

# James 1:12 Commentary

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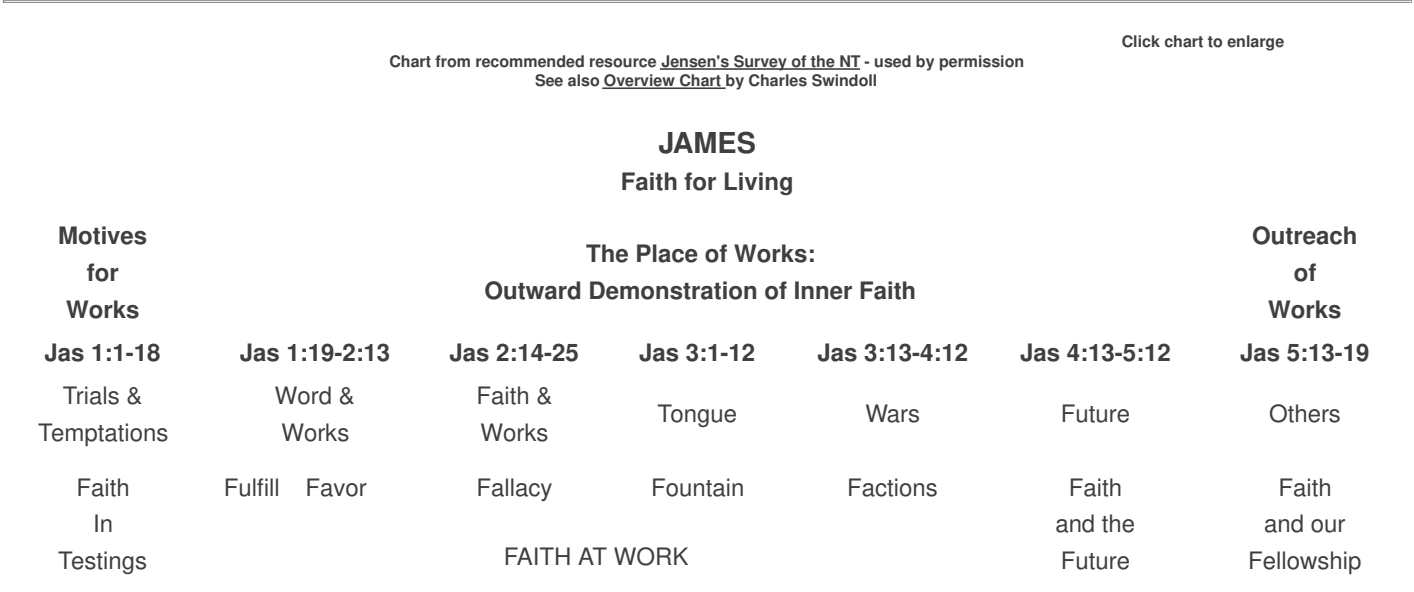
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The Theme: The Testings of Personal Faith

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James 1:12 **Blessed** is a **man who perseveres** under **trial**; for once he has **been approved**, he will **receive** the **crown** of **life** **which** the Lord has **promised** to **those** who **love** Him (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [Makarios aner os hupomenei](#) (3SPAI) [peirasmon, hoti dokimos genomenos](#) (AMPMSN) [lempsetai](#) (3SFMI) [ton stephanon tes zoes. on epeggeilato](#) (3SAMI) [tois agaposin](#) (PAPMPD) [auton.](#)

**Amplified:** Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who is patient under trial and stands up under temptation, for when he has stood the test and been approved, he will receive [the victor's] crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

**NLT:** God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** The man who patiently endures the temptations and trials that come to him is the truly happy man. For once his testing is complete he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to all who love him. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**WBC:** Blessed is the man who endures in time of testing because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown that offers the life [God] has promised to those who love Him.

**Wuest:** Spiritually prosperous is the man who remains steadfast under trial, because after he has met the test and has been approved, he shall receive the crown, namely, that crown which has to do with the life, which He promised to those who love Him.

**Young's Literal:** Happy the man who doth endure temptation, because, becoming approved, he shall receive the crown of the life, which the Lord did promise to those loving Him.

#### **BLESSED IS A MAN WHO PERSEVERES UNDER TRIAL: Makarios aner os hupomenei (3SPAI) peirasmon:**

- Jas 1:2, 3, 4; 5:11; Job 5:17; Ps 94:12; 119:67,71,75; Pr 3:11,12; He 6:15; 10:32; 12:5; Re 3:19
- [James 1 Resources](#)

**Trial > faith > obedience >  
perseverance > crown of life  
(Blessed)**

Who but God could bring blessing out of trials? When you are in the next trial, remember that it has a blessing if we persevere. And don't try to persevere in your own strength but by leaning on Jesus and His indwelling Spirit to empower you.

- [Watch the Youtube Video "Bring the Rain"](#)

Although some commentators think this verse is a solitary disconnected statement by James others such as **Hiebert** feel that...

This verse crowns the whole discussion with the promise of reward in the future life. The teaching in Jas 1:2 to count their trials as joy is here completed with the assurance concerning the ultimate effect of trials bravely endured. It assures a blessedness both here and hereafter. Therefore, it is better to conclude the paragraph with Jas 1:12 or make a separate paragraph of it. ([D Edmond Hiebert - James. Moody](#))

**Blessed is a man** - There is no verb "is" in the Greek, so that it reads more literally "Blessed the man" similar to the beatitudes of Jesus which also lack the Greek verb for "is" (cp Mt 5:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, Lk 6:20, 21, 22, cp "blessed is the man" motif in - **Ps 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6** - see in depth commentary notes on Psalm 1, Job 5:17, Ps 32:2; 34:8; 40:4; 65:4; 84:5; 94:12; 112:1; Pr. 8:34; Is 56:2; Je 17:7; Ro 4:8).

**Charles Simeon** introduces this section noting that...

Under the afflictions with which we are visited in this vale of tears, philosophy has suggested many grounds for resignation and submission: but to find in them matter for self-congratulation and joy, was beyond the reach of unassisted reason. To that however are we led by the voice of revelation, which teaches us to look with confidence to a future state, wherein all that we endure for God, and in meek submission to his will, shall be compensated with a weight of glory, proportioned to the trials we have here sustained for his sake, and the

spiritual improvement which we have derived from them. St. James, who wrote to "his Jewish brethren who were scattered abroad" through the violence of persecution, frequently repeats this consolatory idea. He begins with bidding them to "count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations." Towards the close of his epistle he declares this to be at least the persuasion of his own mind; "Behold, we count them happy that endure." But in the text he does not hesitate to affirm it as an unquestionable truth, that such persons are truly blessed ([James 1 - Charles Simeon's Horae Homileticae - Commentaries](#))

**Blessed** ([3107](#)) (**makarios**) is derived from a root **makar**, (others say from "**mak**" which means large or lengthy) which means to be happy, but not in the usual sense of happiness based on positive circumstances. **Makarios** describes the person who is free from daily cares and worries because his every breath and circumstance is in the hands of His Maker Who gives him such an assurance (such a "blessing"). As discussed below makarios was used to describe the kind of happiness that comes from receiving divine favor. Ultimately, the supremely blessed man or woman is the one who finds their complete happiness in God.

**Makarios** is found 50 times in the NT -

Mt 5:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; 24:46; Lk. 1:45; 6:20, 21, 22; 7:23; 10:23; 11:27, 28; 12:37, 38, 43; 14:14, 15; 23:29; Jn. 13:17; 20:29; Acts 20:35; 26:2; Ro 4:7, 8; 14:22; 1Co. 7:40; 1Ti 1:11; 6:15; Titus 2:13; Jas. 1:12, 25; 1Pe 3:14; 4:14; Re 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.

**Hiebert** comments that in the NT **makarios** is...

always a strongly religious concept denoting an inner quality of life, a joy and happiness not dependent upon favorable external circumstances. It commonly denotes "the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God." It points to a state of soul that the believer begins to experience in his life, even amid adverse outward circumstances, but its full bliss will be realized only in the future life. The blessedness consists not in being free from trials, or yet in the fact that he is being subjected to testing, but that he "perseveres" under trial in the manner indicated in Jas 1:2, 3, 4. ([Ibid](#))

Greek used **makarios** to refer to their gods and thus "the blessed ones" were the gods. They were "blessed" because they had achieved a state of happiness and contentment in life that was beyond all cares, labors, and even death. The blessed ones were beings who lived in some other world away from the cares and problems and worries of ordinary people. To be blessed, you had to be a god. Homer used makarios to describe a state unaffected by the world of men, who were subject to poverty, weakness, and death.

The Greeks also used **makarios** in reference to the dead who were "the blessed ones", men and women who, through death, had reached the other world of the gods and so were now beyond the cares and problems and worries of earthly life. To be blessed, you had to be dead, a state many of us have felt like we would just as well experience because of the nature of our manifold troubles and afflictions at the time.

Finally, the Greeks used **makarios** to refer to the socioeconomic elite, the wealthy, the idea being (completely false I might add) that their riches and power put them above the normal cares and problems and worries of the lower socioeconomic strata, who constantly struggled to make it in life.

In short, the Greeks felt that one had to be either a god, dead or filthy rich to be blessed (makarios)! And so we see another one of the words (like *doulos*, *charis*, etc) that the Bible elevated in status and meaning, as described below in a compilation from many different resources.

**MacArthur** writes that **makarios**...

means to be happy, blissful. That happiness is a divine pronouncement, the assured benefit of those who meet the conditions God requires. (See [Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 157](#))

**Makarios** is a state of existence in relationship to God in which a person is "blessed" from God's perspective even when he or she doesn't feel happy or isn't presently experiencing good fortune. This does not mean a conferral of blessing or an exhortation to live a life worthy of blessing; rather, it is an acknowledgment that the ones indicated are blessed. Negative feelings, absence of feelings, or adverse conditions cannot take away the blessedness of those who exist in such a relationship with God!

**Makarios** ultimately describes the state those who believe in Christ and in so possessing God, possess everything. In addition since they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they are fully satisfied no matter what their circumstances. It is interesting that Aristotle contrasted makarios with the Greek word *endeos* which means "the needy one".

**Friedrich Hauck** says that the Greek word **Makarios**

"refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God."

**Makarios** means possessing the favor of God, experiencing "**spiritual prosperity**". It describes a state of being marked by fullness from God. And so what Jesus is saying in the "Beatitudes" is "**Spiritually prosperous** (blessed) are the poor in spirit... ", etc ([Mt 5:3](#)) And thus some of the translators like Wuest pick up this definition...

**Spiritually prosperous** are the destitute and helpless in the realm of the spirit, (Wuest)

**Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial** - Not "Blessed is one who is never tried"! To be sure there is an element of this blessing which is experienced in this present life (cp 1Ti 4:8-note) but the "bulk" of the blessing looks toward our future life with Christ. Trust your loving, sovereign Father to use the trials as faith-growing tests now and source of a reward in the future.

**Wiersbe** writes that James...

started (Jas 1:2) and ended with **joy**. Outlook determines outcome. This beatitude is a great encouragement because it promises a crown to those who patiently endure trials. Paul often used athletic illustrations in his letters, and James does so here. He is not saying that the sinner is saved by enduring trials. He is saying that the believer is rewarded by enduring trials. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**C H Spurgeon** in his sermon notes ([James 1:12 The Tried Man the Blessed Man](#)) has this to say about blessed...

## **I. THE BLESSED IN THIS LIFE.**

### **1. Blessedness is not in our text connected with ease, freedom from trial, or absence of temptation.**

Untested treasures may be worthless; not so those which have endured the fire. No man may reckon himself blessed if he has to fear that a trial would wither all his excellence.

### **2. Blessedness belongs to those who endure tests.**

These have faith, or it would not be tried; faith is blessed.

These have life which bears trials, the spiritual life is blessed.

These possess uprightness, purity, truth, patience; all these are blessed things.

### **3. Blessedness belongs to those who endure trials out of love to God. The text speaks of "them that love him."**

He that has love to God finds joy in that love.

He also finds blessedness in suffering for that love.

### **4. Blessedness belongs to those who are proved true by trial.**

After the test comes approval. "When he hath been approved" is the rendering of the Revised Version.

After the test comes assurance of our being right. Certainty is a most precious commodity.

### **5. Blessedness comes out of patient experience.**

Blessedness of thankfulness for being sustained.

Blessedness of holy dependence under conscious weakness.

Blessedness of peace and submission under God's hand.

Blessedness of fearlessness as to result of further trial.

Blessedness of familiarity with God enjoyed in the affliction.

Blessedness of growth in grace through the trial.

He who, being tested, is supported in the ordeal, and comes out of the trial approved, is the blessed man.

## **II. THE BLESSED IN THE LIFE TO COME.**

Those who have endured trial inherit the peculiar blessedness—

### **1. Of being crowned. How crowned if never in the wars?**

Crowned because victorious over enemies.

Crowned because appreciated by their God.

Crowned because honored of their fellows.

Crowned because they have kept the conditions of the award.

## 2. Of attaining the glory and "crown of life" by enduring trial, thus only can life be developed till its flower and crown appear.

By trial brought to purest health of mind.

By trial trained to utmost vigor of grace.

By trial developed in every part of their nature.

By trial made capable of the highest glory in eternity.

## 3. Of possessing a living crown of endless joy. "Crown of life" or living crown: amaranthine, unfading.

If such fierce trials do not kill them, nothing will.

If they have spiritual bliss, it can never die.

If they have heavenly life, it will always be at its crowning point.

## 4. Of receiving this lift-crown from God.

His own promise reveals and displays it.

His peculiar regard to those who love him doubly ensures it.

His own hand shall give it. Let us encounter trial cheerfully.

Let us wait for the time of approval patiently.

Let us expect the crown of life most joyfully and gather courage from the assurance of it.

**Perseveres** (5278)(**hupomeno** from **hupó** = under, as in under the rule of someone + **méno** = to abide or remain - see study of noun **hupomone**) means literally to remain under but not simply with resignation, but with a vibrant hope.

**Hupomeno** is in the **present tense** which calls for this perseverance to be one's lifestyle. Bearing up under the trying ordeal is to be our habitual practice. **How can we do this?** We can't but He can and He always said He would. Some say "Let go and let God" but that absolves the believer of personal responsibility. We still need to make a volitional choice to bear up but even this motivation to please God is initiated by the indwelling Holy Spirit (see Php 2:12, 13, especially verse 13 - see notes Php 2:12; 13), Who also provides the power, energizing us to be able to endure as more than conquerors in Christ Jesus our Lord. Don't misunderstand. Sure we will fail to bear up from time to time, for we are human. But when we do, we can return and repent and then press on in the test. Although some theologians argue against this truth, the Biblical truth is that perseverance is one of the signs of genuine faith. Our perseverance does not save us but demonstrates that we are genuinely saved.

**2Ti 2:12** (see notes) If we **endure** (**hupomeno** in the present tense), we shall also reign with Him... (cp same idea of "perseverance of the saints" in a number of NT passages - He 3:6-note, He 3:14-note, He 10:35,36-note, Mt 24:13, 10:22, Lu 8:15, 2Jn 9, 1Co 15:2-note)

**Robert Louis Stevenson** said that "Saints are sinners who keep on going."

The idea of **persevering** is not just to "grin and bear it" but to remain under trials in a such a way that we glorify God as we learn the lessons the trials are meant to teach us, instead of seeking ways to get out from under (cf the prefix preposition "**hupo**" = under) the trials and be relieved of the pressure.

**Hupomeno** has the following meanings depending on the context - **(1)** Stay behind, to tarry behind (beyond an expected time), to remain (as in Acts 17:14, Luke 2:43). **(2)** To stand fast, endure or remain in the sense of persevering so that under affliction, trouble, opposition or trial one holds fast to one's belief or faith (Mt 10:22, 24:13, Mark 13:13, James 5:11, et al). The idea is to be patient under, to persevere and to do so bear bravely and calmly (from Thayer).

**Wayne Detzler** recounts an amazing true life example of Christian perseverance writing that...

True Christian **perseverance** is not tied to tenacity. It is rather the work of God the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. The starch in a saint's spine is shown by Scripture to be nothing less than the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way can one explain the work of **Gladys Aylward**, a London parlor maid. Societies scorned

her missionary application. She seemed too dull to master Chinese and fulfill her vision of serving in China. Realizing this, she scoured up her own fare to China and sailed in 1930. After slogging her way across Siberia she reached her field in remote Yangcheng. When the Japanese invaded in 1940 she led 100 children on an epic journey that caught the imagination of Hollywood (**Ed**: Watch the movie about her life - [The Inn of the Sixth Happiness](#) or [DVD](#)). In 1947 failing health forced her back to England where she crusaded for missions until her death in 1970. That was tenacity, not just British grit. It is God's persevering grace. (borrow [New Testament Words in Today's Language](#) )

Another great example of a Christian who endured (persevered) under trials in a God honoring way is **William Wilberforce** ([biography in Wikipedia](#) or [short bio in Christian History](#)), even better read Eric Metaxas' great biography! - [Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery](#) the 19th-century parliamentarian, who was moved by the Lord to oppose the lucrative but humanly degrading slave trade. In 1807 Wilberforce brought about the banning of the slave trade in England but it was not until 1833 was slavery as an institution abolished, this news reaching Wilberforce even as he lay on his deathbed. Talk about persevering!

On the other hand take the life of British author Samuel Coleridge, who was undisciplined and so did not persevere. Here's how William Barclay described it...

Nothing was ever achieved without discipline; and many an athlete and many a man has been ruined because he abandoned discipline and let himself grow slack. Coleridge is the supreme tragedy of undiscipline. Never did so great a mind produce so little. He left Cambridge University to join the army; but he left the army because, in spite of all his erudition, he could not rub down a horse; he returned to Oxford and left without a degree. He began a paper called *The Watchman* which lived for ten numbers and then died. It has been said of him: "He lost himself in visions of work to be done, that always remained to be done."

Coleridge had every poetic gift but one—the gift of sustained and concentrated effort. In his head and in his mind he had all kinds of books, as he said himself, "completed save for transcription. I am on the eve," he said, "of sending the press two octavo volumes." But the books were never composed outside Coleridge's mind, because he would not face the discipline of sitting down to write them out. No one ever reached any eminence, and no one having reached it ever maintained it, without discipline. (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1958), vol. 1, 284.)

**Spurgeon** said "By perseverance the snail reached the ark." He also said "A poor woman had a supply of coal laid at her door by a charitable neighbor. A very little girl came out with a small fire-shovel, and began to take up a shovelful at a time, and carry it to a sort of bin in the cellar. I said to the child, 'Do you expect to get all that coal in with that little shovel?' She was quite confused at my question, but her answer was very striking, 'Yes, sir, if I work long enough.' Humble worker, make up for your want of ability by abundant continuance in well-doing, and your life-work will not be trivial. The repetition of small efforts will effect more than the occasional use of great talents.

**Perseverance** is also illustrated in nature for yoday's mighty oak is just yesterday's little nut that held its ground

**Coleman Cox** offered another example from nature noting that "Even the woodpecker owes his success to the fact that he uses his head and keeps pecking away until he finishes the job he starts."

**Samuel Johnson** - Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.

**William Secker** put it well when he said that "Though Christians be not kept altogether from falling, yet they are kept from falling altogether."

**Hupomeno** was a military term used of an army's holding a vital position at all costs. Every hardship and every suffering was to be endured in order to hold fast.

**Endurance** is a critical Christian virtue. Unless we have **endurance** , we can never learn many of the truths that God wants us to learn, truths that will lead us into a deeper life and a more fruitful ministry. Children are usually impatient; they cannot sit still long enough to get the things done that need to be done. "How long do we have to wait?" is the stock question of the child. Impatience is a mark of immaturity. Impatience is also a mark of unbelief.

**Trench** defined **hupomeno** (**hupomone**) as manifesting the

temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting.

**Trials** ([3986](#)) (**peirasmos** from **peirazo** = to make trial of, try, tempt, prove in either a good or bad sense) describes first the idea of putting to the test and then refers to the tests or pressures that come in order to discover a person's nature or the quality of some thing. In short, the word **peirasmos** has a "double meaning" depending on the context and depending on how one responds to the



trial/test. In the present context the primary meaning is trial or test which in itself is not an enticement to evil, for he states we are not to **resist** (as one would if the intent were evil) but to **endure** (which supports the meaning of a "neutral" trial).

Think of yourself as a tube of "spiritual toothpaste". Pressure brings out what's really on the inside! Or as another has said Christians are a lot like tea bags. You don't know what's inside of them until you drop them in hot water. Your faith develops when things don't go as planned. It purifies your faith.

**Thomas Manton** - Afflictions do not make the people of God miserable. There's a great deal of difference between a Christian and a man of the world: his best estate is vanity (Ps. 39:5), and a Christian's worst is happiness. He that loveth God is like a die; cast him high or low, he is still upon a square: he may be sometimes afflicted, but he is always happy.

**John Legge** - The most durable and precious metal in the ancient arts was the Corinthian bronze, which was said to have first been caused by the fusing of all the precious metals when Corinth was burned. The most precious products of experience are got in the fire of trial.

**Dean Stanley** - An old sailor was asked for what purpose shoals and rocks were created, and the reply was, "That sailors may avoid them." A Christian philosopher, using that axiom, upon being asked for what purpose trials and temptations are sent, answered, "That we may overcome and use them." The true dignity of life is not found in escaping difficulties, but in mastering them for Christ's sake and in Christ's strength.

As **Kistemaker** says...

God tests man's faith to learn whether it is genuine and true. For instance, we test the purity of a bowl made of lead crystal by lightly tapping the outer edge. Immediately we know its genuineness when we hear a reverberating, almost musical sound. We also know that the lead crystal bowl went through the fire when it was made. Similarly, God tests the faith of man as, for example, in the case of Job. Faith that is not tried and true is worthless. God wants the believer to come to him in a time of trial so that he may give him the strength to endure. God is not interested in seeing the believer falter and fail; he wants him to endure, overcome, and triumph. See how Peter encourages his readers to persevere: "But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God" (1Pe 2:20-note). (Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. Vol. 14: New Testament commentary : Exposition of James and the Epistles of John. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House)

**J C Ryle** - Trials are intended to make us think, to wean us from the world, to send us to the Bible, to drive us to our knees.

**Spurgeon** explains the great value of his personal trials writing...

I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the crucible and the furnace, the bellows that have blown up the coals, and the hand which has thrust me into the heat?... I bear my witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days... I can bear my personal testimony that the best piece of furniture that I ever had in the house was a cross. I do not mean a material cross; I mean the cross of affliction and trouble... In shunning a trial we are seeking to avoid a blessing. ([The Trial of Your Faith](#))

**Stulac** - James the Just, with his deep moral earnestness, wants to help suffering Christians find the strength to make tough moral choices. He therefore calls us to face the issue of worth. Persevering is worth doing, because the crown of life is worth more than avoiding the trial. James calls for courageous applications of this principle. Giving up on a difficult ministry, retaliating against people who are mistreating you, withdrawing from active participation in worship and fellowship, compromising moral standards, interrupting your life of obedience, turning away from a walk of fellowship with the Lord—all these responses to adversity assume that escaping the trial is of more value than gaining the crown of life. The Christian is called to place greater value on the goal of becoming mature and complete in Christ. With such applications, the Christian life is taken out of the realm of sentimentality and placed in the realm of significant moral choice. When a Christian's spouse is unfaithful and abandons the marriage, is Christ still worth obeying? When a Christian's financial security is threatened or wrecked, is Christ still worth trusting? When a Christian's physical health is crippled, is Christ still worth adoring? When a Christian's family member is killed, is Christ still worth serving? When a Christian's actions are misunderstood or slandered, is Christ still worth devotion? Even if the Christian loses everything else, is Christ still worth honoring, and is the crown of life still worth the perseverance in faith? The answer is decisively yes! "Afflictions are but as a dark entry into our Father's house," wrote Thomas Brooks. Christians through the generations of the church have borne testimony to this experience. In the midst of the suffering we are able to see little or no point to it all. So we cry to God, "Why?" Afterward, whether very soon or much later, we find such good resulting from the suffering that we reach the point of being able to say sincerely, "The good I have seen coming out of the trial, especially the benefit of my knowing God far better now, is worth the suffering it took to get me here."



Because we value the Lord and his kingdom and the crown of life more than we value ease or comfort, it becomes the choice of realism and wisdom to consider it pure joy whenever we face trials of many kinds. "However reluctant we may be to embrace it, we know that suffering rightly received is one of the Christian's supreme means of grace" (Wenham 1974:79). ([Stulac, G. M. James. The IVP New Testament commentary Series. Downers Grove, Ill. USA: InterVarsity Press](#) )

**Peirasmos** connotes trouble or something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy, and happiness in someone's life. Trials rightly faced are harmless and in fact beneficial to the saint as Peter (and James 1 explain), but wrongly met become temptations to evil as explained below.

The KJV has "**temptations**" instead of "**trials**". The English word "temptation" originally referred to trials, whether good or bad, but the evil sense has monopolized the word in modern English.

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**What the Clutch Player Wins** - In the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Kerri Strug faced the trial of her life. She had injured her ankle on the vault and was in great pain as she approached her final attempt to determine whether the U.S. gymnastics team would win the gold medal. She moved the crowd with an incredible performance in spite of the pain she was enduring, and the United States won gold. When asked how she did it, she said she focused on her coach, who kept telling her she could do it and who reminded her of what was at stake. When we are hurting during a trial, we need to put our focus on the right place. The payoff for being a faithful clutch player is found in James 1:12: "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." A little-known fact about Michael Jordan is that in addition to his numerous buzzer beaters, he also missed over three hundred last-second shots during his career. It takes a lot of pain and frustration to become a great clutch player. Yet over time your perseverance will bring great victory, a crown of life as a reward you can enjoy today and for eternity. (Tony Evans)

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**Joyful Trials** - The Bible tells us to respond to difficult circumstances in a way that is directly opposed to our natural tendency. One of the most challenging of those commands is this: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

Other translations speak of viewing our difficulties with pure joy, considering ourselves happy—not resisting trials and temptations as intruders but welcoming them as friends. I don't know about you, but that's not the first thing that pops into my mind.

This outlook would seem absurd and unattainable if not for the reason behind it: "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:3). An attitude of joy is not based on what we feel but on what we know of God and His work in our lives. Therefore, a painful process that yields a desired goal can be welcomed as a friend.

It's not the testing of our strength but the trying of our faith in Almighty God that develops our endurance. Through it all, the Lord promises wisdom for today (James 1:5) and a crown of life for those who persevere (James 1:12).

My natural response to difficult circumstances is "Oh, no!" The Lord wants me to see what He can accomplish through them and say, "Oh, yes!" --By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The deeper meaning of my trials  
O Lord, You've kept from me;  
But some small part of Your great plan  
I pray, Lord, help me see.  
—D. De Haan

Joy in trials comes from  
knowing that the outcome will be good.

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**Count It All Joy** - A pastor placed this sign on his door: "If you have problems, come in and tell me all about them. If you don't have any problems, come in and tell me how you avoid them."

What do we do when problems come unannounced and with great intensity? James told us to "count it all joy," because trials do not happen without a reason. He said, "The testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete" (James 1:3, 4). Armed with this understanding, our prayer changes from asking God "why" to thanking Him for what He is doing.

Having endured many trials and facing a new struggle with cancer, Our Daily Bread author Joanie Yoder shared her thoughts in a letter: "I have relinquished my destiny to God's will. Nothing, praise God, not even cancer, can thwart His will. I may have cancer, but

cancer doesn't have me—God alone has me. So in this light, I would value your prayers that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

Trials are unavoidable and unpredictable, and they come in an unimaginable variety. Knowing that our sovereign God will walk with us and use trials to deepen our maturity, we can count them "all joy." — Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know, whatever befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.  
—Crosby

**We can endure trials in this life because of the joys in the life to come.**

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**Vincent** adds that in regard to the meaning of **peirasmos** it

"is a mistake to define this word as only solicitation to evil. It means trial of any kind, without reference to its moral quality."

The context determines whether the intended purpose of the "temptation" is for good or for evil. This distinction is brought out in chapter 1 of James.

James first use of **peirasmos** refers to "trials for good" (as in 1 Peter 1:6), where he exhorted the saints to

**Consider** it (aorist imperative ~ do it now once and for all!) all (wholly) joy ("whole joy", unmixed joy, without admixture of sorrow, not just "some joy" along with much grief! How is this possible? The Spirit produces His joy in you - see notes Galatians 5:22), my brethren, when (implies temptations are to be expected) you encounter (fall into the midst of so as to be totally surrounded by) various (poikilos - all "shapes and sizes" of) **trials** (peirasmos), knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ([James 1:2-3](#)).

God brings (allows) such tests (peirasmos) to prove and increase the strength and quality of one's faith and to demonstrate its validity (read all of [James 1](#) for full context). Every trial becomes a test of faith designed to strengthen the believer's faith, but if the believer fails the test by wrongly responding, then that test becomes a temptation or a solicitation to evil.

Later **James** uses the root verb form (peirazo) explaining that no one should

"say when he is **tempted** (peirazo), "I am being **tempted** (peirazo) by God"; for God cannot be tempted (apeirastos from a = without + peirazo = tempt > incapable of being tempted) by evil, and He Himself does not **tempt** (peirazo) anyone." ([James 1:13](#))

## Torrey's Topic The Blessed

- Whom God chooses -Psalms 65:4; Ephesians 1:3,4
- Whom God calls -Isaiah 51:2; Revelation 19:9
- Who know Christ -Matthew 16:16,17
- Who know the gospel -Psalms 89:15
- Who are not offended at Christ -Matthew 11:6
- Who believe -Luke 1:45; Galatians 3:9
- Whose sins are forgiven -Psalms 32:1,2; Romans 4:7
- To whom God imputes righteousness without works -Romans 4:6-9
- Whom God chastens -Job 5:17; Psalms 94:12
- Who suffer for Christ -Luke 6:22
- Who have the Lord for their God -Psalms 144:15
- Who trust in God -Psalms 2:12; 34:8; 40:4; 84:12; Jeremiah 17:7
- Who fear God -Psalms 112:1; 128:1,4
- Who hear and keep the word of God -Ps 119:2; James 1:24; Mt 13:16; Lk 11:28; Re 1:3; 22:7

- Who delight in the commandments of God -Psalms 112:1
- Who keep the commandments of God -Revelation 22:14
- Who wait for the Lord -Isaiah 30:18
- Whose strength is in the Lord -Psalms 84:5
- Who hunger and thirst after righteousness -Matthew 5:6
- Who frequent the house of God -Psalms 65:4; 84:5
- Who avoid the wicked -Psalms 1:1
- Who endure temptation -James 1:12
- Who watch against sin -Revelation 16:15
- Who rebuke sinners -Proverbs 24:25
- Who watch for the Lord -Luke 12:37
- Who die in the Lord -Revelation 14:13
- Who have part in the first resurrection -Revelation 20:6
- Who favour saints -Genesis 12:3; Ruth 2:10
- The undefiled -Psalms 119:1
- The pure in heart -Matthew 5:8
- The just -Psalms 106:3; 10:6
- The children of the just -Proverbs 20:7
- The righteous -Psalms 5:12
- The generation of the upright -Psalms 112:2
- The faithful -Proverbs 28:20
- The poor in spirit -Matthew 5:3
- The meek -Matthew 5:5
- The merciful -Matthew 5:7
- The bountiful -Deuteronomy 15:10; Psalms 41:1; Pr 22:9; Lk 14:13,14
- The peace-makers -Matthew 5:9
- Holy mourners -Matthew 5:4; Luke 6:21
- Saints at the judgment day -Matthew 25:34

Who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God -Luke 14:15; Re 19:9

#### FOR ONCE HE HAS BEEN APPROVED: *hoti dokimos genomenos* (AMPMSN):

- Deuteronomy 8:2; 13:3; Proverbs 17:3; Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2,3; Hebrews 11:17; 1Peter 1:6,7; 1Peter 5:10
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### PASSING THE DIVINE TEST

**For once** (*hoti*) is used here as a subordinating conjunction as a marker of causality and could also be translated *because*. James is explaining the reason for the beatitude associated with perseverance. **Wuest** renders it "because after he has met the test and has been approved." The point is that the promised beatitude will be given **after** we have completed the test. It follows that if we are to receive a reward, we must be tested, must submit to the test and must endure the test to the end. This **process** proves we are genuine ("approved").

**Approved** (1384) (*dokimos* from *dokime* = test, proof, trial = idea is that when you put metal through a fiery testing and it comes out on the other side enduring it "proven", "authentic" or "genuine" **Click** discussion of related word *dokimazo* and the antonym = *adokimos*) describes one who has stood the test. *Dokimos* conveys the idea of being tested and passing the test, so that God's "Good (God) Housekeeping" stamp of approval is on your life.

**Dokimos** occurs 7 times in the NT (Ro 14:18; 16:10; 1Co 11:19; 2Co 10:18; 13:7; 2Ti 2:15; Jas 1:12) and 6 times in the Septuagint (LXX) primarily referring to **precious metals** - refined or pure - Ge 23:16; 1Ki 10:18; 1Chr 28:18; 29:4; 2Chr 9:17; Zech 11:13

**Vine** writes that *dokimos* signifies "that which is approved by being proved, that which stands the test [Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#) In his lexicon Vine adds " The word is used of coins and metals in the Sept.; in Ge 23:16 (this is Brenton's English translation of the Septuagint), "four hundred shekels of silver **approved** with merchants (Hebrew = "passing for the merchant." The final clause

affirms that the measurement of silver was according to the standards used by the merchants of the time);" in Zech 11:13, in regard to the 30 pieces of silver, "Cast them into a furnace and I will see if it is good (approved) metal."

**Donald Barnhouse** - In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called "dokimos" or "approved"

**Wuest** adds this description that **dokimos** means to "put to the test for the purpose of being approved, and having met specifications, having the stamp of approval placed upon one. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

A **dokimos** man or **dokimos** character is like metal which has been cleansed of all alloy and impurity. In James 1:12 (see below) the weaknesses of such a one have been eradicated and he emerges strong and pure. That which is dokimos is shown to be trustworthy and genuine.

**Approved** describes anything tested and fit for service. As alluded to above, this term was used of gold and silver which has been purified by fire of all alloy.

**Dokimos** is the word describing money which is genuine or as we would say sterling (silver) [sterling = conforming to the highest standard]. In other words, a persons must first be "proved" before being "approved". One so approved is assayed by the One Who has eyes like flames of fire (see **note** [Revelation 1:14](#)) yet passes this scrutiny and is counted as worthy.

**Dokimos** is a word which motivates one to have a "God consciousness" (cp "Coram Deo" - before the face of God!), a consciousness of His presence and of living and acting in His sight, so as to please Him in all things. (e.g., see the use by James below)

Sometimes it is helpful to get a sense of the meaning of a word by observing uses of its antonym and here **isaiah 1:22** presents us with a clear picture, where God is speaking to faithless Israel declaring...

Your silver has become **dross** (**Hebrew** = **siyg** = literally that which is turned away or skimmed off in the refining process, the waste or impurity, the refuse after smelting precious metal and figuratively that which is base or worthless), Your drink diluted with water. (**Note:** The **Septuagint -LXX** translates **siyg** with the Greek word **adokimos**, essentially the opposite of dokimos).

**Richards** writes that **dokimos** "is used in the NT in the sense of recognition, of being officially approved and accepted."

**William Barclay** - The Greek for **one who has stood the test** is **dokimos**, which describes anything which has been tested and is fit for service. For instance, it describes gold or silver which has been purified of all alloy in the fire. It is therefore the word for money which is genuine, or, as we would say, sterling. It is the word used for a stone which is fit to be fitted into its place in a building. A stone with a flaw in it was marked with a capital **A**, standing for **adokimastos**, which means tested and found wanting. Timothy was to be tested that he might be a fit weapon for the work of Christ, and therefore a workman who had no need to be ashamed. ([Barclay's comments on 2Timothy 2:15 from The Daily Study Bible](#)) Barclay adds that "To the man who meets trials in the right way there is joy here and hereafter. In this life he becomes a man of sterling worth. He is dokimos; he is like metal which is cleansed of all alloy. The weaknesses of his character are eradicated; and he emerges strong and pure." ([James 1 - Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**NIDNTT** - The root dek-, dechomai, accept, gives two verbal derivatives dokeo and dokao. The former means (intrans.) to appear, have the appearance, (trans.) to think, believe, consider right; the latter means expect. Derivatives of the former are: (a) dokimos, trustworthy, reliable, tested, recognized, used as a technical term for genuine, current coinage, but also applied to persons enjoying general esteem; (b) adokimos, untested, not respected; (c) indirectly also dokimion, test, probation; (d) from dokimos are also derived dokimazo, test, pronounce good, establish by trial, recognize, and apodokimazo, disapprove of, reject, blame; dokimasis and dokimasia, investigation, testing (preparatory to installing in an office); dokime, approved character, trial. (Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan [See this page for a few instructions on how to most efficiently utilize this incredible resource.](#))

**Spurgeon in Faith's Checkbook - Mark of Divine Approval** - YES, he is blessed while he is enduring the trial. No eye can see this till he has been anointed with heavenly eye salve. But he must endure it, and neither rebel against God, nor turn aside from his integrity. He is blessed who has gone through the fire and has not been consumed as a counterfeit. When the test is over, then comes the hallmark of divine approval, "the crown of life." As if the Lord said, "Let him live; he has been weighed in the balances, and he is not found wanting." Life is the reward: not mere being—but holy, happy, true existence—the realization of the divine purpose concerning us. Already a higher form of spiritual life and enjoyment crowns those who have safely passed through fiercest

trials of faith and love. The Lord hath promised the crown of life to those who love Him. Only lovers of the Lord will hold out in the hour of trial; the rest will either sink or sulk, or slink back to the world. Come, my heart, dost thou love thy Lord? Truly? Deeply? Wholly? Then that love will be tried, but many waters will not quench it, neither will the floods drown it. Lord, let thy love nourish mine to the end. (Spurgeon, C. Faith's Checkbook)

**HE WILL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE WHICH THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM: lempsetai (3SFMI) ton stephanon tes zoes, on epeggeilato (3SAMI) tois agaposin (PAPMPD) auton:**

- **Crown** - Mt 25:34; Lk 22:28, 29, 30; Ro 2:7, 8, 9, 10; 1Co 9:25; 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 1:7; 4:13; 1Pe 5:4; Re 2:10; 3:21
- James 2:5; Is 64:4; Mt 10:22; 19:28,29
- James 2:5; Ex 20:6; Deut 7:9; Neh 1:5; Ps 5:11; Ro 8:28; 1Co 2:9; 8:3; 1Pe 1:8; 1Jn 4:19
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CROWN OF LIFE

**Will receive** (2983) (**lambano**) means to take hold of, to grasp, to seize. Lambano can indicate either benevolent and hostile actions, and have as object either people or things; e.g. take a wife, collect taxes, accept a verdict, take a road, and figuratively take courage. It is used with a material subject, as when, for example, fear or terror seizes men. In the present context clearly James is speaking of a benevolent action, the crown of life. Note that it is one that we receive as a gift from a gracious God, not one that we earn by our works/merit.

**Paul** speaks of a similar **reward** in his last letter to Timothy explaining that...

in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2Ti 4:8 -note)

**The crown of life** - Note that the tested and approved believer will not receive **life**, but **the crown of life**, which Hiebert explains as "Eternal life as the final consummation of our salvation in eternity. The genitive "of life" is best taken as an appositional genitive, the crown which consists of eternal life in the full, final sense of the term. It is God's gracious reward to those who have been rendered fit for that life by their approved character. The article with "life" (tes zoes) points to that eternal life in all its fullness awaiting the attested believer. Burdick remarks, "Since it is a reward for an accomplishment subsequent to initial faith, it must refer to a still higher quality of life." It is not merely escape from eternal condemnation, but the believer's eternal enjoyment of life as the approved of God in His presence." ([Ibid](#))

## COUNT IT JOY

by Susan Peterson

Count it joy, and never be discouraged,  
When by trials your life is sorely pressed.  
For you know that when your faith is tested,  
Your endurance then develops best.  
Perseverance must complete its working;  
You will need to let it have its way.  
When it's done, you'll be complete and perfect,  
Having all you need to meet each day.

So if any one of you lacks wisdom,  
Ask of God, who always hears and cares.  
He gives freely without asking questions;  
His abundance will become your share.  
But when asking, you must never falter,  
Like a wave that's blown and tossed about.  
If you do, you'll never gain God's blessing;  
Double-minded, you'll succumb to doubt.

Blest the man who perseveres in trial;

For you know the testing soon will pass.  
When it's o'er and you have stood unmoving,  
You'll receive the crown of life at last.  
But when tempted, never be accusing;  
It's not God who leads you from the path.  
Your own lusts seduce you and entice you,  
Giving birth to sin, and sin to death.

Do not let yourself yield to deception;  
God's the source of every perfect gift.  
He's the Maker of the stars in heaven,  
Changing not as shadows move and shift.  
For He chose a spirit birth to give you,  
Through the Word of truth that you believed.  
Thus are you the firstfruits of His labors;  
By His grace, salvation is achieved.

**William Barclay** comments (see more by Barclay with some repetition under Stephanos below)...

In the life to come he receives the crown of life. There is far more than one thought here. In the ancient world the crown (stephanos, Greek #4735) had at least four great associations.

(a) The crown of flowers was worn at times of joy, at weddings and at feasts (compare Isaiah 28:1-2; SS 3:11). The crown was the sign of festive joy.

(b) The crown was the mark of royalty. It was worn by kings and by those in authority. Sometimes this was the crown of gold; sometimes it was the linen band, or fillet, worn around the brows (compare Psalms 21:3; Jeremiah 13:18).

(c) The crown of laurel leaves was the victor's crown in the games, the prize which the athlete coveted above all (compare 2 Timothy 4:8).

(d) The crown was the mark of honour and of dignity. The instructions of parents can bring a crown of grace to those who listen to them (Proverbs 1:9); Wisdom provides a man with a crown of glory (Proverbs 4:9); in a time of disaster and dishonor it can be said, "The crown has fallen from our head" (Lamentations 5:16).

We do not need to choose between these meanings. They are all included. The Christian has a joy that no other man can ever have. Life for him is like being for ever at a feast. He has a royalty that other men have never realized for, however humble his earthly circumstances, he is the child of God. He has a victory which others cannot win, for he meets life and all its demands in the conquering power of the presence of Jesus Christ. He has a new dignity for he is ever conscious that God thought him worth the life and death of Jesus Christ.

What is the crown? It is the crown of life; and that phrase means that it is the crown which consists of life. The crown of the Christian is a new kind of living which is life indeed; through Jesus Christ he has entered into life more abundant.

James says that if the Christian meets the testings of life in the steadfast constancy which Christ can give, life becomes infinitely more splendid than ever it was before. The struggle is the way to glory, and the very struggle itself is a glory. ([James 1 - Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Moo** - The crown is the emblem of spiritual success, given by the King of the universe to those who 'keep their faith' in the midst of suffering and temptation. Life should be taken as identifying the reward—the reward that is life. (See [The Letter of James](#). The Pillar New Testament commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos - or borrow Moo's [Tyndale commentary on James](#))

O the friends that now are waiting,  
In the cloudless realms of day,  
Who are calling me to follow  
Where their steps have led the way;

They have laid aside their armor,



And their earthly course is run;  
They have kept the faith with patience  
And their crown of life is won.

[\(Play hymn\)](#)

**Crown** (4735) (**stephanos** from **stepho** = to encircle, twine or wreath) was a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard.

There are 25 uses of **stephanos** in the NT - Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2, 5; Acts 6:5, 8f; 7:59; 8:2; 11:19; 22:20; 1Co. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1Th 2:19; 2Ti 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1Pe 5:4; Re 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10; 6:2; 9:7; 12:1; 14:14. Note the concentration of uses in the Revelation.

There are 29 uses of **stephanos** in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) - 2Sa 12:30; 1 Chr. 20:2; Est. 8:15; Job 19:9; 31:36; Ps. 21:3; 65:10; Prov. 1:9; 4:9; 12:4; 14:24; 16:31; 17:6; Cant. 3:11; Isa. 22:18, 21; 28:1, 3, 5; 62:3; Jer. 13:18; Lam. 2:15; 5:16; Ezek. 16:12; 21:26; 23:42; 28:12; Zech. 6:11, 14. Note that in the Septuagint, **stephanos** in some contexts symbolizes a special honor or as representative of happiness and prosperity (Ps 21:3; Pr 12:4; 16:31; Lam 5:16; Ezek.16:12) and also of a royal crown (2Sa 12:30; 1Chr 20:2 Zech. 6:11).

The **stephanos** was literally an adornment worn around the head as a crown of victory in the Greek athletic games, this reward being given to the runner who crossed the goal first, to the disc thrower with the longest toss, etc. Apart from recognition of athletes and winners of various kinds of competitions, in the Greco-Roman world, the awarding of a crown or wreath signified appreciation for exceptional contributions to the state or groups within it. The recipients were usually public officials or civic-minded persons serving at their own expense

**Paul** uses the image of a **crown** in his first epistle to the Corinthians writing...

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (1Co 9:24-note, 1Co 9:25-note)

**Comment:** No one competing in the Olympic games received a crown until the race is over. In this present life we are charged to "run with endurance" (cp He 12:1, 2-note) and not to shrink back (cp He 10:38, 39-notes) when the trials come. James sets before us the grand reward that awaits those who persevere, loving God.

Many were the sorts of crowns which were in use amongst the Roman victors:

- (1) Corona civica, a crown made of oaken boughs, which was given by the Romans to him that saved the life of any citizen in battle against his enemies.
- (2) Obsidionalis, which was of grass, given to him that delivered a town or city from siege.
- (3) Muralis, which was of gold, given to him that first scaled the wall of any town or castle.
- (4) Castralis, which was likewise of gold, given to him that first entered the camp of the enemy.
- (5) Navalis, and that also of gold, given to him that first boarded the ship of an enemy.
- (6) Ovalis (and that of myrtle), which was given to those captains that subdued any town or city, or that won any field easily, without blood.
- (7) Triumphalis, which was of laurel, given to the chief general or consul who, after some signal victory, came home triumphing.

These, with many others, as imperial, regal, and princely crowns (rather garlands or coronets than crowns), are not to be compared to the crown of glory which God hath prepared for those that love him. Who is able to express the glory of it; or to what glorious thing shall it be likened? If I had the tongue of men and angels, I should be unable to decipher it as it worthily deserveth. It is not only a crown of glory, but hath divers other titles of pre-eminency given unto it, of which all shall be true partakers that are godly; a crown of righteousness, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness; a crown of life, because those that have it shall be made capable of life eternal; a crown of stars, because they that receive it shall shine as stars for ever and ever. — John Spencer

**Barclay** adds that **stephanos** had the following associations in the ancient world...

(a) the **victor's crown** in the games. Smyrna had annual games which were famous all over Asia. As in the Olympic Games, the reward of the victorious athlete was the laurel crown. The Christian can win the crown of



victory in the contest of life.

(b) When a man had **faithfully performed the work of a magistrate**, at the end of his term of office he was granted a crown. He who throughout life faithfully serves Christ and his fellow-men will receive his crown.

(c) The heathen world was in the habit of wearing crowns, chaplets of flowers, at banquets. At the end of the day, if the Christian is loyal, he will have the joy of sitting as a guest at the banquet of God.

(d) The heathen worshippers were in the habit of wearing crowns when they approached the temples of their gods. At the end of the day, if he has been faithful, the Christian will have the joy of entering into the nearer presence of God.

(e) Some scholars have seen in this crown a reference to the halo or the nimbus which is round the head of divine beings in pictures. If that is so, it means that the Christian, if he is faithful, will be crowned with the life which belongs to God himself. ([The Daily Study Bible Series Comments on Revelation 2:8-11 The Letter to Smyrna](#))

The **stephanos** was the only prize ancient Olympic athletes received and thus it was cherished as a great treasure. How much more should we as believers "run with endurance the race that is set before" (see **note** Hebrews 12:1) us, knowing that the Olympic athletes

do it to receive a perishable **wreath** (stephanos) but we an imperishable." (See **note** on 1Cor 9:25)

**TDNT** has a lengthy note on **stephanos**...

The crown, as a wreath placed around the head, is a sign of life and fertility, and perhaps also a symbol of light. It has a place in the cultus and supposedly wards off evil. The closed crown is used in magic. The crown expresses joy and honor, but also sorrow. It acknowledges excellence.

**II. Nature.** The simplest crown consists of a bent twig or of two twigs tied together. Wreaths of grass, leaves, or flowers also occur. The Dionysus cult uses ivy, oak, and acanthus, Neptune and Pan wear wreaths of fig leaves, and Zeus of laurel. Soldiers wear crowns at triumphs, and victors wear laurel or olive wreaths. The myrtle signifies love. Roman magistrates wear gold crowns, and Etruscan crowns, also used at Rome, are of precious stones and golden oak

### **III. Use.**

1. The Cultus. In cultic acts priests wear various forms of crowns. Aeneas crowns his brow with twigs when he first treads Roman soil and prays. Crowns are placed on sacrifices and altars, and are even offered in sacrifice. Images are crowned when dedicated to cultic use and on the feasts of the gods. The crown expresses reverence; Empedocles takes it as a mark of veneration when crowned.

2. Oracles. Crowns evoke true dreams. The person who delivers the oracle wears a crown. When Creon comes back crowned after consulting the oracle he is hailed as a messenger of joy. Roman frescoes depict crowned prophetesses.

3. Processions and Feasts. Crowning takes place in relation to prayer-processions. On the New Year feast at Rome houses are adorned with crowns or wreaths. Animals are also crowned or garlanded at various feasts.

4. A Sign of Salvation and Protection. Various examples show that crowns are viewed as signs of protection. Thus Tiberius wears a laurel wreath during thunderstorms. Wreaths are put at the entrances to houses. Crowns also serve as a means of power and protection in the invocation of gods or demons in magic.

5. The Mysteries. Mystagogues bear myrtle branches in the Eleusinian mysteries, and neophytes in the Isis mysteries. A crown is handed to the mystagogue in the dedication ceremonies of Mithras.

6. Political Life. Cultic and political life are closely related, hence it is natural that those who hold national office should be crowned. When politicians give orations in Athens they wear wreaths as a sign of immunity. The Roman emperor, his family, the priests, and state officials all wear crowns in processions.

7. The Games. Held in honor of the gods, sporting festivals culminate when the victors, who struggle hard to win, are crowned with wreaths of laurel, olive, or ivy. The herald calls their names, and the names of their fathers and towns, and then hands over the wreaths. The ceremony ends in their homes, which also bear wreaths. In the final rites they offer their wreaths to the deity.

8. The Army. The Spartans put on crowns before doing battle, perhaps in connection with sacrifice and as a

sign of protection. In the Roman army the general wears a crown to purify the troops before battle. The goddess of victory is depicted with a crown, and there are crowns for the victors, whether of grass, oak leaves, or laurel. An ancient Roman custom is to offer prisoners for sale with crowns on; this possibly derives from a Germanic practice of sacrificing prisoners.

#### 9. Private Life.

a. A Sign of Joy and Respect. Various examples illustrate the use of the crown or wreath as a mark of joy or respect.

b. Weddings. It is natural that there should be crownings at weddings. Thus we have depictions of brides with crowns, and the guests at the wedding feast also wear crowns.

c. Symposia. Wreaths adorn the participants at banquets and the ensuing symposia, which are held in honor of various gods. The wreaths express festal joy but also serve to cool the head during drinking. Wreaths are also placed on the bowls and vessels and on the walls of the rooms where the feasts are held.

10. The Cult of the Dead. A common custom is to put wreaths on the dead, on the bier, and on the grave. Permanent wreaths are carved on gravestones and funds are set up for regular adornment with wreaths. The wreaths honor the dead but also protect them against demons. Plato hands down an idea that in Hades there will be a symposium for the righteous at which they will be adorned with crowns. The mysteries promise initiates that in the hereafter they will be adorned with crowns and will enjoy the company of the blessed. (borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**Life** (2222) (**zoe**) in Scripture is used (1) to refer to **physical life** (Ro 8:38-note, 1Co 3:22, Php 1:20-note, James 4:14, etc) but more often to (2) to **supernatural life** in contrast to a life subject to eternal death (Jn 3:36, see all 43 uses of "eternal life" below). This quality of life speaks of fullness of life which alone belongs to God the Giver of life and is available to His children now (Ro 6:4-note, Ep 4:18-note) as well as in eternity future (Mk 10:30, Titus 1:2-note on Eternal Life) for those who have received the gift of life found in Christ Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6).

**Richards** writes that..

Zoe in classical Greek refers to natural life--the principle that enables living things to move and to grow. In the NT, zoe focuses on the theological meaning rather than on the biological. From the perspective of the NT, in every respect life is the counterpart of death. Each book of the NT speaks of zoe. In each, the principle of life lifts our vision beyond our earthly existence to reveal a unique quality of life that spans time and eternity and that has its roots in God. It is the biblical use and meaning of zoe that most concerns us as we examine what the NT says about life. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

**Wuest** (in comments on 2Pe 1:3-note) writes that **zoe**...

speaks of life in the sense of one who is possessed of vitality and animation. It is used of the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God. It is used to designate the life which God gives to the believing sinner, a vital, animating, spiritual, ethical dynamic which transforms his inner being and as a result, his behavior.

(In comments on 1Jn 1:2 Wuest adds) here used as Thayer indicates, as "the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God." Thus, this life that God is, is not to be defined as merely animation, but as definitely ethical in its content. God is not the mere reason for the universe, as the Greeks thought, but a Person with the characteristics and qualities of a divine Person. The ethical and spiritual qualities of this life which God is, are communicated to the sinner when the latter places his faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and this becomes the new, animating, energizing, motivating principle which transforms the experience of that individual, and the saint thus lives a Christian life. The message of John is that since the believer is a partaker of this life, it is an absolute necessity that he show the ethical and spiritual qualities that are part of the essential nature of God, in his own life. If these are entirely absent, John says, that person is devoid of the life of God, and is unsaved. The ethical and spiritual qualities of this life were exhibited to the human race in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. His life thus becomes the pattern of what our lives should be in holiness, self-sacrifice, humility, and love. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Promised** (1861) ([epaggello](#) from **epí** = intensifies meaning + **aggéllō** = tell, declare) means to announce with certainty as to what one will do. In Classic Greek it was used of announcing a summons or issuing a command. To promise is to make a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified. The non-lying God makes a legally binding declaration of what He will give the person who loves endures trials and love him and therefore who has a right to expect the reception of this glorious beatitude, the

crown of life. The **aorist tense** records the historical fact that the promise was given and thus stated by the non-lying God, stands firm and sure regarding its consummation. There is no "gamble" involved in this promise.

**Those who love God** - This phrase or a similar phrase is a common designation for God's people both in the OT (Ex 20:6; Ps 97:10-[Spurgeon's note](#); Ps 145:20-[Spurgeon's note](#)) and the NT (Ro 8:28-note; 1Co 2:9; 2Ti 4:8-note; 1Pe 1:7, 8-notes).

**Love** (verb) (25) (**agapao**-see related study of noun **agape**) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (John 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24). Note that **agapao** is a verb and by its verbal nature calls for action. This quality of love is not an emotion but is an action initiated by a volitional choice. And the **present tense** signifies that his reader's (verb is plural) have a continuing love for God.

**How do believers love God?** Certainly they can say it and pray it, but ultimately the aphorism still applies that actions speak louder than words. If we love God with our lips, we should demonstrate it with our life. Let's listen to our Lord's words to those who call themselves His disciples (cp Mk 8:34, 35, 36, Lk 9:23)...

**Jn 14:15** If you love Me, you will **keep** (tereo) My commandments.

**Comment:** The key verb explaining love is '**keep**' = keep an eye on, keep something in view, to attend carefully, or to watch over it. **Tereo** speaks of guarding something which is in one's possession. It means to watch as one would some precious thing.

**Jn 14:21** "He who has My commandments and **keeps** (**tereo - word study**; present tense = not perfectly but as the general "tenor" of their life) them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

**Jn 15:10** "If you **keep** (**tereo - word study**) My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

**Jn 21:15** So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love (agapao) Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (agapao) Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (agapao) You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (phileo) Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love (phileo) Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

**1Jn 2:5** but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

**1Jn 5:3** For this is the love of God, that **wekeep** (**tereo - word study**) His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

These Johannine passages clearly teach that **love** is an action based on a choice, which for a disciple is first and foremost manifest by the choice to obey the good and acceptable and perfect will of the Father and the Son. Don't hypocritically say "I love God" on Sunday in worship service and then spend the next 6 days doing your will on earth instead of His. No, we cannot live in perfect obedience but every waking moment should be marked by a sincere heart desire to please our Father Who art in heaven (cp 2Co 5:9, 2Ti 2:4-NOTE). With such a mindset, obedience is seen less as a duty and more as a privilege and pleasure. When we live this way our joy will be made full beloved (Jn 15:11). Why do we far too often grovel in the pig sties of this passing evil age when we could be continually dining at the Father's table, Whose banner over us is love.

**Hiebert** remarks that...

Their love for God is the outcome of their faith in Him, which produces willing endurance for Him (Jas 1:2, 3, 4-notes). Love is the essence of true faith. Where there is no love for God, death reigns...

The promised reward cannot be earned. It is God's gift to those who truly love Him. Indeed, "it is unattainable by those who do not serve God from a heart of love and devotion." An obedience that is motivated by a personal desire to win a reward is the very antithesis of Christian spirituality. The rewards that God promises

to those who love Him are of such a nature that only someone prompted by unselfish love for the Lord would be able to appreciate them. ([Ibid](#))

**Steven Cole** says that...

You might expect James to say, "the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who persevere," or "to those who obey," or "to those who believe in Him." But rather, he says, "to those who love Him." Why does he say this? I think it is because love for Christ keeps us from loving the world. Love for Christ motivates us to persevere under trials. Note that love for Christ does not exempt us from trials. Rather, it gives us the strength to persevere. Love for Christ is the inevitable result of belief in Him. If we don't love Him, we don't know Him (1Jn 4:8). When Jesus restored Peter after his denials, He asked him three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" (See John 21:15, 16, 17.) Why? Because love for Jesus Christ is the necessary motivation to serve Him, especially when serving Him causes hardship and persecution. If you're struggling with perseverance in trials, examine the quality of your love for Christ. ([James 1:9-12 Perspective for Perseverance](#))

**Moo** explains that in this verse...

Clearly James's overall purpose in this verse is to encourage believers to endure trials faithfully so that we might receive the reward that God has promised. Some Christians have a difficulty with rewards, objecting that our obedience to Christ should be pure and disinterested, unmotivated by any such crass consideration as future reward. This objection is understandable, and it is certainly the case that far too many Christians bring a selfish and calculating "bottom line" mentality into their service of the Lord, asking "What's in it for me?" at every step. But the contemplation of heaven's rewards is found throughout the NT as a spur to our faithfulness in difficult circumstances here on earth. Keeping our eyes on the prize can help motivate us to maintain spiritual integrity when faced with the temptations and sufferings of earthly life. Moreover, as Mitton aptly observes, "the rewards are of a kind that only a true Christian would be able to appreciate." (See [The Letter of James](#). The Pillar New Testament commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos - or borrow Moo's [Tyndale commentary on James](#))

**Gingrich** writes that...

If we trustingly and prayerfully endure our trials, we prove the genuineness of our faith toward God and of our love for God and then in the world to come, we will be given a victor's crown, a crown consisting of eternal life and its fulness. The award is given, not to trials or to endurance of trials, but to faith tested and proved to be genuine through trials. (Gingrich, R. E. The Book of James. Memphis, TN.: Riverside Printing)

**F B Meyer** writes that...

At His judgment-seat He (Christ) will weigh up the worth of our individual mortal life, and He is doing so day by day. Not only when we pass the threshold of death, but on this side, our Lord is judging our character and adjudicating our reward. Let us strive to be as well-pleasing to Him in this life, as we hope to be in the next.

Give us grace, O Lord, to work while it is day, fulfilling diligently and patiently whatever duty Thou appointest us; doing small things in the day of small things, and great labours if Thou summon us to any; rising and working, sitting still and suffering, according to Thy word. AMEN.

**Don Robinson** ([Reasons for Trials](#)) sums up this section...

God is trying to produce in us an enduring overcoming faith. We need to accept our trials; learn from them; pray for wisdom; rejoice in our trials; and thank God for them.

Trials and testings happen in our life to produce real Christian joy

Trials and testing happen in our life to produce in you an enduring faith

Trials and testings happen in our life to mature us as a Christian

Trials and testings happen in our life to drive us to prayer

Trials and testings happen to bring equality among the brethren

Trials and testings happen to bring us reward in heaven

To review note that James 1:1-12 expounds four truths which should encourage us when we experience trials -- God uses trials to produce staying power in those who endure. God provides wisdom to understand trials. Believers, whether rich or poor, find encouragement to rejoice over their position in life. God promises a reward to fill the believer with a sure, steadfast hope.

## O THAT WILL BE GLORY

by Charles Gabriel

When all my labors and trials are o'er,  
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,  
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.

O that will be glory for me, glory for me!  
When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory, be glory for me!

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## **Greg Laurie - THERE'S NO ESCAPING IT**

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

It was Martin Luther who said, "One Christian who has been tempted is worth a thousand who haven't been." Temptation is a subject we are all familiar with. None of us enjoy it, but it is a reality of the Christian life. No doubt we would rather there were no such thing as temptation. But it may surprise you to know that testing—even temptation—can have a positive effect in the life of a Christian.

It has been said, "Christians are a lot like tea bags. You don't know what they are made of until you put them into hot water." It is in the hot water of testing and temptation that we see what we are really made of. Everyone faces temptation in their lives. As James 1:13 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted. ..." This verse does not say if one is tempted, but when. Temptation is inevitable. There is no escaping it.

The word "tempt" means "to entice to do wrong by a promise of pleasure or gain." We must realize that it is not a sin to be tempted. Jesus himself was tempted, after all. Paul certainly grappled with it as well. But it is a sin when we give in to the temptation.

We don't want to underestimate the seductive power and pull of temptation. We make a big mistake when we say, "I can handle this." Famous last words. Even the strongest Christians are vulnerable to the enticements of the devil. Even those who have known the Lord for years are still susceptible to enemy's attacks.