

James 25-08-03a

Greetings, this is the 3rd of August, 2025. We're in the Gospel of James, the Book of James, chapter one. Looking at this eminently practical material, as we saw last time, it doesn't get any more applicable, any more pertinent for the life we live day by day, how we exercise our stewardship of time and opportunity than this guidance from James on how to navigate the rocks and shoals that face us in circumstance, in relationships, in the testing that faces us on an ongoing basis.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study. We'll begin. Amen.

Father, what a wonderful privilege to share fellowship with believers who are enthusiastic about relationship with you, our opportunities, the potentials that are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for him. We thank you for his saving work, his ongoing example and representation and intercession before your throne on our behalf.

We thank you for the privilege we have of representing him as his body on this earth. We pray that as we look at these principles and truths from your word, that God, the Holy Spirit will help us to remember them and to see how they should make a difference in the way we think and speak and act, how we face our challenges, how we exploit our opportunities so that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified and you will find us pleasing in your sight. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Reading our passage here in James chapter one, we have seen this great introduction and starting at verse two, the facing of challenges, temptations or tests, various trials. And the word there was perasmos, P-E-I-R-A-S-M-O-S, perasmos, and it's cognate verb for testing, which is perazo, testing or tempting, depending on the context, and to account it all joy.

This is something that needs to be unpacked a little bit because in other places we are told no testing, no discipline in some cases is pleasant. Temptations are not in themselves an occasion for joy. We're not thrilled to be put under pressure, to face challenges, sometimes painful, difficult challenges.

We don't relish the prospect. We don't look for those. We fall into them, as James says.

And as you continue in verse 12, blessed is the man who endures these perasmos, these challenges, these tests. For when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him. And we've seen this not only in Paul talking to Timothy about that crown of life, but also in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation.

Be faithful unto death. I will give you the crown of life. And this is a clue.

This is a great key to understanding how this joy works because it is joy that is found in the morning. You remember this from the Psalms. Joy comes in the morning.

There is joy ahead. There is the prospect, the promise of rejoicing. And we see this most clearly when we look at the parallel in 1st Peter.

So again, as we've done in the past, turn with me over to 1st Peter chapter one. I believe, as I have told you for multiple reasons, that both Peter and James heard the teaching of the Lord Jesus on this and many other subjects. They internalized it.

They remember it under the ministry of the Spirit. They are communicating what the Lord Jesus taught them to their hearers. And if you look at verse three of 1st Peter one, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the one to whom we turn for wisdom. If any man like wisdom, let him ask of God. Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope. We have been begotten by the word of truth. You see that in our passage.

To a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We look forward to our resurrection, our new life entrance into the heavenly kingdoms, the future that is promised to us, an inheritance in verse four, incorruptible and undefiled that does not fade away. The grass withers, the flower fades.

The things of this life are transient. Even the good things, our happiest relationships, our most satisfying accomplishments, the things that come to us as blessings from God that enhance and invite praise and enjoyment in this life are transient. The old saw, you can't take it with you.

Our experiences, our pleasures, even the greatest ones are transient in this life, but we have an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade away. Those things that come to us in the eternal future, this is a cause for our joy because it is permanent. Everything in this life is ephemeral.

We saw this in Ecclesiastes. Reserved in heaven for you. Which you? Who has an inheritance? We reviewed this a few weeks back.

You can watch carefully when the Lord Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. And are we seeing it? Are we entering it? Or do we have an inheritance in it? Who has the inheritance? Those who in verse five are kept by the power of God. What do you know about the power of God? This is not just some existential power that randomly strikes like lightning.

Kept by the power of God. How does the power of God come into our lives? The same way we were begotten by the word of truth, born again by the spirit of God. The spirit of God and the word of truth birthed us as believers.

And we live our lives in the same way that we received Jesus Christ. As you have received him, so walk. And that divine life force that births us, sustains us, and keeps us.

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We are indwelt by the spirit. We are gifted by the spirit.

We are led into all truth by the spirit. We are baptized by the spirit. We are filled as we cultivate that presence by the spirit.

Kept by the power of God. So if I wanna be kept by the power of God, this is not just an abstraction. I know how to do this.

Pay attention to the word of truth. Cycle it through my thinking, not just during Bible class. I don't just listen and nod my head and assent.

When I'm in the thick of it, I'm at work, I'm in conversation, I'm doing chores, I'm endeavoring to take a respite and take a break and turn on the TV or watch something, read something, peruse something, visit somewhere, go on a vacation. Wherever I am and whatever I'm doing, I involve the word of God as it applies in that circumstance. Even in Bible class, we can apply the word of God as we listen.

Do I let myself get distracted? Does my mind wander? Am I deflected? Am I quick to look into the law of liberty and then forget, as James is going to tell us here shortly? No, we are kept by the power of God through faith. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe in the power of God's truth to not only create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me, to transform me by the renewing of my mind.

It takes both the word and the spirit. This preserves me, it keeps me, it guards me. And I recognize that and I prioritize that.

I avail myself of this gracious provision of God, kept by the power of God. That's who's going to get the inheritance. And the inheritance is what, as the furniture arranging lady says on her program somewhere, sparks joy.

Keep the things that spark joy. I have this and I'm going to take it out and employ it. I have a warm knit sweater that someone made for me.

I have a wonderful quilt or a blanket. I have something and I'm going to keep it because in the future I will revisit it and there is joy in that prospect. There is joy in the using.

Joy comes in the morning. So that inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, nobody can take it. Moth and rust do not corrupt.

Thieves do not break in and steal. It's solid, it's there. You think sometimes when things are rough and there's unforeseen expenses and suddenly money seems to be going everywhere, if you could look at a bank statement and say, but you know what? I've got \$500,000 in the bank and it's drawing interest.

And when I have a need, it is there. This calms us, it settles us when we know that there is resource. We know that there is provision.

We know that there is something that gives us confidence, a solid foundation. Spiritually speaking, this is the rock on which we build our house. We saw this last time in Matthew 7. Wise man builds his house, builds his life on this solid foundation.

Whatever future storms may come, that house is going to stand because it's founded on the rock. And that rock is Christ. So we bless God, we thank God, who according to His abundant mercy, His grace has begotten us again to a living hope.

It's a hope that is alive. It breathes, it has power, it bears fruit. Remember when you take biology and they say, how do you know if something's alive? And it moves, it has respiration, it can reproduce, the things that characterize life.

If we have a living hope, it is going to live and breathe and move. It is going to do work. It's going to impart power and progress.

It is going to reproduce joy in our lives. Hope does not disappoint. Hope produces something on the happiness spectrum.

I love the concept of the happiness spectrum. Are you happy? Do you have joy? Well, there's a spectrum. And it is all the way from ecstasies on the exceptionally wonderful energetic side to contentment.

I have learned in whatever state I find myself there with to be content. I have peace that passes understanding. I'm not upset.

I'm not blown about by every wind. I'm not double-minded and unstable in all my ways. More about that coming up here shortly.

But Peter and James, this James, who I believe is the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, both of them heard the Lord's teaching on this and understood it and took it to heart. An inheritance does not fade away. Reserved in heaven, there shouldn't be a break between verse four and five here.

Take the comma out. Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God. If we fritter away this wonderful gift that comes from the mercy of God, if we forget who we are and why we're here, if we let ourselves be blown about, if we become double-minded and unstable, guess what? There is not an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us.

Who inherits? Who exploits the fullness of the work of Christ on our behalf? We who by faith build our house on the rock and are kept by the power of God through faith. How does faith work? You've got to know something and believe it and take it to the bank. Believe it and act on it.

There are people who are told that nicotine is a poison and they believe it. There's no doubt in their mind. I saw in one of my favorite programs, the untold stories of the ER, the emergency room.

A grandma had a family gathering and made a wonderful salad and she was picking stuff out of her garden, but she got confused and she had some tobacco growing in her garden. And she picked these leaves and put them in the salad. Well, they were full of nicotine and everybody in the family got nicotine poisoning.

There were ambulance after ambulance, bringing people from this family gathering and the ER doctor is trying to figure out what is the matter with these people? They are poisoned. And it was nicotine from these leaves. And she was unaware that she was putting her entire family in the emergency room.

But people understand that nicotine is a poison, but they will smoke or they will vape or they will get nicotine patches. And well, one patch is not enough, so I'll put on two or I'll put on three. They can know nicotine is not good for you.

They can know that it's dangerous and in excess, it is poisonous and will put you in the hospital, but they'll use it anyway. And there is a craving, there is a desire that sets in and it is highly addictive. How do you break that? We have to be kept by faith for deliverance, deliverance.

We need to be delivered from ourselves, from our fallen nature, from our intrinsic native, natural fallen fleshly desires. We need deliverance from that. What delivers us from ourselves? What enables us to escape the corruption of the world? The garment spotted by the flesh, the fiery darts of the wicked one, the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

What kind of salvation is in view here? When Peter says that you're kept by the power of God through faith for deliverance, this is deliverance now. This is deliverance in the ages to come. We will eventually be delivered out of this fallen flesh, out of this sinful nature, out of the world that draws us and entices us away from the tempter with his snares.

All of that, deliverance now and in the times to come. We are kept by the power of God. We are guarded.

We are secured by God's power, not our willpower, not our wishful thinking, but by the power of God. We need this on a moment by moment basis. We need it right now.

We need it 30 minutes from now. We need it an hour from now. We need it for the rest of today.

We need it tomorrow. We need it in the coming week and month and year. As long as this earthly life lasts, we need salvation.

We need the power of God. It is the only thing that can deliver us. No human invention, no

human philosophy, no support group, no medication can deliver us.

Only the power of God, which is the spirit and the word. We cultivate it, we pursue it. We consciously choose to incorporate it into the waking moments of our life.

Kept. If we are kept by the power of God, there is this inheritance waiting for us, and that is a cause for celebration. That is an encouragement.

We can account it joy. Kept by the power of God through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. We haven't seen it yet, but we're already feeling its power.

We are already energized and encouraged and given joy by the prospect. You know this. How many things do you look forward to? You're trudging through a difficult task, but you see that it's almost done, and you know that it's gonna be very satisfying when you're finished.

You finish a course in school. You finish a difficult procedure that you have to undergo in order to have better eyesight or get a bone fixed or have your teeth corrected or filled or broken ones mended or replaced or whatever it might be. There's a process, and we look forward to the end.

There's an impending visit. There's an impending holiday. There's a vacation.

There's something that we really look forward to, and we're already feeling the enjoyment, even in the anticipation. The anticipation of it is pleasurable and enjoyable, and it hasn't even come yet. The antithesis of this, by the way, and again, we'll talk about this a bit later today, but the antithesis is we can bring future joy into the present as James and Peter both describe it here.

We can start enjoying our incorruptible, undefiled inheritance now, or we can borrow trouble from the future. We can import depression and discouragement and disheartenedness, disappointment, pain from the future. Here's the difference between importing joy and importing pain and sorrow.

There is one future for us who are kept by the power of God. I'm not talking about believers that flake out, apathetic, indifferent, distracted, self-indulgent, casualties in the spiritual battle. We are not of those who fall back under perdition.

We are of those who by faith and patience inherit the promises. That's who we're talking about. This is us.

We're not going to fail. We're not going to quit. We're not going to be deceived.

We are those who inherit this. For us, there is one future. It is guaranteed by the promise of God.

This inheritance, that's our future. And from that, we bring joy and encouragement and stability

and direction and power into our lives. Those who do something else.

There are any number of possible futures that are discouraging and depressing. There's no end to bad things that could come our way. I don't know for sure, but this might happen or this might happen, or this could be the outcome, or there are so many possible futures where bad stuff is on the way.

And I can borrow trouble and discontent and discouragement from a possible future that may not even happen. But, oh, experience tells me it's all gonna go north. It's all going to be bad.

It's all going to be, see, I don't believe in things going south. South is good. North is bad.

When things are bad, they go north. That's my view. It hasn't even happened yet, and there is an uncertain future.

Why not trust God for blessing? Trust God for provision? Trust God to work all things together for good? Even if one of these not so happy futures takes place, God will be there. The promises of God, the power of God to keep us and guard us for deliverance is there. These things that are true and honest and noble and just and of good report, think on these things.

Pick the certain future and bring joy into the present. Don't choose from a collection of unhappy futures and import sadness and sorrow and depression and discouragement from things that, how many times have we done this? Oh, you know, I'll blow a tire before I ever get there and I'll be in the ditch. I'll be changing my tire in a thunderstorm and changing a flat in a hurricane, as Jerry Reed used to say.

You don't know that. What do we know? I know whom I have believed. I'm persuaded he's able to keep what I have committed to him against that future day.

I am kept by the power of God. I'm going to import joy and strength and stability, peace that passes understanding from my certain future. I have no intention of falling back to perdition.

I am going to be faithful. I'm going to be patient. Where do I get my patience? James just told us, didn't he? The testing of your faith produces patience.

So Peter says, we are kept by the power of God through faith for deliverance and inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, ready to be revealed in the last time. Verse six, why does James say count it all joy? What does Peter say? In this, you greatly rejoice. In this certitude, this infallible promise of God.

You greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by poikilos perasmos, the exact same phrase James uses, various trials. You're challenged, you're grieved. Notice, you greatly rejoice while you're being grieved.

How does that work? The testing isn't pleasant, it isn't fun. I don't look at my test and say, oh, more of that, please. I'd like seconds.

I just enjoy pain and suffering and hardship and challenge. The challenge is not the source of joy. The challenge, the hardship is a source of grief, but I overcome the grief, I overcome the disappointment, the sorrow, the pain, the hardship.

I overcome it, overcome evil with good. And I overcome it, I suppress it, I put it in its place. I will experience the grief, but it is outweighed and outshined by this great rejoicing that comes from the promise of God about my incorruptible undefiled inheritance.

The deliverance that is coming to me because I am kept by the power of God. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. The power of God that keeps us and sustains us and gives us the fruit of the spirit, which is love and joy and peace, is greater than anything the world can throw at us.

I just have to remember that. I have to go to the power, go to the word, cultivate the spirit, make sure that I am repentant, that I am confessing my sins and removing any obstacles to the full-orbed influence of God's truth and God's spirit in my life. I am not perpetuating patterned sins.

I am not failing to purify myself, to be renewed in my mind, and so on. Notice in verse six, in this, that you're kept by the power of God, you've got an inheritance coming. There is a salvation to be revealed in the last day.

I rejoice in that, even though now, for a little while, I'm grieved by various trials, why? Verse seven, so that the genuineness of your faith, these trials expose the quality of faith, which is much more precious than gold that perishes. The reason gold is valuable is because it is thought, from an earthly perspective, that it's imperishable. You can't burn it up.

You can't destroy it with a hammer. It's gold persists. It doesn't rust.

It doesn't oxidize. It doesn't turn into something else. Gold is one of the most permanent elements that we can handle, but our faith, genuine faith, is more durable and more precious than gold, even though it is tested by fire, tested by fire.

Keep your finger here and turn over to chapter four of 1 Peter. Remember, verse 12, 1 Peter 4.12, beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial. That's what he's talking about here in chapter one, verse seven, it is tested by fire.

Your faith is tested by fire. And so he returns to this in verse 12 of chapter four. Don't think it's strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing is happening.

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, that there must be something seriously wrong. Why am I facing this inordinately severe test? Verse 13, what does James say? What did Peter say at the beginning of his letter? Rejoice, rejoice. This is the extent to which you are partaking of Christ's sufferings.

So that when his glory is revealed, notice again, where does the joy come from? You pull it from the future into the present. The hope is real. The promise is real.

The inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled. I'm going to focus on that. I may be challenged now, but I'm sticking with God's spirit.

I'm sticking with God's word. And I am going to remember that when his glory is revealed, I will be glad with exceeding joy. It's like when my family comes to visit, I'm going to be so happy when they're here.

I'm happy now just with the prospect of their visit. I'm happy that they're coming. I'm excited.

I'm energized. This is a good day because a joyful experience is close at hand. We do the very same thing with the reality of the fulfillment of God's promise to us.

We ensure that we are kept by his power. These are decisions that we make, and we make them in the face of challenge. Back to James 1. Verse 12, blessed is the man who endures temptation.

How do you endure it? We just saw the expanded version of this, both here in James 1 and in 1 Peter 1. These men heard it from the lips of the Lord Jesus himself. When he has been approved, you did it right by faith. You appropriated the power of God and you imported the joy of the Lord.

You bore the fruit of the spirit, which is joy in the face of challenge, in the face of hardship. You have a durable faith that does not perish. Even gold is going to perish, but the quality of your faith, more precious than gold, even though there is fiery trial, 1 Peter 4.12, that faith, this is what sustains us in the present and enables us to account it all joy when we're in those trials.

Not that the trial is fun, not that the trial is joyful, but the patience that I develop, the reflection of God's glory that I am able to bear is going to be revealed in the day of deliverance, the day of salvation. Crown of life promised to those who love him. Then in verse 13, let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone.

We're gonna make a final pass through this, its relationship to counting it joy when we fall into testing in verses two and three, testing by evil. What does this mean? We're gonna take a fresh and final look at this before we move forward in James when we come back from the break.