we are made of.

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They bring the spurious weeds that would drain the nutrients of God's grace in the soil of our heart to the surface so that the loving hand of God can wipe them away; and paves the way for the yielding of the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5-13). It corrects backslidings and restores believers to the right path (Psalms 119:67); it keeps us in right path when pride and self would have led us astray (II Corinthians 12:7-10); it prunes us for greater fruitfulness (John 15:1-3); it refines us to radiate the glory of God more effectively; it provides stepping stones for better things. Job got better possessions through his crisis, and Joseph got to the throne through adversity. Trials are forerunners of miracles, they teach us of the reliability of God's word, the sufficiency of His grace as well as the inadequacy of human wisdom and strength. It deepens our faith in God and boosts our confidence to trust through till the clear shining comes after the rains. They make us aware of the presence and supremacy of God. They prove the devil a liar and challenge other believers to greater commitment. Above all, it prepares for the believer an eternal weight of glory far beyond comparison in heaven.

### **PROGRESS DESPITE TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS** James 1:2-5,12

To triumph and make the best of every trial and temptation, James highlighted certain attitudes and qualities that must characterise the life of the believer during times of trials.

1. **Joy.** "Count it all joy" (vs. 2). Sadness and disconsolate frame of mind weakens the Spirit, brings discouragement and dishonours God. A joyful disposition activates the Spirit to make the best of the situation and triumph. Philosophy may instruct men to be calm under their troubles; but Christianity teaches men to be joyful because whatever comes our way is allowed by the love of God (Romans 8:28) for our benefit and promotion.
2. **Faith.** "the trial of our faith" (vs. 3). Trials place our faith on test. Thus, there must be a sound believing of the great truths of Christianity and a resolute cleaving to them, in times of trials, knowing also that our God is able to deliver.
3. **Patience.** "the trial of your faith worketh patience ..." (vs. 3,4). Trials produce patience and we are commanded that we should allow patience (and not passion) to be set at work in us. All actions and words in the time of trial should emanate from patience, not passion. Allowing passion to indulge will hinder the operation and noble effects of patience. Let us give patience a chance to work, and it will work wonders in a time of trouble. Bearing all that God appoints with a humble, obedient and joyful attitude for as long as He allows is to allow patience have its perfect work; at the end of which the believer is equipped with all that is necessary for the rest of his Christian race and warfare. To be patient under trial is to be calm in thought, resigned in temper, prayerful in spirit, submissive to God, steady in our faith and trust in God without murmuring even when he feels keenly hurt, and acting under His control without haste.
4. **Prayer.** "If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (vs. 5). We ought to pray more especially for wisdom to make a right use of affliction than the removal of it.
5. **Endurance.** "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (vs. 12). When temptations persist, it is a call for endurance. It is not only the man who suffers that is blessed, but he who endures - who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of duty. The endurance must be from a principle of love to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reward the victors with a crown of life. Rightly born, trials prepare and fit the believer for the work he was sent into the world to do. Unswerving constancy in clinging to the word of God removes weaknesses, deficiencies and imperfections from his character and, and like in Moses, allows the power of God to work in his life fitting him for divine service towards God and humanity. Endurance under God's grace allows the believer to develop steadfastness, live victoriously, and be made conformable to the image of Christ – achieving the standard of God for all believers.