

**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,<sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.<sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.<sup>6</sup> But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.<sup>7</sup> That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;<sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.**

**<sup>9</sup>The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.<sup>10</sup> But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.<sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.**

**<sup>12</sup>Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (NIV84)**

Theme: Blessed are they who persevere

1. Rejoice in Trials.
2. Trust the Lord's Power.

You may have missed the big news about NBA, superstar, Kevin Durant. If you did, that's ok; in fact, I expect most of you to have missed it. I'm not talking about how he donated a million dollars to the relief efforts in Oklahoma. But the other reason why Kevin Durant is in the news: he finally finished his back tattoo. Yes, that's news now in today's world. This tattoo consists of many parts—the part he just finished takes up about a third of the back of his 6'9" frame—it's a Bible passage just opposite of a depiction of Jesus. The passage the Durant chose? The first three verses of our text for today. Not that it's a bad passage by any means, just not one that would have crossed my mind since there is no mention of Christ. Plus Durant chose to permanently inscribe this passage on his body using the translation called "the Message" which is more of a paraphrase than a translation. Follow along with the accurate NIV translation as I read

the translation of the Message and see how the point changes.

**“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.”** According to that translation what are we to do when we face tests or challenges? Well we work hard and don't try to get out of anything prematurely. I don't know what Christian denomination Kevin Durant, and I don't know why he chose this passage. But I do know that that translation leads people to think. It's no wonder that one blogger, who wrote about Durant's tattoo thinks this passage is, “A reminder of the importance of sticking to one's principles in difficult times.” Is that the point? Sticking to one's principles in times of trouble and hardship? That's what the world often turns to. When faced with trials and troubles they turn to themselves—their own power and hard work. They look to their principles to get them through hard times. But that's hardly the point James is making. Rather James is telling us that when we face trials and temptations it's through faith in Jesus Christ that we are lifted up. Today we see that blessed are those who persevere. So, rejoice in trials and trust in the Lord's Power.

In the first words of our text, James says, **Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.** We all face trials of many kinds. It is a trouble, a hardship. It is a result of living in this sin-filled world. Perhaps it is a health issue. Maybe your sick, someone you love has some disease, or perhaps it is some unknown medical issue that leaves you wondering and worrying just what exactly is going to happen. Or it could be financial issues. You're struggling to make ends meet and you don't know how to pay the bills. Or perhaps it's problems with your family; there has been a fallout or you are having problems raising your kids. Or it could possibly be issues are work or school with friends or co-workers.

We all face many trials and troubles. Some seem relatively minor, while others consume us. Some are about us—and others are about those we care about. And no one likes to face trials and hardships. No one wants to suffer. And yet James tells us to consider our trials as joy? We rarely do. Instead we whine and complain. “Why is this

happening to me,” we ask. “Why doesn’t God take care of my problems?” And of course, we worry. “What is going to happen?” “Is everything going to turn out to be ok?”

So if James tells to take joy in our trials he must give us a reason, right? He says in verses 4 and 5, **you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.** Whenever we face trials our faith is put to the test. What are you going to do? Are you going to whine and complain? Are you going to try to take care of things yourself? Trust in worldly wisdom? Or are you going to rely on God? Are you going to put your hope in the Lord and his power? Trials test our faith. Our trials are a blessing. For when we face trials we turn to the only one who can help us. We turn to God. We turn to his Word. And there in his Word God reassures us. He shows us his love and power. He tells us, **never will I leave you nor forsake you. Or surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age.** And when we hear the gospel, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith. Our doubts, fears, and worries are removed. And so our trials give us a more mature faith.

And so we can rejoice in our trials. But that is hard isn’t. It is hard to rejoice when we suffer. It is hard to have joy when we go through trials and hardships. It takes a good amount of faith. It takes a lot of spiritual wisdom. So we pray. **If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.** Prayer is an act of faith. When we pray we are saying that God hears our prayers, has the power to answer them, and will answer them.

We pray knowing and believing God’s promises. For we know that God is the one who gives to us. He is the one who gives us all that we need for body and life. He is the one who continues to give to us day after day. And he gives generously. He gives to us more than we need—more than we want. He gives to us more than we deserve. For he doesn’t treat us as our sins deserve. But he sent his Son to suffer and die to graciously give us eternal life. And finally he gives to us without finding fault. He doesn’t hold our sins against us. He finds no prayer too petty, too seemingly unimportant, or too great to answer.

And so we pray to God. And we trust in his power.

But sadly, he is often not the one we turn to first. Many times, we first turn to ourselves. We trust in our own power and know-how. When we suffer, what the first thing we often think of? “What can I do to get out of this?” “There must be something I can do to make this pain go away.” Isn’t that the message of the translation on Durant’s tattoo? That’s how that writer read it anyway. We first turn to ourselves and our own power—trying to get ourselves out of our own problems. “I can take care of it myself” we say.

And if that doesn’t work, then we turn to others. Maybe it’s doctors. Or other medical professionals. We trust in financial advisors. Or anybody else who might be able to help us in some way, shape, or form. And then finally, when all else fails, we might turn to God. We might consider his power.

But consider our lessons for today. The first lesson is about the fall of Jericho. This was a large, fortified city. Hard to break into or tear down. And all the Israelites had to do was march around that city. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day after the 7<sup>th</sup> time, they shouted, horns were blown, and the walls came tumbling down! Why? Was it because of their own power and might, or God’s? There isn’t some scientific explanation—as if the sound waves from their shouting and trumpet playing somehow knocked over a weak wall. It was completely the power of God. That is why Joshua said as they rounded the city for the 7<sup>th</sup> time, **Shout for the LORD has given you the city!**

Or consider our gospel for today. A centurion, a Roman military leader, had a servant who was sick. He knew Jesus had the power to heal him. So Jesus started to go to his house. But the Centurion said that he wasn’t worthy to have Jesus in his house. He knew that Christ had the power to heal his servant by just saying so—he didn’t even need to see him. So that is what Jesus did. Expect he didn’t even say anything. Jesus healed him without doing or saying a thing. That is the power of the Lord.

We see his power elsewhere throughout Scripture. He is the one who created the world. By just his voice all things that are came into being. And know he watches over his creation to make sure it runs how he wants it to. We see examples of Jesus power as he parted the Red Sea

or the Jordan River for his people. Or when he defeated enemy after enemy in the wilderness and Canaan. We see Jesus' power throughout his ministry. Through his miracles we just see a glimpse of his power. From turning water into wine, walking on water, or making the wind and the waves obey him. Or casting out demons, or healing diseases. We see his power in his death. For when he died he took all our sins upon himself. He became guilty of our sins. With the weight of the world's sins upon himself he was forsaken by the Father. And he gave us his perfection. He has power over sin and the devil. And three days later he showed his power over his death.

That is the power of the Lord. Consider that power. He has the power to create the world and life. He has power to take care of that life. He has power to heal diseases and other health issues. And if he has power over the things that cause death, than he certainly has power over death itself. And so God has power over all things. Whatever trials you face, God has power over it. Whatever situation you face, health problems for you or loved ones, financial woes, family issues—whatever of the various and many trials and hardships you deal with—God has complete power and control over them. And if it is his will; he will get rid of those troubles. And no matter what happens, **we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.**

And those who trust in him throughout their life will join him in eternal life. As we read in verse 12, **Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.** Trials test our faith, so we turn to God and our faith is strengthened. It leads us to persevere to the end. And in the end we will receive the victorious crown of eternal life that God promises all his believers.

So unlike those of the world, when we face trials there is no reason to trust in yourself or the ability of others. There is no need to whine and complain. No need to worry. For God has power over all things. And he always does and always will use that power to your benefit. So you can rejoice in trials. For God blesses you through them as he strengthens your faith, preserves you to the end and leads you to receive the crown of life. Amen.