

James 25-04-13b

We're ready now to resume our study in James chapter 1 verses 1 and 2. We're in verse 2. We've seen the significance of these 12 scattered tribes being addressed by Jacob, the slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this close familial association is the entree. It's a very carefully thought-out greeting.

You could sit for a couple of days deciding how am I going to organize the material that God has laid on my heart as an inspired author to convey to scattered believers of Jewish heritage who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Should I talk about myself? Should I try to establish my authenticity and my authority and my apostleship or my standing in the community or my role in whatever capacity? James here says, I'm a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am bringing a message from them to the chosen people with the heritage that goes back to the original Jacob.

I am his namesake or he is mine. I've never figured out which direction namesake points, maybe both, but he shares a name with the father of the 12 tribes. He is writing to them and it's important.

That's why it's unfortunate that it has been somewhat obscured here in the English which comes through the Latin. But Jacob writing to the 12 tribes immediately, loops in all of the national heritage, cultural pride, traditional values of faithful Israelite heritage people. They're on board and they are ready to listen.

They are people of hardship. Then as now, you talk to Jewish people for very long, invariably their pilgrimage in Europe, their experience which is now vicarious of the Holocaust, their parents or grandparents or great-grandparents or other relatives experienced the horrors of the Holocaust 80 odd years ago and it's definitional. It's difficult to get away from even though they've not personally gone through it.

The repercussions, the after-effects, the lingering prejudices of anti-semitism and so on are present and are a factor that many have to deal with. They didn't ask for it. They didn't choose when, where and how and to whom to be born.

And the situations are various. Some are highly successful in business or the entertainment industry or other endeavors. And there are others that are in quite desperate straits.

James says, my brethren, my people, my fellow Jews, my fellow Christians, when you fall into these various trials, account it an occasion for celebration. This is a decision. This is an approach.

It is an attitude to adopt. It is a policy to implement that when things are tough and you're being stretched and being taxed and up against it, it could be persecution. It can be hardship of any type.

This is your policy. And he leads with that. These words come first in the sentence.

Your policy approaching pretty much anything should be, adjudge it, an occasion for celebration, for joy. Then he says, when you fall into various trials, fall is a great translation here. The word for fall in Greek is pipto, p-i-p-t-o, pipto, you fall, something falls.

This is a word that has a prefix, peri, p-e-r-i. Peri means around, perimeter, paraphrase, paraphrastic. In Greek, in Ephesians, when you get to chapter four and it says walk worthy, it's peripateo.

Pateo is the patter of your feet. Pateo is to walk. Peripateo is to walk around.

So what does this word literally mean? Judge it an occasion for rejoicing when you fall around, you tip over in one direction or another, and it comes to mean, in its connotation, you didn't really see it coming. It isn't a cause and effect. It wasn't necessarily expected.

It may have come as a surprise. It's a combination of walking around and falling. Peripipto, you're kind of just moving around and you're tripped.

You fall into, and the into is just a part of the case here. There's not even a preposition. When you fall into various, poikilos, p-o-i-k-o-l-o-s, and poikilos means there's no telling what it is.

It can be a variety of things. It's used elsewhere in scripture to talk about things of many kinds. So in Mark 134, Jesus goes about preaching and doing various kinds of healing.

What have you got? It doesn't, it says there are some blind and some lepers and just various healings. It can be unique to the individual. It can be common to a category or a group, but it's a variety of many kinds.

There's in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 4, Hebrews is right before our book. You go to Hebrews chapter 2 and look at verse 4, God bearing witness both with signs and wonders with various miracles. Miracles that fit the occasion or the audience or that God knew would have an impact on the observers.

Poikilos, various kinds. Why is that important here? It doesn't matter what the test is. The issue is not this is a persecution test or this is a health issue or this is a failure on someone else's part that affects you directly that drags you into a swamp or a pit or some other bad situation.

You think of Joseph with his brothers and he sort of can't help getting in their bad books when he shares his dreams and they look at him askance and they don't like him because he's their father's favorite, Jacob's favorite and through no real fault. He didn't dream the dreams of his own accord. God sent him these dreams.

He recounts them. He communicates them. His brothers hate him for it and his brothers toss him into the pit and sell him into slavery.

And then they tell Jacob that he was killed by a wild animal and they bring the bloody coat. The coat when it is talked about in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures of Genesis, the coat of many colors. It's this word, poikilos, various colors.

What does this tell us? We tend to think it's a financial issue. I need to get financial advice. I got to make myself smart on finances.

I've got money issues, money problems. Money needs to be the solution. I've got a health issue.

Go to the doctor, get a test, get a scan, try a medicine, doesn't work, try a different one. It's a medical problem. I've got a social issue.

Somebody's unhappy with me over something. We've got a dispute about something and I need to rectify this. I've got to try to explain or defend or mollify or satisfy or in some other way reconcile this thing.

It can be of an almost infinite variety of challenge. Poikilos. Who knows? It can be something you never heard of before and you fell into it just by being around.

You kind of fell around. You fell in a particular direction and now you're in this particular situation facing this particular challenge. When that happens and you get blindsided, hits you like the headlights coming out the tunnel.

Unexpected, unknown, haven't got the resources to meet it at that point. Scripture says here, adjudicate that, take charge of it, be the hegemon and say whatever this is, it's an occasion for rejoicing. Hold that thought because we're not built that way.

We don't like surprises of a negative nature. We don't like being blindsided by misfortune or slings and arrows and such. We like stability.

We like to have a plan. We like to see things coming and make preparation. We like to deal.

We like to stay on top, be stable. Don't rock my boat. Don't swamp me.

Don't hit me with a bow wave from some great thing and sink me as and I didn't even see it coming. We don't like that at all. And yet scripture counterintuitively is saying, look at these situations that a normal human being would respond to very negatively.

You should decide to view it as an occasion for joy. Where does that decision power come from? You can't just decide to have an attitude or a policy without the strength to maintain it and to fulfill it. Where does that strength come from? If you are a slave of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, you are given the strength, you are given the power because the power is in the word and the power is in the spirit.

And when we make that decision, that power kicks in. But notice, account it, adjudicate it, decide to treat it as an occasion for rejoicing, for joy. When you fall around into whatever kind

of perazmos, perazzo is the verb, perazmos is the noun that is a test.

You can test a thing expecting it to fail. I saw an example from decades ago. Some of you may remember Ralph Nader.

He was a consumer advocate back in the 1960s and early 70s. And when someone would make a model of car that started having a history of bad accidents or blowing up unexpectedly because the gas tank wasn't configured right, Ralph Nader would jump in there and start advocating. And if he heard that something wasn't right, he would go out and test it.

And he had an organization that would go out and test and try to find these flaws and demonstrate these flaws. He was testing for the purpose of disapproval. I want to prove that this thing is faulty.

I want to show the flaw. I want to show the deficit. I want to show the bad design and get this thing taken off the market and get people recompensed who have been victims of this shoddy workmanship.

That's perazzo. It is also used for positive testing, testing for the purpose of approval. So of the different meanings that you have, turn back again just a few pages to Hebrews chapter 11.

Look at Hebrews chapter 11 verse 29. This is your by faith chapter. You remember this part of your knowledge of how to navigate the New Testament.

And you have the faith of Moses in this section of Hebrews chapter 11 verse 27. Moses forsakes Egypt, doesn't fear the wrath of the king. Verse 28.

He keeps the Passover, sprinkling the blood so that the destroying angel doesn't touch them. Verse 29. By faith they pass through the Red Sea as dry land, whereas the Egyptians attempting to do so were drowned.

Do you see the word attempting there? That's perazzo, actually. Perazmos is the noun, but attempting. We have a direct parallel in English when we say I will try to do something.

I'm having an event. Can you come? I'll try. I need something done.

Can you do it? I'll try. I will make the attempt. There's an old gospel song.

We'll understand it all by and by. Do you remember how it starts? Tested and tried. We're off made to wander.

And in English to be tried or to undergo trying circumstances. Tested and tried. We're off made to wander.

We'll understand it all by and by. So when you think of perazzo, think of try in both senses. Here, it's the Egyptians attempted.

They tried to cross and failed. When we encounter trying circumstances, testing circumstances, challenging circumstances. Both senses sort of kick in.

We are being tested and we are attempting to try to navigate that in a way that pleases God and that passes the test. So when James says, account it an occasion for rejoicing when you fall into various, whatever kind, known or unknown, common or uncommon, trial, test. What is the conclusion here in verse 3? How do you accomplish it if you try? How do you ensure that you pass the test? Look at the next word.

What is the key to successfully navigating that challenge? Whatever variety it may be. However, you may have fallen into it willingly or unwillingly, your own fault, someone else's fault. You just fall into it.

It doesn't say you walked into it. Doesn't say you chose to go into it. You just fell.

As you moved around, knowing, knowing that the testing of your faith. So whatever this trial is, however it came about, for whatever reason you fell into it, you're a dispersed Jew out there getting this letter from the author that God has detailed to deliver this word. What do you know? What knowledge enables you to pass this test? To try and succeed in getting through it.

Testing of your faith produces something. The testing of your faith produces something. Keep your finger here in James and turn back to Romans chapter 5, verse 3. Paul wrote Romans.

Having been justified by faith, he says in verse 1, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith, notice faith in verse 1, faith in verse 2, into this grace in which we stand and we do what? We rejoice, children, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we also glory in tribulations. This is not *perasmos* or *perasmoi* here.

This is *thlipsis*. This is the word that's translated tribulation, talking about the great tribulation in Revelation. Glory in tribulations, knowing that, note, do you see the structure parallel here? We glory in tribulations.

Why? We know something. Tribulations that would push us down, that would depress us, discourage us, stop us in our tracks, neutralize us, deflect us. We glory in them because we know something.

That tribulation, that *thlipsis* produces very same verb that James uses, the test, the tribulation. We know that it produces something. It works something.

It makes something. It's productive in the positive sense. It doesn't take away from us.

It doesn't leave us short. It produces something. This is Jesus reaching into the basket of five loaves and two fish and bringing out enough resources to meet everyone's need.

Knowing. Tribulation produces perseverance. Both Paul and James, and you can find it also in

Peter, talk about our perspective, how we choose to view hardship, how we choose to view a trial or a hardship or a tribulation is based on what we know.

We choose to glory. We choose to see this as an occasion for rejoicing. It's a mental process.

It's rational. It is spiritual and it's based on spiritual knowledge. This isn't science.

This isn't psychology. It is a biblical truth. We know from the word of God that God is working with us to develop in us skills and abilities and characteristics that will enable us to serve him even more fully and even more effectively in the future.

Not just in this life, but in the life the ages to come. God is at work to will and to do for his good purpose. I've got to view my tribulation, view my hardship, view my situation as a test of my faith.

And my faith has content. I know God is in this. God understands it, even though I don't.

I just fell around into it. But God knew it was coming. God has equipped me.

God has given me resources. God has placed his spirit within me, given me his word. I'm never tested perazzo above what I am able to bear.

God carefully graduates, calculates the weight of that test and we're always able to bear it because we're bearing it in his strength, not our own. We are adjudicating what this is for and it isn't about solving the immediate poikilos kind of trial. I don't know what kind it is.

Doesn't matter. The approach is always the same. I know whom I have believed.

I know that this is a test of my faith. It is an occasion to go to the throne, to trust God, to claim his promises, to go to him in prayer, in confidence, go boldly for grace to help in time of need. As it says in Hebrews 10, grace to help in time of need is there always, without fail.

That's where I go. Where could I go but to the Lord? Because I know that this test is productive. In Romans chapter 5 verse 3, it produces perseverance.

It strengthens me. It gives me more capability to bear with, to bear up under and that perseverance is going to contribute to my Christian character in ways I didn't even see coming. And that character is going to produce in me that confident expectation of the glory of God.

Hope. Hope is the motivation. Hope does not disappoint because everything that is the content of our hope depends on God and not on me.

Hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. In the margin next to Romans chapter 5 verse 3 through 5, write James 1, 2 through 4 and in the margin of James, write the reverse Romans 5, 3 through 5. Knowing the testing of your faith produces patience. Do I know how difficult the test is? Do I

know how it's going to turn out? Do I know what the upshot will be? Often not.

In the midst of it, I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow or the next day or the next. What do I know? Wonderful song, I know not when my Lord may come. Night or noonday fair, whether I'll walk the veil with him or meet him in the air.

What do I know? I know whom I have believed. I'm persuaded. He's able to keep that that I've committed to him against that day.

It's a direct quote from Paul. And what we know is what gets us through. Poikilos perasmoi.

Poikiloi perasmoi. That's the correct Greek. They match.

The oi on the end is what Hebrew people say when it's tough. Oi, oi, ve. Poikiloi perasmoi.

It's whatever, whoever saw it coming, kind of a test or a challenge. Knowing. Knowing this test of my faith is a good thing.

Knowing the promises of God, it's going to produce character and potential in me to make me a better slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, more fully equipped for every good work. That's what this is for. It's not about solving the problem.

It's not about making people happy. It's not about paying off a debt. It's not about the situational effects.

What is it doing in God's eyes? What is it doing for me in terms of my spiritual growth and character and capability and serviceability to God? That's what this is for. It's like a story. I've said many times.

It's like a story problem, but I should really update that. Story problems were printed in books back in the 1960s when I was a kid. What simulates that kind of thing now? You think about video games, first-person shooters.

You're put into an environment that sometimes even have goggles and you're in a virtual reality. What does that do? It's not that different from reading a really well-written book that transports you and puts your mind into a situation with characters, that are in faraway places doing unfamiliar things, but you enter into it. You can be watching a well-crafted movie and if there's a startling noise or a cat jumps out, you jump because you're invested, you're immersed in a reality that produces responses from you, even though it's not quote-unquote real life.

Our real life is in heaven with God. Our real life is the future with Christ. Our real life is upcoming.

This is training. This is the simulator that pilots practice basic skills, familiarity with the controls, an artificial prompt to produce a response, hopefully the correct response. You're yawing, you're pitching, you're getting ready to stall, you're diving too steeply, you need to adjust the

throttle, you need to change the flaps or the ailerons or whatever other things constitute flying.

It is input that is designed to train someone to produce the proper output, to do it consistently, to do it calmly, to do it with good effect. And that's what this life is. It isn't about how did the poor cartoon character do in the simulator.

I remember the driver training simulator. They brought a bus down to Sequoia School and had a projector on one end and, you know, three or four cars there and you're supposed to drive. You've got a gas pedal on a brake.

So you're going down a street that's filmed and a lady pushes a baby buggy out in front of you. You're supposed to slam on the brakes and avoid running over the lady with a baby. I have never had one moment of concern about the lady that they filmed and the actual baby in the buggy if there was one because that's not the issue.

The issue is did I produce the proper response? Did I react like I should if that ever happens for real? If I'm surprised by the unexpected, am I alert? Am I watching? Hopefully I'm watching and praying and I have developed these conditioned responses through practice. The only way to practice is to be challenged. So how do I view my challenges? I can get enmeshed in them.

I can get involved in them. I can live inside the movie. I can live inside the well-told tale in a book.

I can get so immersed. Have you seen these fail videos where people have a VR goggle on and they're fighting something and next thing you know, they've broken their 73 inch big screen TV or they've knocked over expensive vases and broken glass tables and you know, knocked holes in their sheet rock and everything because they're so in the game. They forget where they are in the room.

God is providing these inputs for our benefit and his glory always. It is never the opposite. If we line ourselves up for discipline, even our discipline, our chastisement is for our benefit and his glory.

No chastisement seems beneficial when it is delivered, but it afterward yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. That hardship, even when it is disciplinary, even when I brought it on myself, is designed for my good and God's glory. That's what it's for.

It's not about the specific situation, the specific loss, the awkwardness or the lack or the whatever happened. That's not the issue. Any unbeliever, any godless, pagan, atheist, different religion person can look at human life, draw conclusions, and try to navigate it based on human ideas, human strength, human resources, human objectives, and human standards of success.

Well, I ducked a bullet there. I thought I was going to lose \$13,427, but by cleverly deceiving a couple of people, I didn't lose it. That's success.

Not in God's eyes. Dishonesty is not God's way. Truth, reliance on God's grace.

I may lose it. God will make it up in some other way. I cannot outdo the grace of God.

It's a matter of faith. It's a matter of what do I know? So when you see James chapter 1 verse 3, knowing, circle it, underline it, this is how we navigate challenges. Whatever variety they are, whatever poikiloi perosmoi it is, it's what we know that gets us through.

Hence the importance of Bible study, regular exposure to God's word, regular resort to the throne of grace in prayer, regular reliance on the Holy Spirit, recognizing His influence and His voice as He brings scriptural truths to our minds, recognizing God's hand in things. You have to be familiar with something to recognize it. Once you hear someone's voice often enough, you can recognize it.

I had this happen. I was showing somebody the app that we've made for the Crystal Sermon Library. This individual went to Southwestern Seminary and has heard Dr. Criswell preach on numerous videos and recordings.

And so I was showing him the app and I went to a certain place and I tapped it and two words came out of my phone. You're sharing and I stopped it. He automatically knew who it was.

He heard two words. Oh, that's Criswell. Nobody says you're sharing the services of the First Baptist Church in Dallas.

And this is the pastor bringing the message. You hear one word and you know, it's Dr. Criswell. Why? Familiarity.

Somebody hasn't heard Criswell before could hear the whole thing and say, well, who was that? Familiarity. Are we familiar? Do we know? Knowing this, knowing these principles, having seen them worked out in our life over and over again and in the lives of fellow believers, the other members of the 12 tribes, the other slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, our fellowship builds us up. Our fellowship encourages us.

We've seen God work in Israel in scripture. We've seen God work in the lives of the Lord Jesus and of the apostles that of the Apostle Paul in particular. We have a lot of his biography in scripture.

We know how God preserved, how God answered his prayers, how God even worked through some of his missteps for Paul's benefit and God's glory. We've seen the promises, the letters to the seven churches. And even in the Revelation, you go to chapter 3, verse 18.

What does the Lord Jesus tell that church? Buy from me gold refined in the fire. The fire refines the gold. Malachi 3.3, God will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. How are gold and silver refined? Not by talking to them, not by encouraging them, not by showing them examples of

shiny gold and silver elsewhere. That gold and that silver has got to be heated hot enough for the impurity to rise and be removed.

That gold has to be heated. God sits as a refiner, Malachi 3.3. And once they are refined like gold and silver, then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. They are acceptable.

They are presentable and their offerings are acceptable. Not like we saw in Leviticus. I don't care how many sacrifices you bring.

Their perfume doesn't impress me. Purified people please the Lord and are usable, are functional, are servants. 1 Peter 1, 6 and 7. In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in various trials.

Poikiloi's trials, Peter says. So that the proven character of your faith. Remember Romans 5.3? Testing of your faith produces patience here in James.

The testing produces perseverance in Paul. Here Peter says the proven character of your faith. It's been proofed.

It's proved out. More precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire. It results in the praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Perseverance, character, character, hope. Hope does not disappoint. The hope of approval when the Lord Jesus returns.

Well done, good and faithful slave. Result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Finally, Zechariah 13, verse 9. One third, remember the thirds in Zechariah? We saw this when we did Kings and Prophets.

That final third, I will bring through the fire. I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them.

I will say, that's my people. That one belongs to me. That one's mine.

They are my people and they will say, the Lord is our God. That's the true 12 tribes. That's the true brethren, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, of God the Father.

Willing to be tested, willing to develop faith under fire to result in the praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's why we're here. And for no other reason.

What an opportunity. With that, knowing that, can we judge these hardships in occasion for rejoicing? I'm going to celebrate this. This is a chance to get it done, to get down the road toward the objective.

The reason God saved me through Christ is to get this done. Here's an opportunity. This is it.

It's happening in this circumstance right now. What a privilege. Got the word, got the spirit.

Let's get it done. That's James's appeal and he's only three verses in. It's an amazing letter and we'll see more of it next time.

But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful opportunity that you give us in Jesus Christ. By his faithfulness and obedience, his claiming of perfect hope, claiming of promise, in his humanity to endure the cross and despise the shame to now be seated at your right hand as our example, as our intercessor, as our Savior, is such an inspiration as we endeavor to live our lives and walk the path that you place us on.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, God, the Holy Spirit, will make them live and remain powerful in our thinking so that we can respond to this challenge to treat every hardship, every difficulty, whatever it may be, wherever it may come from, as an opportunity to rejoice, to grow, to reflect the glory that the Lord Jesus revealed when he came and walked this earth. We ask it in his name. Amen.