

**ECCLESIA
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
Pastor Luther H. Holmes, Jr.
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Bible Enrichment Series**

**NINE TESTS EVERY BELIEVER MUST FACE
LESSON 2 – THE TIME TEST**

KEY CHAPTER: James 1:1-12 (Message Bible)

1 I, James, am a slave of God and the Master Jesus, writing to the twelve tribes scattered to Kingdom Come: Hello!

Faith Under Pressure

2-4 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work, so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

5-8 If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who "worry their prayers" are like wind-whipped waves. Don't think you're going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open.

9-11 When down-and-outers get a break, cheer! And when the arrogant rich are brought down to size, cheer! Prosperity is as short-lived as a wildflower, so don't ever count on it. You know that as soon as the sun rises, pouring down its scorching heat, the flower withers. Its petals wilt and, before you know it, that beautiful face is a barren stem. Well, that's a picture of the "prosperous life." At the very moment everyone is looking on in admiration, it fades away to nothing.

¹² Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.

Introduction

We are living in a time that most of us never would have expected or predicted. Now more than ever we recognize that we do not know what tomorrow holds.

In times like these the question must be asked, how should we, as followers of Jesus, respond during these unusual and uncertain times?

Tonight, we turn to the book of James where we have this reminder: that while trials are certain and come in all shapes and sizes, joy is possible as we recognize God's purpose and provision in the midst of our trials.

Context

James was the half-brother of Jesus, and he was a pastor in the church in Jerusalem in the years following Jesus's return to Heaven. ***James is writing to real people, in a real situation.*** These are people who are facing real trials. As individuals and as a church we must strive to have a view toward joy in the midst of unexpected situations. We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we can trust that God will use our trials to accomplish His purposes. As we navigate uncertain times we must trust His plan, submit to His work in us and go to Him in faith asking for wisdom.

The first phrase of verse 2 provides a call that frames the entire section that follows. James is calling on believers who are facing trials to consider their trials with joy. On its own this may seem like a call to unsubstantiated happiness, but the verses that follow reveal the reason saints can truly, *count it all joy*.

We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that our trials have a purpose (1:2-4) As we face trials, we can have this hope: That God is using our trials to make us perfect and complete. The call for joy or rejoicing in the knowledge that God uses trials to bring us to maturity is a theme throughout the New Testament (≡; Romans 5:1-5)

How can we endure with joy?) Jesus endured the cross with joy as his motivation (Hebrews 12:2) While Jesus endured the cross with joy, He still experienced pain, grief and sorrow (Matthew 26:37-39). Enduring with joy does not mean we don't experience pain, but it does mean that we have hope and purpose in the process. We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that God provides wisdom for the journey. In times of difficulty, we become acutely aware of our need for wisdom. It is easy to feel lost or unprepared. God does not leave us alone to find our way through our trials, He generously and graciously gives wisdom to those who ask in faith.

God is ready and willing to give wisdom, but there is a qualifier, we must ask believing that He will give it. We must trust that He will hear and answer our request. The person who doubts is described as double-minded and will not receive wisdom from God.

In this series, we will examine "Nine Tests Every Believer Must Face" knowing that they're all working together for our good. The nine tests for our learning are:

- (1) The Wilderness Test. (alone in storms)
- (2) The Test of Time (just waiting and waiting)
- (3) The Motivation Test (Doing the right things for the wrong reasons?)
- (4) The Failure Test (We all fail if we try to do something)
- (5) The Self Will Test (Are you stubborn in your ways?)
- (6) The Discouragement Test
- (7) The Misunderstanding Test
- (8) The Frustration Test
- (9) The Servant Test

Tonight we begin with Lesson 2

The Time Test (or Patience Test)

Genesis 12:1-2 (NIV)

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

[2] "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Genesis 12:3-4 (NIV)

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

[4] So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Genesis 12:5-6 (NIV)

He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

[6] Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

Genesis 12:7-8 (NIV)

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

[8] From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Genesis 12:9-10 (NIV)

Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

[10] Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

We love to focus upon the PROMISES...

- I will make you a great nation
- I will bless you
- I will make your name great
- You will be a blessing
- I will bless those that bless you
- I will curse those that curse you
- All of the people of the earth will be blessed through you

The Promise entailed for Abraham:

- Personal blessings from God
 - Personal protection from enemies
 - Personal purpose to live out
- Abraham was 75 years old when the promise was given. Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

- And Abraham STILL lived-in tents up until his death.
- Before the fulfillment of the promises—comes the TESTING OF TIME.

The promises are not fulfilled IMMEDIATELY

- To know what is in your heart TO SEE IF YOU WOULD KEEP HIS COMMANDS OR NOT.
- To humble you TO TEACH YOU THAT MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.

The Reason for the TIME TEST is to:

- Force the Believer to TRUST GOD in all things.
- Force the Believer to trust God TO FULFILL HIS WORD
- Force the Believer to trust God to fulfill His Word IN HIS OWN TIME AND IN HIS OWN WAY.
- To Teach the Believer to Believe that God is God and Will Be God despite what I see or experience.
- To expose personal shortcomings of impatience

The Time Test gives the believer the opportunity for:

- Faith to Grow
- Faith to ENCOURAGE OTHERS
- Purifying his MOTIVES and ATTITUDE
- Development of MATURITY
- Development of PATIENCE
- Development of DISCIPLINE
- Development of PURPOSE

The Time Test will reveal:

- Man's Plans can only FAIL
- That God alone will get the GLORY
- That God is a MIRACLE WORKING GOD
- That God is FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD
- That God's Power is Greater than the LAWS OF SCIENCE.

Abraham's Time Test reveals:

- Being chosen does not exempt us from testing
- There is grace even in failure

- Grace does not negate the price of failure

Signs you are failing the TIME TEST

- You express doubt rather than faith
- You work to substitute YOUR WAY for God's Way
- You become distracted
- You murmur and complain
- You quit in your responsibilities

Five things to do to pass the TIME TEST.

- Do things that require FAITH
- Never stop attending Church
- Never stop worshipping God
- Learn to serve OTHERS
- Rejoice in the Promise EVERYDAY.

***Isa 40:31** But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

- There is not a promise given by God that will not come to pass. He causes us to wait in order that we may develop maturity.

***2Pe 3:9 (GW)** The Lord isn't slow to do what he promised, as some people think. Rather, he is patient for your sake. He doesn't want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change the way they think and act.*

In order to receive the promises, we must pass the Time Test.

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