



The Letter of James
Bible Study Session 2
James 1:2-4
“Pure Joy”

Study By
Lorin L Cranford

Greek NT

2 Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοὶ περιπέσῃτε ποικίλοις, 3 γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν· 4 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

**La Biblia
de las Américas**

2 Tened por sumo gozo, hermanos míos, el que os halléis en diversas pruebas, 3 sabiendo que la prueba de vuestra fe produce paciencia, 4 y que la paciencia ha de tener su perfecto resultado, para que seáis perfectos y completos, sin que os falte nada.

NRSV

2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; 4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

NLT

2 Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. 3 For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

The Study of the Text:¹

One of the first challenges that James lays on the table for his readers is one of the greater challenges to Christian living: how to face trials. In a manner that we will discover is typical for James, he spends little time coddling Christians undergoing difficult times. In a manner that often is looked upon in our world as harsh and very blunt, James admonishes believers going through tough times to deny human instincts of self-pity and instead to adopt a posture of pure joy in the experience of trials. Modern western society with its pleasure seeking mentality never seeks joy in the middle of pain. Rather we search for joy by avoiding situations that can produce pain and suffering. And this is especially the case when pain is produced by confrontation with others in our world.

Jewish Christians living in ancient Jerusalem knew well the experience of being ostracized by fellow Jews because of their Christian commitment. Luke in the book of Acts touches on several of these incidents that happened in Jerusalem during the thirties through the fifties of the first century. Diaspora Jewish Christians knew this even more since they belonged to a Christian community that included uncircumcised Gentiles and at the same time were participants in the Jewish synagogue where such associations were anathema. How to be genuinely Christian and faithful Jews at the same time was no small challenge. Given the growing tensions back home in Judea with the Romans, they increasingly felt isolated and hard put to walk the line of loyalty to their Jewish heritage as believers in Christ.

In the modern world believers face many kinds of ‘testings’ of their faith in Christ. In some parts of our world the danger of being a Christian in a viciously hostile society to Christianity is huge. Some pay the ultimate price of martyrdom for their religious commitment. In other situations believers find themselves living in a cultural dispersion by being far from their homeland while being in a country where Christianity is not particularly welcomed, or at least their version of Christianity is viewed very negatively. The occasional snide remarks in the workplace about their religious faith; the ‘under the table’ discrimination against them career wise simply because of being Christian in a non-Christian office; the sarcastic teasing from classmates in the

¹With each study we will ask two basic questions. First, what was the most likely meaning that the first readers of this text understood? This is called the ‘historical meaning’ of the text. That must be determined, because it becomes the foundation for the second question, “What does the text mean to us today?” For any applicational meaning of the text for modern life to be valid it must grow out of the historical meaning of the text. Otherwise, the perceived meaning becomes false and easily leads to wrong belief.

school room simply because of refusing to indulge in immoral behavior due to Christian commitment -- all these and a thousand more such situations present the opportunity -- in James' view -- to get really excited and thrilled to be a believer in Christ!

Was this guy crazy? Why would anyone in their right mind get excited about experiencing pain? And furthermore, how in the world could anyone do this, unless they were 'off their rocker'? James provides some profoundly wonderful answers to our questions about joy and pain.

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

As mentioned in the first study, this question is the one we need to first raise when trying to understanding the meaning of a scripture passage. Answering this question adequately includes the probing of several aspects both as background information and as direct statement in the scripture text itself. We will take a look at both aspects in relation to 1:2-4 of James.

Background:

What lies in the background of a passage normally provides the essential framework for understanding the meaning of the words of a scripture text. God in His creative wisdom so designed us human beings that words and expressions of ideas have to be filtered through a background in order to take on intelligible meaning to us. This individual background includes everything in our life that contributes to producing meaning. When studying ancient texts like scripture that come out of backgrounds very different from our own, seeking to understand that background becomes critical to being able to attribute meaning to the words found in the biblical text. Two foundational background dimensions make up the heart of the setting for every passage of scripture: its history and its literary nature.

Historical Setting.

External History. In the history of the copying of the text of James through the Middle Ages, some manuscripts containing this passage reflect variations in wording at some points. The editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed.) considered only one of these variations to have enough significance to impact the translation of the text into other languages. In verse three, the text reading δοκίμιον, "testing," is replaced with δόκιμον, "genuineness," in a few late manuscripts.² Although the latter word δόκιμον fits the context better, the former word δοκίμιον has overwhelming manuscript support and it is easier to explain the replacing of δοκίμιον with δόκιμον for the sake of clarity than it is to go the opposite direction.³ Consequently the editors rank δοκίμιον the rating of "A" that means the highest level of certainty where variations occur.



In the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed) one more place of variation surfaces in comparing all the available manuscripts on this passage.⁴ The sequence of the words ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως is written differently in some of the manuscripts for the sake of clarity. There is no change of meaning;



²{A} δοκίμιον P⁷⁴ vid x A B C Ψ 33 81 322 323 436 945 1067 1175 1243 1292 1409 1505 1611 1735 1739 1852 2138 2298 2344 2464 Byz [K L P] Lect it^{ar, ff, s} vg syr^{p, h, pal} arm eth geo slav Didymus^{3/4} Cyril // δόκιμον 1241 Didymus^{1/4}

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

³"The noun δοκίμιον usually means 'a means or instrument of testing.' In this context, however, such a meaning does not seem to fit well (although some scholars argue that 'means of testing' does fit the context here). Some copyists, therefore, substituted the adjective δόκιμον, which in this context functions as a noun with the meaning 'that which is approved, or genuine.' It should be noted that according to evidence from the Greek papyri, in Koine Greek δοκίμιον was sometimes used as the neuter of an adjective. If δοκίμιον here means 'genuineness,' then there is no real difference in meaning between the readings δοκίμιον and δόκιμον. (See also the comments on 1 Peter 1:7). In this context, however, 'testing' (RSV, NRSV, REB, NJB) fits better than 'genuineness.'" [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament : An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 468.]

⁴Jakobus 1,3

* δοκίμιον 110. 1241 pc; Did^{pt} (δοκίμιον is replaced with δόκιμον in these manuscripts)

* 2 3 1 629 pc vg (the sequence of listing these words varies, ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως, in the manuscripts listed)

| 2 3 429. 614. 630 pc sy^p

| 1 B² ff

| – sy^h; Aug^{pt} Arn

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 588.]

just an effort to stress clearly that it is your (ὑμῶν) faith (πίστειως) that is being tested.

In light of these instances of variation and upon analysis of the evidence favoring the printed Greek text, we can now analyze the adopted Greek text with complete confidence that it was the original wording that was written at the beginning.

Internal History. The primary time marker inside the passage is the indefinite temporal clause ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, “*whenever you may fall into different kinds of testings.*” In the exegesis section below the precise meaning of this phrase will be explored in detail. Here it should be noted that both the indefiniteness of occurrence (ὅταν) and the broad, inclusive reference to testings (πειρασμοῖς...ποικίλοις) make it clear that James has in mind the widest possible range of possible testings (πειρασμοῖς). The way he sets this up implies his understanding of the possibility of a host of different life experiences becoming a moment that “puts our faith to the test.” One should not limit his reference to just persecution, even though that is included. It does not center on health issues, although these are included. The very general nature of the reference intends to include any kind of life experience that puts pressure on us, primarily at the point of our religious commitment to Christ.

The basic time movement implicit in the passage is that testings should trigger a process of spiritual development. This is ongoing and has as its ultimate objective not just the development of a firm faith. Rather something more significant is the goal: the development of a spiritually mature person. Somewhat in the background of the stating of this ultimate goal with the ἵνα clause in verse four is preparation to face divine judgment at the end of life’s journey.

Literary:

The historical aspects begin our study of background issues, but the study is not complete until the literary aspects of the text have been considered. These include any detectable literary patterns (genre), the literary setting (context), and the internal literary organization of ideas (structure).

Genre: Often in modern literary circles the issue of genre determination it is debated back and forth as to what constitutes sufficient patterns to be given a distinct label as a genre. The art verses science tension usually lies at the heart of such debates. Similar discussions take place in biblical studies as well, although they are focused on ancient writings across a wide spectrum of settings. The value of such analysis has proven itself repeatedly over the past 150 years that these kinds of examinations of ancient texts have been done. One particularly important implication is that such identification enables the Bible student to find other expressions of the same literary form not only elsewhere in the Bible but more importantly in the existing literature of the ancient world. Examination of a variety of ways in approaching a topic from differing perspectives, religious and philosophical, help place the author’s ideas in a clearer setting.

Ordinarily in a true letter the identification of which section of the letter the text is located in would be the beginning step of analysis. But beginning with 1:2 we are not dealing with material in a letter. Rather it reflects ancient Jewish style preaching. And in James this means the material in 1:2-5:20 reflects some form of *paraenesis*. This Latin term, based on the Greek παραίνεσις, refers to the giving of admonitions concerning behavior and developing relationships.⁵ In the ancient world standards of acceptable and unacceptable morality were in place in the various cultures across the Roman empire. Where Rome exercised political and military control their standards became the ultimate authority to measure behavior. In the outlying provinces such as those found in Palestine that were under the direct control of the emperor, proper behavior was usually a mixture of Roman custom and local tradition.

The Jewish people were one of only two ethnic groups in the empire with a religious tradition that contained a code of conduct as well. The pagan religions of that world, outside of Mithraism from Babylonia, did

⁵As one might expect modern philosophy is divided over the proper labeling of ancient admonitional material. In the teachings on ethics found in ancient manuals of rhetoric, two terms surface with regularity: *protrepsis* (πρότρεψις) and *paraenesis* (παραίνεσις). The distinction between them is not clear, either in the minds of modern philosophers nor by the ancient philosophers as well. One convenient distinction sometimes found is that πρότρεψις designated admonitions designed to convert the listener to a particular philosophical way of living, while παραίνεσις specified admonitions intended to encourage the continuation of living within the framework of already adopted standards of behavior. Probably this distinction is too neat and tidy, since occasionally the two terms are used interchangeably in the ancient literature. We will use the term *paraenesis* in the broader sense of the word to refer to principles of morality taught by individuals or groups in the ancient world. This reflects the perspective of Abraham J. Malherbe in his work *Moral Exhortation* that explores ancient standards of morality in great detail.

not place any emphasis on morality being connected to religion. Morality came from the government and from local custom out of the past. The teaching of morality in the Roman empire was largely in the hands of a few of the philosophical traditions, mainly Stoicism, by the beginning of the Christian era. These philosophers advocated systems of behavior in close connection to loyalty to the state and to society at large. Adhering to standards brought a stable society which ideally was to be composed of virtuous individuals who lived by the established principles of morality. At the heart of the ancient philosophical quest was the achieving of virtue, called ἀρετή in Greek and *virtus* in Latin. Becoming virtuous enabled the individual to be a contributor to a stable society as well as to achieve success in life. Atheists could be as virtuous as highly religious individuals in this system.⁶

But the Jews were different. From the time of the prophets in the eighth century before Christ, standards of morality were central to one's religion. From the Exile on adhering to the principles of the 'holiness code' in the Law of Moses played a key role in one finding acceptability before God for this life and for the life to come after death. In addition, another ethical tradition emerged from within the Jewish teachings that was concerned with holy living but not so centered in standards of ritual purity necessary for worship in the temple. It came to be known as the Jewish wisdom tradition. Its roots are in the book of Proverbs that looks at life in this world in terms of proper behavior. But during the intertestamental period the wisdom teachings often linked behavior to adherence to the Torah, as is found in the Wisdom of Ben Sira (also called Ecclesiasticus or Sirach) and the Wisdom of Solomon that are contained in the Old Testament Apocrypha.

Sometimes the standards of moral living were not all that different between the philosophical and the Jewish ethical traditions. Such things as murder, violence etc. were universally condemned as inappropriate behavior. But with many of the details each of the systems taught distinctive character traits as either appropriate or inappropriate behavior. Occasionally something considered appropriate in one system, e.g., humility, was considered a weakness and even a vice in other systems. Out of this came the so-called vice and virtue lists in most of the ethical systems.

One area where important differences of view point would always be found is at the point of the motivation for proper behavior. In the Greco-Roman systems, motivation centered around achieving ἀρετή or *virtus* that made for personal success and a stable society. Thus ethics were generally an important part of patriotism. In the Jewish tradition, morality was defined by the Torah, i.e., the Law of Moses, and adherence was a requirement of a life acceptable to God. But for Christians, the motivation for behavior centered in love and gratitude to God for salvation through Christ. Christians behave themselves not to become pleasing to God but out of gratitude for having been accepted by God through Christ.

Thus the admonitions in the book of James are driven by Christian motivation, and not by the legalistic system of Jewish Torah obedience. At several places in the document this will come to the surface and highlight the difference between James and Sirach even when they are advocating similar if not identical behavior on the same topic. Here is the heart of what the admonitions of James are attempting to do for the Jewish Christian audience that both his preaching in Jerusalem and the writings in the document targeted. Living the Christian life as a Jew posed special challenges, and doing that in the sea of Gentiles in the Diaspora posed even more challenges. Outward patterns of behavior might very well be similar to those of one's synagogue Jewish friends and even of Gentile acquaintances. Why one conducted himself a certain way was critical.

Additionally at times by the middle of the first century, Christian understanding was developing many unique traits of behavior not found in either the surrounding pagan or Jewish traditions. Or else basic Jewish wisdom traits were undergoing radical reshaping in the Christian perspective. Here is where Christian writings along with the emerging oral traditions became very important in order to help guide believers. These writings of James made enormous contributions at this point.

Most likely it is at this unique Christian pattern that James 1:2-4 falls. Somewhat similar emphases are found in Romans 5:2b-5 and First Peter 1:6-7, but not in Jewish tradition nor in the Greco-Roman traditions in this expression.⁷ Many scholars are convinced -- with some justification in my opinion -- that circulating

⁶In the larger history beyond our concerns with the first Christian century, Christian theology by the end of the second century had taken over the philosophical understanding of ἀρετή with the redefinition of it as achieving moral perfection based on Christian religious devotion and thus essential for establishing an acceptable relationship with God. This represents a blending of biblical emphasis and contemporary philosophical teaching that had disastrous consequences in perverting the Gospel of Christ as found in the New Testament. Out of it came the Roman Catholic system of penance among other things.

⁷**Rom. 5:2b-5.** καὶ καυχόμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ· 3 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχόμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες
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in early Christianity was an emphasis on facing trials positively rather than negatively as a part of Christian teaching. The example and teaching of Jesus served as the foundational model for the development of this teaching. James, Peter, and Paul each express their distinctive version of this teaching in their writings.⁸ Thus clearer understanding of James’ admonition here comes about through comparison with Paul and Peter in their teaching at this point.

Context:

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF TEXT		
Of James ⁹		
PRAESCRIPTIO		1.1
BODY	1-194	1.2-5.20
Facing Trials	1-15	1.2-12
God and Temptation	16-24	1.13-18
The Word and Piety	25-37	1.19-27
Faith and Partiality	38-55	2.1-13
Faith and Works	56-72	2.14-26
Controlling the Tongue	73-93	3.1-12
True and False Wisdom	94-102	3.13-18
Solving Divisions	103-133	4.1-10
Criticism	134-140	4.11-12
Leaving God Out	141-146	4.13-17
Danger in Wealth	147-161	5.1-6
Persevering under Trial	162-171	5.7-11
Swearing	172-174	5.12
Reaching Out to God	175-193	5.13-18
Reclaiming the Wayward	194	5.19-20

A major contextual concern of 1:2-4 relates to the verses that follow it. Clearly it stands as the beginning admonition of the document and thus sets sometime of a tone for everything else that follows. Thus the

ὅτι ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται, 4 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα. 5 ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ καταισχύνει· ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχεται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.

And we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

First Peter 1:6-7. 6 ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς, 7 ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου εὐρεθῆι εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

⁸“The best explanation of both the similarities and the differences among these passages is that all three employ a common traditional form circulating in the early church. Each has modified the form to bring out his own emphases. This form, which probably stems originally from some saying of Jesus (e.g. Mt. 5:11–12; cf. below on 1:2), may have circulated as part of Christian baptismal instruction, having been taken over from Judaism (so Daube, 113, 117–119). At any rate, James pieces this form into his epistle via the catchword device apparent in vv 2 and 4.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 66-67.]

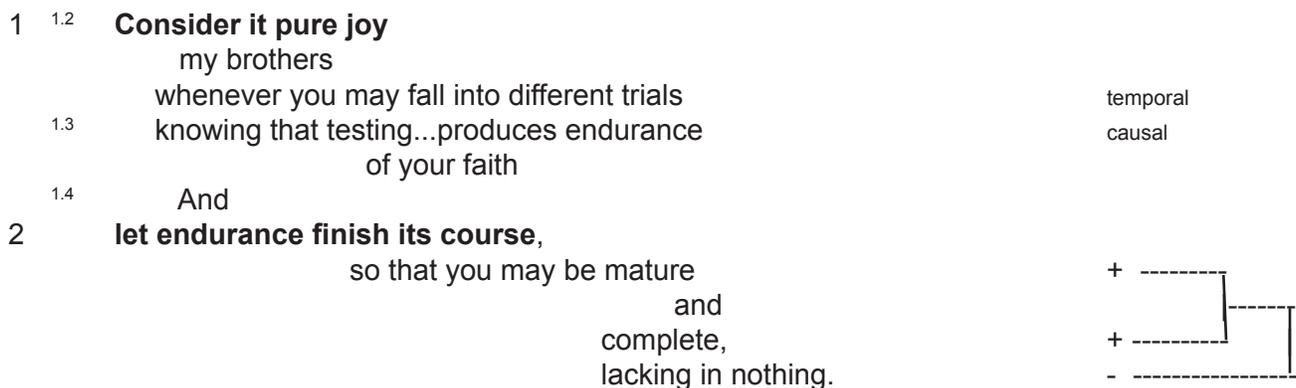
⁹Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, *A Study Manual of James: Greek Text* (Fort Worth: Scripta Publications, Inc., 1988), 285. **Statements** indicate core thought expressions in the text as a basis for schematizing the rhetorical structure of the text. These are found in the Study Manual and also at the James Study internet site.

triangular concepts of χαρὰν (*joy*), πειρασμοῖς (*trials*), and γινώσκοντες (*knowing*) are drawn together in a rich expression of inner connectedness. Grasping this connection is challenging but also it opens a window of profound understanding into the nature of the Christian life lived in faith.

One of the challenges of biblical interpretation is determining the boundaries of idea expression. Naturally connected ideas will form what is called a pericope, which is a natural literary unit of thought expression. One common way of setting idea boundaries in ancient Jewish writings was through the use of ‘catch words’ or phrases. Unfortunately Bible translation often blurs these items by the words used in translations and by mistaken paragraphing. But in the original Greek they are usually clear and easily discernible. One of these catch words used by James is πειρασμοῖς, *trials*. He uses it in verse four and repeats it in verse twelve (πειρασμόν). This strongly suggests the limits of the larger pericope as vv. 2-12. But internally additional signals are given. In verse four the participle λειπόμενοι, *lacking*, is used as the last word of the sentence, and then in the clause at the beginning of the next sentence (v. 5) the verb form λείπεται, *lacks*, is used. Verses 2-4 stand as two sentences in the Greek and also as a pericope, and similarly vv. 5-8 stand together as a natural pericope. One of the signals of connectedness between these two pericopes is the use of this catchword link. Verses 9-11 also stand as a clearly defined small pericope, and is linked to the preceding two pericopes both by the introductory verb Καυχάσθω, *take deep pleasure*, being linked back to χαρὰν, *joy*, in verse two, and also by vv. 9-11 serving as illustrations of what was asserted in vv. 5-8. Clearly verse 12 is a small pericope in that it is formed as an ancient beatitude, and is then linked back to vv. 2-11 by the catchword πειρασμόν, *trial*.

Beyond 1:12, verses 13-18 have a close relationship to vv. 2-12. A major signal of this is the shift from the noun πειρασμόν in v. 12 to the verb form off the same root stem, πειραζόμενος, *being tempted*, in verse 13. What James is doing is shifting from the general discussion of trials of all kind to the more limited perspective of seeing these as a temptation to disobey God by giving into human passion. Although distinct in its emphasis, verses 13-18 has connections to vv. 2-12 with the common topic of facing trials.

Structure: In the internal organization of thought inside vv. 2-4 the use of a block diagram that visually pictures the connections of primary and secondary ideas of sentences and clusters of sentences becomes helpful for understanding. The English text diagram below represents a highly literalistic translation of the Greek text so that the grammatical structure of the Greek text is preserved since it serves as the foundation for organizing the ideas.¹⁰



What becomes apparent here is a twofold admonition to start something (#1) and to allow it to run its course (#2) to the intended goal. In the first admonition (#1), the basis of adopting the posture of joy is what we know; the Greek participle γινώσκοντες, *knowing*, is in a causal function giving the reason for the admonition. The ‘that’ clause, ὅτι, spells out what we are to know. The heart of that is understanding endurance as

¹⁰Note of explanation about the diagram. The number in the far left margin indicates a number of the core ideas in the book of James and corresponds to the numbers in the above outline of the book of James. The second column represents the chapter/verse break points in the text. The word on the numbered lines in bold print present the core expression, that is in grammar language the core of the main sentence clause. The other lines represent expansion elements that are modifying something in the core clause. If they are above and indented three letters they precede what they modify. But if they are below they follow what they modify. Coordinate connectors such as ‘and’ etc. will be indented five letter from the left text margin to reflect their connecting major clause units. For details on how to do this go to my “Steps to a Literary Structural Analysis of the Greek Text of the New Testament,” at cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/gkgrma05.pdf>.

the outcome of testing. The ‘whenever’ clause, ὅταν, defines the moments where the need of this posture surfaces.

The second admonition (#2) continues the emphasis by repeating ὑπομονή, *endurance*. The core verb ἐχέτω stresses giving room for ὑπομονή to complete its job, ἔργον τέλειον. This completed job is not a mature faith as logic might suggest. Instead in the purpose ἵνα clause, this is a mature person, ἦτε (*you may be*). And the emphasis on maturity is structured in typical Jewish parallelism for special emphasis: + τέλειοι; + ὀλόκληροι; - ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. This structure sets up a synonymous parallel with positive stress in the two qualities of τέλειοι and ὀλόκληροι. Then it re-enforces this by stating its opposite in the antithetical parallel of the negative ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

The twofold admonition structure will provide the organizing basis for our exegesis of the text.

Exegesis of the Text.

With a one-two punch James hits the road running full steam with this first set of admonitions. Believers are encouraged to do something utterly contrary to human instinct, and to let this initial action turn into an ongoing process that moves the person toward a stated objective. Out of this comes the perspective that God seeks to grow us up into spiritually mature individuals. And one of the major vehicles for growing us is by our experiencing really hard times. Later on James will vigorously deny that we can blame God for these hard times (vv. 13-18). Hard times happen because we live in a fallen, sinful world. What we make of them shows how spiritually mature we are, as well as provides God an opportunity to do something good in us.

1) Adopt the posture of joy, vv. 2-3.

2 Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, 3 γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν·

2 *My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance;*

One of the beginning patterns to take note of the vocative mood form ἀδελφοί μου, *my brothers*.¹¹ In the Greek this is the form for direct address and functions independently of being a part of a sentence. But in ancient Greek its rhetorical role was the more important function in written material. Typically, it serves to introduce a new topic or else a switch in topics. In the book of James, it plays that role consistently through the document: 1:2, 16 (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί), 19 (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί); 2:1, 5 (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί), 14; 3:1; 4:11 (ἀδελφοί); 5:7 (ἀδελφοί), 12, 19. Of course, this is but one of many signals in ancient Greek of a change of topics, but in James it does play an important role at this point. Additionally, the repetition of the form with its variations noted above further underscores the pastoral concern of James for his readers. There in this first pericope of the document James highlights his concern for his Hellenistic Jewish readers.

Core admonition: Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε. The most difficult part of this larger expression to understand is the main clause. The verb ἠγέομαι literally means to think or consider something.¹² When used with

¹¹The vocative case in Greek is distinct from the nominative case which typically states the subject of a verb. But in the plural forms most nouns and pronouns are spelled the same way in both cases. One aid to case identification in both printed Greek texts is that the vocative case forms are set off by commas, whereas the nominative case forms are not. In James three variations surface ἀδελφοί μου (*my brothers*), ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί (*my beloved brothers*), and ἀδελφοί (*brothers*). The opposite of the positive ἀδελφοί shows up in 4:4 as a vocative case expression: μοιχαλίδες, *whores*, which with its intense bluntness certainly catches our attention as the writer intended.

¹²ἠγέομαι fut. ἠγήσομαι LXX; 1 aor. ἠγησάμην; pf. ἤγημαι (s. prec. four entries; Hom.+).

2. to engage in an intellectual process, think, consider, regard (Trag., Hdt.+ ἀναγκαῖον w. inf. foll. (s. ἀναγκαῖος 1 and cp. BGU 824, 4; PRyl 235, 4) **2 Cor 9:5; Phil 2:25.** δίκαιον w. inf. foll. I consider it my duty to **2 Pt 1:13** (Just., A I, 4, 2 and D. 125, 1). περισσὸν ἠγεῖσθαι w. articular inf. foll. consider superfluous (POxy 1070, 17 τὸ μὲν οὖν γράφειν ... περιττὸν νῦν ἠγησάμην) Dg 2:10. Foll. by acc. w. inf. (Hdt. 3, 8, 3; SIG 831, 13; Philo, Agr. 67; Jos., Ant. 19, 107; Just., A I, 9, 1 al.) **Phil 3:8a** (s. also ζημία); ἀποστόλους πιστοὺς ἠγησάμενος εἶναι PtK 3 p. 15, 18.—*W. double acc. look upon, consider someone or someth. (as) someone or someth.* (Aeschyl., Hdt. et al.; Wsd 1:16; 7:8; Philo, Cher. 70; Jos., Ant. 7, 51; Just., A I, 9, 3 and D. 12, 1 al.) Ac 26:2 (the perf. ἤγημαι w. pres. mng., as Hdt. 1, 126; Pla., Tim. 19e; POslo 49, 3 [c. 100 A.D.]; Job 42:6); **Phil 2:3, 6; 3:7, 8b** (=AcPl Ha 2, 23); **1 Ti 1:12; 6:1** (Job 30:1; JosAs 3:4 cod. A [p. 42, 20 Bat.]); **Hb 10:29; 11:11, 26; 2 Pt 2:13; 3:15**; in vs. **9** one acc. is supplied by the context; Hv 2, 1, 2; Dg 2:6; 9:6. Also τινὰ ὡς τινὰ **2 Th 3:15**; cp. 2 Cl 5:6; Hv 1, 1, 7 (ὡς as Philo, Agr. 62; cp. Job 19:11; 33:10; Tat. 34, 1) πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ὅταν ... *deem it pure joy, when ... Js 1:2* (cp. POxy 528, 8 πένθος ἠγούμην; Just., D. 14, 2 ἠγεῖσθε εὐσέβειαν, ἐάν ...). μωρίαν μᾶλλον εἰκὸς ἠγοῖντ' ἂν, οὐ θεοσέβειαν ought consider it folly rather than reverence for God Dg 3:3; cp.

a second object in the double accusative construction the idea is to regard something as something. The second ‘something’ here is Πᾶσαν χαρὰν, **pure joy**. The noun χαρὰν refers to the experience of joy.¹³ Understanding χαρὰ clearly is something of a challenge. Often the meaning of a word is more easily defined by its opposite. In James 4:9 the opposite of χαρὰ is κατήφεια, **mourning**. The opposite of sensing deep guilt is the sense of well being in innocence. This is more than surface level feeling; it penetrates to the interior of one’s existence. Additionally in 1:9 James will give a functional synonym as Καυχᾶσθω which has this idea of a profound sense of being okay with God that can be then expressed as a ‘healthy’ pride.

James calls upon his readers to experience χαρὰν as πᾶσαν χαρὰν. The Greek adjective πᾶς in an attributive position as here underscores this χαρὰ as completely free of diluting foreign stuff that would diminish the sense of well being. Some will translate the phrase as ‘complete joy’ with the implication of intensity of joy being the point of the adjective. But degree or intensity is not in the range of meaning for πᾶς; rather it moves in the direction of specification of only the quality referenced by the noun it modifies. Thus James is not talking about being extremely happy; rather he is pointing us toward a profound sense of well being.

One additional note is the play on words with the opening words of this admonition Πᾶσαν χαρὰν and the preceding salutatio greeting, χαίρειν. Both the noun and the infinitive come from the same root stem in Greek. He greets his readers with “rejoice” as his hello, and immediately encourages them to rejoice in every kind of trial that comes into their life. When the initial readers read the χαίρειν on the outside of the rolled up scroll, and then unrolled it, the first words they read were Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε.

What is the first object of the verb ἠγήσασθε? Here the dependent clause introduced by ὅταν, **when-**

4:5. Also pass. ἐκείνη βεβαία εὐχαριστία ἠγείσθω let (only) that observance of the Eucharist be considered valid ISm 8:1. In **1 Th 5:13** there emerges for ἡ, the sense esteem, respect (s. Mitt-Wilck. I/2, 116, 4f [II/III A.D.] ἡγοῦ μάλιστα τοὺς πατέρας καὶ σέβου ἴστω).—B. 711; 1204. DELG. M-M. TW. Spicq.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 434.]

¹³χαρὰ, ᾄς, ἡ (χαίρω; Trag., Pla.+) ‘joy’.

1. the experience of gladness

a. gener. **Gal 5:22.** Opp. λύπη (X., Hell. 7, 1, 32; Philo, Abr. 151; TestJud 25:4; JosAs 9:1; ApcMos 39) **J 16:20f; 2 Cor 2:3; Hb 12:11.** Opp. κατήφεια **Js 4:9.** W. ἀγαλλίασις **Lk 1:14;** 1 Cl 63:2; MPol 18:2. χαρὰ μεγάλη (Jon 4:6; Jos., Ant. 12, 91; Iren. 1, 2, 6 [Harv. I 22, 10]; s. χαίρω 1) **Mt 28:8; Lk 24:52; Ac 15:3.** τὸ τῆς χ. μέγεθος AcPl Ha 6, 9; πολλή χ. (BGU 1141, 3 [I B.C.] μετὰ πολλῆς χαρᾶς) **Ac 8:8; Phlm 7.** πᾶσα χ. (Sb 991, 6 μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς) **Ro 15:13; Phil 2:29; Js 1:2.**—W. prep. ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς (B-D-F §210, 1; Rob. 580) for joy **Lk 24:41; Ac 12:14;** ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτοῦ in his joy **Mt 13:44.** ἐν χαρᾷ **Ro 15:32;** Ieph ins; MPol 18:2. μετὰ χαρᾶς (X., Hiero 1, 25; Polyb. 21, 34, 12 v.l.; Diod S 16, 79, 4; Plut., Mor. 1095b; Jos., Ant. 8, 124; LXX; PsSol 8:16; Did., Gen. 215, 9) with joy **Mt 13:20; 28:8; Mk 4:16; Lk 8:13; 10:17; 24:52** (Jos., Ant. 11, 67 ὄδευον μετὰ χ. [to Jerus.]); **Phil 1:4; Col 1:11; Hb 10:34; 13:17;** 1 Cl 65:1; Hv 1, 3, 4 (w. ἐπαγγέλλω, so Joly, cp. 1 Cl 34:7 ‘great and glorious promises’).—W. subjective gen. **J 15:11b** (cp. 11a ἡ χ. ἡ ἐμῆ); **16:22** (Lycan [III B.C.] Fgm. 20 Wehrli ’52: τὴν ἀληθινὴν χαρὰν τῆς ψυχῆς τέλος ἔλεγεν εἶναι=he designated the true joy of the soul as the goal); **2 Cor 1:24; 7:13; 8:2.** W. gen. to denote the origin of the joy χ. τῆς πίστεως joy that comes from faith **Phil 1:25.** χ. πνεύματος ἁγίου **1 Th 1:6;** also χ. ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ **Ro 14:17.**—Used w. verbs: χαρῆσαι χαρὰν μεγάλην be filled with intense joy **Mt 2:10.** Cp. **1 Th 3:9** (χαίρω 1); χαρᾷ χαίρειν (χαίρω 1) **J 3:29a** (foll. by διὰ τι at someth.). ἀγαλλιᾶσθαι χαρᾷ **1 Pt 1:8** (Pol. 1:3). ἔχειν χαρὰν have joy, feel pleased **2 Cor 1:15** v.l.; **Phlm 7; 3J 4;** diffit. Hs 1:10 (have joy accompanying it). χαρὰν λαμβάνειν experience joy Hv 3, 13, 2 (Just., D. 100, 5); GJs 12:2; 20:4 (codd.). χαρὰν ποιεῖν τινι give someone joy **Ac 15:3.** χαρὰν τι παρέχειν 1 Cl 63:2. πληροῦν τινα χαρᾶς fill someone with joy (Jos., Bell. 3, 28) **Ro 15:13;** pass. πληροῦσθαι χαρᾶς (Diod S 3, 17, 3 τέκνα ... πεπληρωμένα χαρᾶς; Περὶ ὕψους 7, 2 ψυχὴ πληροῦται χαρᾶς; EpArist 261; Philo, Mos. 1, 177; Jos., Ant. 15, 421; Just., A I, 49, 5) **Ac 13:52; 2 Ti 1:4;** Dg 10:3. Also χαρᾶς ἐμπί(μ)πλασθαι (cp. Philo, Det. Pot. Ins. 123; Jos., Ant. 3, 99) MPol 12:1; χαρᾶς πλησθεῖς AcPl Ha 2, 15; perh. 8, 6f. χαρᾷ ὑπερπερισσεύεσθαι **2 Cor 7:4.** πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγείσθαι **Js 1:2** (ἠγέομαι 2). ἔσται χαρὰ σοι **Lk 1:14;** ἔσται σοι χ. GJs 20:3 (codd.); without the dat. there will be joy **Lk 15:7** (χ. ἐπὶ w. dat. as Jos., Ant. 7, 252); also γίνεται χαρὰ (Tob 11:18 S) vs. **10,** cp. **Ac 8:8;** AcPl Ha 6, 3. χαρᾶς εἶναι (qualitative gen.) be pleasant **Hb 12:11.** χαρὰ ὅτι joy that **J 16:21.**—Ign. provides χαρὰ w. adjectives to set it off: ἄμωμος Ieph ins; IMg 7:1; αἰώνιος κ. παράμονος IP-hld ins.—The Johannine lit. places emphasis on joy as brought to the highest degree (πληρόω 3) ἡ χαρὰ ἡ ἐμῆ πεπλήρωται **J 3:29b; cp. 15:11b; 16:24; 17:13; 1J 1:4; 2J 12.** Cp. also the act. πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν **Phil 2:2.**—As v.l. for χάρις **2 Cor 1:15.**

b. metonymically, a state of joyfulness (Nicol. Dam.: 90 Fgm. 52 p. 354, 3 Jac. οἱ ἀκούοντες ἐν χαρᾷ ἦσαν) εἰσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου (GrBar 15:4.—Of God: δωρήσεται ζωὴν αἰώνιον, χ., εἰρήνην Theoph. Ant. 1, 14 [p. 92, 2]) **Mt 25:21, 23** (so BWeiss; Jülicher, Gleichn. 475; Zahn, JWeiss, OHoltzmann; but s. 2c). Of Christ ὅς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινε σταυρόν **Hb 12:2** (πρόκειμαι 2).

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1077.]

ever, does double duty grammatically. It serves as the primary object of the verb, i.e., the first ‘something.’ What we are to consider as pure joy is defined by this clause. The second role of the ὅταν clause is adverbial. It sets up a potential scenario in time when the adoption of the stance of joy is appropriate.

Expansion element 1: ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις. The indefinite nature of this dependent clause in Greek does not imply uncertainty that such situations will occur. Rather the use of ὅταν, rather than ὅτε, to introduce the idea specifies generality and inclusiveness of reference. This is further amplified by the subjunctive form of the verb περιπέσητε and the all inclusive adjective ποικίλοις highlighted in the post position of the clause. Both the verb περιπέσητε and its object πειρασμοῖς are key to understanding the possible scenarios that James alludes to. The verb from περιπίπτω refers to unintentional occurrences in the three instances of its use in the New Testament. In Luke 10:30 it refers to the Good Samaritan ‘falling among thieves’ on his trip to Jericho, and in Acts 27:41 of Paul’s ship accidentally hitting a reef on its way to Rome. The point in James is to underscore that trials come upon individuals; not that individuals seek them out. We live in a fallen world and experiencing difficulties in that world is inevitable. We don’t hunt out trials; they find us. This is stressed both by the meaning of the verb and by the subjunctive mood spelling that is used here.

Secondly, what we ‘fall into’ is defined as πειρασμοῖς, **testings**. Note the plural form from πειρασμός. The challenge of this noun is that its foundational meaning alludes to moments of pressure upon a person that can come either from outward circumstance or inwardly from self-induced pressure. That pressure can produce evidence of genuineness or it can entice us to do wrong. Additionally James also makes use of the verb περιράζω (vv. 13-15), which tends to emphasize the negative side of the pressure point as a temptation to sin.¹⁴ This is with the sense either of entrapment (Matt. 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; Mk. 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Lk. 11:16; 20:23; Jhn. 8:6), or of temptation to sin (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5ab; Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 7:5; Rev. 2:10 et als.). Contextually James signals a slight shift of meaning when he moves from discussing πειρασμοί in verses 2-12 to discussing περιράζω in verses 13-18. The nature of the shift is from the general concept of ‘testing’ to the more narrow ‘tempting to sin.’ But at the same time these two ideas are inner connected. Being under the pressure of a test can turn into a temptation to do wrong.

What does James envision as a **test**, a πειρασμός? He qualifies it with the adjective modifier ποικίλοις, **various kinds of**. This adjective from ποικίλος, -η, -ον, is inclusive of variety and different types of things and actions.¹⁵ A few older commentaries assume that James is alluding only to religious persecution here in light of references in 2:6-8 and 5:7-11.¹⁶ But the contextual signals from the discussion in vv. 2-12 along with the

¹⁴περιράζω can on occasion stress putting someone to the test to see if they are genuine or not: 2 Cor. 13:5; Rev. 2:2. Note especially where God or Christ does this: Jn. 6:6; Heb. 11:17; 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18ab, 4:15, 11:37; Rev. 3:10. In a few places the verb alludes to individuals attempting to put God to the test: 1 Cor. 10:9; Heb. 3:9; Acts 5:9, 15:10. But the negative side is dominant in NT usage.

¹⁵ποικίλος, η, ον (Hom.+)

1. pert. to existence in various kinds or modes, diversified, manifold (Pind. et al.; 2 Macc 15:21; EpArist 78; Philo; Jos., Bell. 3, 393, Ant. 10, 142) ἄνθη (Ps.-Pla., Axioch. 13 p. 371c) ἈρρPt 3:10. ἀρνήσεις Hs 8, 8, 4. ἀσθένεια 6, 3, 4c. βάσανοι *many/ various kinds of torments* **Mt 4:24; Hs 6, 3, 4b**; of torture MPol 2:4. βοτάναι Hm 10, 1, 5. δυνάμεις **Hb 2:4**. ἔθη Hs 9, 17, 2b; ἐπιθυμιαί **2 Ti 3:6**; cp. **Ti 3:3**. ἰδέαι Hs 9, 17, 1. καρποί 9, 28, 3; Dg 12:1. νόσοι (Tat. 20, 2; Philo, Omn. Prob. Lib. 58 νοσήματα) **Mt 4:24; Mk 1:34; Lk 4:40**. ὄρη Hs 9, 17, 2ac; 3. πειρασμοί **Js 1:2; 1 Pt 1:6** (πολλοῖς P⁷²). πονηρίαί Hs 9, 18, 3. πραγματεία (cp. Philo, In Flacc. 3) 9, 20, 1. τιμωρίαί 6, 3, 3; 4a. τρυφαί m 6, 2, 5. π. χάρις θεοῦ *the grace of God, that manifests itself in various ways* **1 Pt 4:10**. χροαί Hs 9, 4, 5ac. W. ξένος: διδαχαί **Hb 13:9** (s. also 2b below). W. πολὺς (Diod S 5, 62, 1 πολλοὶ κ. ποικίλοι λόγοι=many and varied reports; 17, 13, 1; Maximus Tyr. 11, 11e; Ps.-Plut., Hom. 122) Hm 4, 2, 3; Hs 9, 20, 2. ἐν πολλαῖ θλίψεσι π. in many kinds of afflictions 7:4.

2. pert. to existence in various aspects

a. of things, many-colored, variegated (Hom.+; Polyaeus 6, 1, 4; Lucian, Deor. Conc. 10; PGM 4, 2709; LXX [Gen 37:3 al.]; TestJob 46:7; TestZeb 1:3; Jos., Ant. 11, 235). This mng. is to be preferred in οἱ λίθοι οἱ π. the many-colored stones (JosAs 2:3; 13:5; IG IV2/1, 106 I, 96; 113 [IV B.C.]) Hs 9, 4, 5b.

b. of persons, esp. w. ref. to devious ways of thinking, words, actions, fig. ext. of 2a: ambiguous, crafty, sly, deceitful (Hes. et al.; Trag.; Pind., N. 5, 28 βουλευματα; Aristoph., Thesm. 438 λόγοι; Polyb. 8, 18, 4 Κρης ὑπάρχων καὶ φύσει ποικίλος; Just., D. 134, 5) **Hb 13:9** (s. also 1 above). ἀπατη[λοῦς] καὶ π. ... λόγους AcPl Ox 6, 12 (restored after Aa I 241, 14).—DELG. M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 842.]

¹⁶“The reader, especially if he is not thinking of 1:13, will not be able to interpret ‘trials’ here in any other way than as the persecutions which befall the entire group of “brethren” who are here addressed.” [Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greeven, *James* :

qualifying adjective ποικίλοις strongly argue against limiting πειρασμοῖς to just persecution, which in the New Testament is more naturally expressed by θλίψις.¹⁷ The suffering of difficulty from being persecuted is certainly not excluded from James' reference, but he clearly has in mind something broader.¹⁸ The generalized nature of the admonition covers every experience in life that "puts us to the test" with pressure.

Thus James calls upon his readers to take a specific stance of deep joy every time life presented them with a 'pressure moment' either because of their religious faith or just in general. He calls upon believers to adopt a posture toward life's hardships that runs counter to human instinct. Negative reaction is the typical human response. And with religious orientation often comes the "Why me, Lord?" question. Pressure pushes us to turn inward. James calls upon us to turn outward and upward with joy. Here he somewhat echoes Sirach 2:1, Τέκνον, εἰ προσέρχῃ δουλεύειν κυρίῳ, ἐτοίμασον τὴν ψυχὴν σου εἰς πειρασμόν, *My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing.*

More significantly, James shares a common understanding of life's difficulties with both Paul and Peter. In Rom. 5:2b-3, καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, *and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings.* Paul saw the possibility of profound joy (καυχώμεθα, = Jas. 1:9) in sufferings stemming largely from persecutions. Peter is closer to James with his more general emphasis in 1:6, ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιάσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον [ἐστίν] λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς, *In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials.* But all three Christian leaders understood that one's faith commitment to Christ transformed living by enabling us to adopt a stance of deep joy in the midst of life's hardships. As many scholars are convinced, this common perspective most likely reflects a general teaching of early Christianity that circulated among different congregations.¹⁹ Likely but not certain, a source for this understanding is from Jesus teaching in Matt. 5:11-12, with the parallel in Luke 6:22-23:

11 Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

11 μακάριοι ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν ψευδόμενοι ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. 12 χαίrete καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφῆτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

This teaching of Jesus more easily accounts for Paul's expression in Romans, since both James and Peter are broader in their scope than just persecution. But the core idea of divine blessing in hardships does have connection to James and Peter as well.

Clearly living as a Jewish Christian in Jerusalem in the 40s and 50s presented special challenges. The social chaos that was beginning to develop over growing antagonism against the presence of the Romans, the internal divisions between Jewish aristocrats and Jewish peasants that often was more vicious than the common dislike of the Romans, the challenge of living faithfully to Christian commitment while trying to maintain one's Jewish heritage -- all these and many more 'pressure moments' made life challenging. Jewish Christians in Hellenistic Judaism scattered around the empire felt most of these pressures to some extent, and they additionally faced the daily reality of living in a world of Gentiles who did not share most of their values about life, and certainly none about religion. Their world was a morally degenerate world of unimaginable portions in comparison to that of their Jewish friends back in Judea where Torah obedience, including the holiness code, was the law of the land. They felt the sting of synagogue rejection stronger than those back in Jerusalem simply because in their congregations the dominant membership was uncircum-
A Commentary on the Epistle of James, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 71.]

¹⁷Note the single use of θλίψις in 1:27, which here alludes to suffering of orphans and widows because of their helplessness to take care of themselves on their own. This general meaning of distress accounts for 5 of the 45 NT uses.

¹⁸The possibility of misguided and totally false understandings exists when one just reads the older King James Version translation of this as "when ye fall into divers temptations." In 1611, the adjective 'divers' did mean 'diverse,' but not in modern English.

¹⁹"The best explanation of both the similarities and the differences among these passages is that all three employ a common traditional form circulating in the early church. Each has modified the form to bring out his own emphases. This form, which probably stems originally from some saying of Jesus (e.g. Mt. 5:11-12; cf. below on 1:2), may have circulated as part of Christian baptismal instruction, having been taken over from Judaism (so Daube, 113, 117-119)." [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 66.]

cised Gentiles more often than not. Association with these folk who were ‘brothers in the faith’ at meal times etc. stood as anathema in the synagogues. Uncircumcised Gentile members of the churches in Judea was a rarity, since most Gentiles living there, who were few in number outside of the Roman military, had been proselyte converts to Judaism before becoming Christians. Out of James came the invaluable insight to live the transformed life that turned hardship moments into occasions for rejoicing.

James’ words continue to challenge us even today. He touches on a basic principle of Christian living that transcends race and circumstance. Particularly in pleasure driven western culture his words take on a very challenging tone. Our tendency is to avoid pain and hardships at all costs. We are plagued by the damnable heresy of ‘health and wealth gospel’ preaching that re-enforces and grows out of the ‘cut flower’ western society. These false prophets in the pulpits and on TV contradict James, Paul, and Peter, along with Jesus, weekly with their distortions of the Christian life portrayed as a religious, materialistic successful style of living.

James reminds us that life is often tough. It’s far from perfect. The hardships that come are real and stinging, and can be overwhelming. Just ask any Christian living in deep poverty about hardships. James calls us to living a transformed life that conquers these hardships with deep joy and gladness. Not with a phoney denial of their reality, as is taught in the Christian Science religion as well as others. Facing trials honestly and realistically is critical.

Expansion element 2: γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν. How can we conquer trials with joy? James’ answer is because we know something the rest of the world doesn’t know, or else doesn’t accept. Western society has pale cliches about this, such as ‘no pain, no gain.’ But none of them reflect spiritual insight. Additionally, our ‘knowing’ -- according to James -- is not theoretical. Instead, it is γινώσκοντες, the knowledge gained from experiencing trials and God at work in them. Peter’s take on this is expressed in 1:8, ὃν οὐκ ἰδόντες ἀγαπᾶτε, εἰς ὃν ἄρτι μὴ ὀρώντες πιστεύοντες δὲ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε χαρᾷ ἀνεκλαλήτῳ καὶ δεδοξασμένῳ, *Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.* Our knowledge centers on Christ and the joy coming out of relationship with Him. For Paul, this knowledge is somewhat more formal (Rom. 5:3b-4): **εἰδότες ὅτι** ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονήν κατεργάζεται, 4 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμήν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα, **knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.** Paul is speaking more theologically, while James is more functional and pragmatic.

What is it that we know? James says, τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν, *the testing of your faith produces endurance.* Here πειρασμοῖς περιπέσσητε ποικίλοις, *falling into various trials,* becomes τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως, *the testing of your faith.* *First comes the realization* that what humanly speaking is a pressure moment is actually an opportunity to demonstrate genuineness in our faith commitment to God. Fundamentally, James signals a shift from looking at trials with human eyes to seeing those same trials from God’s viewpoint. Peter reflects this same perspective with different words in 1:7, ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσοῦ τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου εὔρεθῇ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.* The establishment of a genuine faith in trials will become glory and praise to God at the second coming of Christ, for it will reveal the extent of God’s help and presence with us in those trials. Paul sees the content of this knowledge about trials as recognition of the launching of a process of spiritual development leading to a strengthened expectancy of God’s eternal blessing in His presence (5:3-5). Trials get us ready for Heaven! We recognize that and thus rejoice over trials.

James has a little affinity with Sirach here, but a noticeably different perspective as well. In Sirach 4:17-18, it is lady wisdom who does the teaching of the righteous in the midst of trials:

17 For at first she will walk with them on tortuous paths; she will bring fear and dread upon them, and will torment them by her discipline until she trusts them, and she will test them with her ordinances. 18 Then she will come straight back to them again and gladden them, and will reveal her secrets to them.

17 ὅτι διεστραμμένως πορεύσεται μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν πρώτοις, φόβον καὶ δειλίαν ἐπάξει ἐπ’ αὐτὸν καὶ βασανίσει αὐτὸν ἐν παιδείᾳ αὐτῆς, ἕως οὗ ἐμπιστεύσῃ τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πειράσει αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς δικαιώμασιν αὐτῆς· 18 καὶ πάλιν ἐπανήξει κατ’ εὐθεῖαν πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ εὐφρανεῖ αὐτὸν καὶ ἀποκαλύψει αὐτῷ τὰ κρυπτὰ αὐτῆς.

In Sirach’s view, spiritual wisdom here personified as a woman provides the key to understanding the pain and suffering of trials in life (ἐν πρώτοις). These come as tests of the individual’s willingness to obey the

Torah (παιδεία αὐτῆς). When the righteous one follows the Torah (πειράσει αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς δικαιοῦμασιν αὐτῆς) he then is given spiritual insight into what is happening in trials. Thus James' first readers in the Jewish Diaspora, already familiar with Sirach,²⁰ would have clearly sensed that Christianity comes at trials differently than Judaism did.

Wow! Here is a spiritual insight that challenges every believer whether living as a Jewish Christian in Jerusalem or the Diaspora, or in the modern world. The first century world, particularly the Jewish and Christian aspects of it, had a better grip on the reality of suffering. They just experienced more of it, than most western affluent Christians do. Yet, even in our modern world many believers living in some parts of the world are experiencing more than their share of hardships, and often as intense persecution against them for being believers.

Second there comes the realization from James that this testing of our faith is intended to produce *endurance*, ὑπομονήν. James saw trials as a testing of faith out of which came endurance which leads to the spiritual maturity of the individual. This process, triggered by trials, is more detailedly explained by Paul in Rom. 5:3-4: suffering produces endurance (ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται), which leads to character (δοκιμήν, 'provenness'). This results in hope (ἐλπίδα). For Peter the establishment of genuineness in faith (τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) through trials (ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς) leads to the praise and glorification of God at final judgment (1:7). Both James and Paul see ὑπομονήν as the immediate product of trials.

Endurance, ὑπομονή, is remaining consistent in the face of adversity.²¹ Out of adversity should emerge

²⁰This assumption is based on ancient documentary evidence of the extensive use of the Greek version of Sirach in Diaspora Judaism for a century or more prior to the beginning of the Christian era. Note

Several facts are to be taken into account when one examines Jewish attitudes to the book. First, in pre-Christian times Greek-speaking Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora considered the Wisdom of Ben Sira as one of their sacred writings, for it was included in the LXX, a Jewish work. Second, the 1st-century B.C. Jewish group at Masada had a Hebrew copy of the book that had been written stichometrically, i.e., each bicolon (or poetic line) is written on one line, the first colon (half-line) appearing on the right-hand side of the column, and the second on the left-hand side (Yadin 1965: pls. 2-4, 6-8). The same style of writing was used in 2Q18, two small 1st-century B.C. Hebrew fragments of the book from Qumran (Baillet, Milik, and de Vaux 1962: pl. 15). This procedure, which was usually reserved for books that were later received into the Jewish canon, is another indication of the reverence the Essenes and others who were Palestinian Jews accorded the book. (The medieval Cairo Geniza mss B, E, and F of the book were also written stichometrically.) Third, at least some Jews apparently accepted the book as sacred and inspired, for from early in the 1st century B.C., the book underwent successive Hebrew and Greek recensions in Palestine (see D below).

[Alexander A. Di Lella, "Wisdom of Ben-Sira" In vol. 6, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 934.]

²¹ὑπομονή, ἦς, ἥ (ὑπομένω)

1. the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance (Ps.-Pla., Def. 412c; Aristot., Stoics [Stoic. IV 150 index; Musonius; Epict.—PBarth, D. Stoa4 1922, 119ff]; Polyb., Plut., LXX; PsSol 2:36; TestJob 1:5; TestJos; Philo; Jos., Ant. 3, 16 al.; Just.; beside καρτερία Orig., C. Cels. 7, 55, 6; καθ' ὑπομονὴν διὰ ἔργων ἀγαθῶν Theoph. Ant. 1, 14 [p. 90, 17]) *esp. as they are shown in the enduring of toil and suffering* **Lk 21:19; Rom 5:3f** (on the 'climax' form of the saying cp. Maximus Tyr. 16, 3b τὴν ἀρετὴν διδόνασιν οἱ λόγοι, τοὺς δὲ λόγους ἢ ἄσκησις, τὴν δὲ ἄσκησιν ἢ ἀλήθεια, τὴν δὲ ἀλήθειαν ἢ σχολή); **15:4f; 2 Cor 6:4; 1 Th 1:3; 2 Th 1:4; 1 Ti 6:11; 2 Ti 3:10; Tit 2:2; Hb 10:36; Js 1:3f; 2 Pt 1:6ab; Rv 2:2f, 19; 1 Cl 5:5, 7; B 2:2; IEph 3:1; Hm 8:9; D 5:2. πᾶσα ὑπ.** every kind of patience **2 Cor 12:12; Col 1:11.** W. the subjective gen. ἡ ὑπ. Ἰωβ **Js 5:11** (ACarr, The Patience of Job [Js 5:11]: Exp. 8th ser., 6, 1913, 511-17); αὐτοῦ (i.e. Χριστοῦ) the endurance that Christ showed Pol 8:2. Differently ἡ ὑπ. τοῦ Χριστοῦ a Christ-like fortitude, i.e. a fortitude that comes fr. association w. Christ **2 Th 3:5** (OSchmitz, D. Christusgemeinschaft des Pls im Lichte seines Genetivbrauchs 1924, 139f); cp. IRo 10:3 (s. also 2 below). W. the objective gen. ὑπ. ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ perseverance in doing what is right **Ro 2:7** (Polyb. 4, 51, 1 ὑπ. τοῦ πολέμου). ὑπ. τῶν παθημάτων steadfast endurance of sufferings **2 Cor 1:6** (Ps.-Pla., Def. 412c ὑπ. λύπης; Plut., Pelop. 278 [1, 8] ὑπ. θανάτου; Jos., Ant. 2, 7 πόνων ὑπ.). ὁ λόγος τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου (λόγος 1aβ) **Rv 3:10** (s. also 2 below). δι' ὑπομονῆς with patience or fortitude **Ro 8:25; Hb 12:1.** διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς through his patient endurance MPol 19:2 (Just., A I, 16, 3). ἐν ὑπομονῇ (PsSol 2:36; TestJos 10:2) Lk 8:15 (LCerfaux, RB 64, '57, 481-91). ὑπομένειν πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν practice endurance to the limit Pol 9:1. ὃδὲ ἐστὶν ἡ ὑπ. τῶν ἀγίων here is (an opportunity for) endurance on the part of the saints (Weymouth) **Rv 13:10** (s. JSchmid, ZNW 43, '50/51, 112-28); cp. **14:12.** Text uncertain τὸν λόγον τῶν ὑ[πο]μονῶν AcPl Ha 6, 11f.—WMeikle, The Vocabulary of 'Patience' in the OT: Exp. 8th ser., 19, 1920, 219-25, The Voc. etc. in the NT: ibid. 304-13; CSpicq, Patientia: RSPT 19, 1930, 95-106; AFestugière, RSR 21, '31, 477-86; LMarshall, Challenge of NT Ethics '47, 91f.

2. the act or state of patient waiting for someone or someth., expectation (Ps 9:19; 61:6; 2 Esdr 10:2) **Rv 1:9** (on ὑπ. ἐν Ἰησοῦ s. IHeikel, StKr 106, '35, 317). Perh. (s. 1 above) **3:10** and **2 Th 3:5**; IRo 10:3 might also be classed here (so. Lightf.).—RAC

a determination to be faithful to God and to live by Christian principles. But this is not something we decide to do ourselves within the reserves of human determination.²² The literal meaning of the noun ὑπομονή, which comes from the verb ὑπομένω, is ‘to remain under the load.’ What the testing of our faith intends to accomplish is to develop this trait of remaining faithful under the burden of hardships.²³ In the virtue list of 2 Peter 1:5-8, endurance is one of the key traits mentioned as important for Christian growth: 5 For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with **endurance**, and **endurance** with godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. 8 For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δὲ σπουδῆν πᾶσαν παρεισενέγκαντες ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν, 6 ἐν δὲ τῇ γνῶσει τὴν ἐγκράτειαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐγκρατεῖα **τὴν ὑπομονήν**, ἐν δὲ **τῇ ὑπομονῇ** τὴν εὐσεβείαν, 7 ἐν δὲ τῇ εὐσεβεία τὴν φιλαδελφίαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ τὴν ἀγάπην. 8 ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμῖν ὑπάρχοντα καὶ πλεονάζοντα οὐκ ἀργούς οὐδὲ ἀκάρπους καθίστησιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν. Early Christianity placed great value and importance on consistency of faith commitment to Christ, and often in the midst of great hardship.



2) Give endurance freedom to work, v. 4

4 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

The second admonition by James is an encouragement to not ‘short circuit’ this process of developing endurance. Trials provide the opportunity for endurance to begin developing. Trials as a test of faith emphasizes endurance as a religious product, not the result of self determination. Our consistency in trials is our steadfast commitment to Christ.

Now James stresses the importance of allowing that developing endurance to reach full maturity in our life: ἔργον τέλειον. Endurance is not a trait that we can exhibit momentarily and then move on to something else. By definition ὑπομονή stretches out over extended periods of time, and faces repeated challenges. James’ point in this admonition underscores this extension of time that allows ὑπομονή to produce its intended product. The ἔργον τέλειον, **perfect work**, is developed endurance but also stresses an end product

IX 658–65. DDenton notes a close connection w. ἐλπίς: SJT 34, ’81, 313–20. See ὑπομένω, end.—M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1039-40.]

²²This was the pagan Greek idea of ὑπομονή which was considered to be a trait under bravery, ἀνδρεία:

Ethically ὑπομένειν may be a brave resistance which honours man (cf. Plat. Theaet., 117b) or a cowardly acceptance of what degrades man, e.g., ὑπομένειν δουλείαν, Hdt., VI, 12; τυραννίδα, Aristot. Pol., IV, 10, p. 1295a, 23; δεσποτικὴν ἀρχήν, III, 14, p. 1285a, 22. The Greek is proud of his sense of freedom which will not tolerate humiliating demands. *In the system of Greek virtues ὑπομονή is, along with καρτερία, a sub-division of ἀνδρεία.*² This treats περὶ τὰς ὑπομονάς, δικαιοσύνη περὶ τὰς ἀπονεμήσεις (v. Arnim, III, p. 64, 18). δειλός is the πάντα φεύγων καὶ φοβούμενος καὶ μηδὲν ὑπομένων (Aristot. Eth. Nic., II, 2, p. 1104a, 19 ff.). Aristot. grants that ethically it is often hard to decide τί ἀντί τίνος ὑπομενετέον, III, 1, p. 1110a, 30. But *the brave man has to summon from within himself the power of resistance.* As he must not stand firm just for fear of social ostracism (→ αἰσχύνη, Plat. Ap., 28c; Hb. 12:2), so he must not do so from the hedonistic motive of enticing hope. The brave man must stand fast for love of honour (→ αἰδώς).³ He must endure hard things καλοῦ ἔνεκα.⁴ Aristot. distinguishes ἐγκράτεια and καρτερία by saying that the ἐγκρατής is ὁ κρατῶν τῶν ἡδονῶν, the καρτερῶν ὑπομένων τὰς λύπας. He similarly distinguishes μαλακία: and ἀκρασία the μαλακός is ὁ μὴ ὑπομένων πόνους the ἀκρατής is ὁ μὴ δυνάμενος ὑπομένειν ἡδονὰς ἀλλὰ καταμαλακιζόμενος (weak, yielding) καὶ ὑπὸ τούτων ἀγόμενος.⁵ In the Stoic system, too, ὑπομονή has a high place as a sub-division of ἀνδρεία.⁶ The Stoic strives for strength of soul. This is to be attained by schooling the will, both ἀποχρῆ τῶν ἡδέων and ὑπομονῇ τῶν ἐπιπόνων.⁷ Under Stoic influence Philo, too, links ὑπομονή with ἀνδρεία and καρτερία.⁸

[*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 4:582-83.]

²³Revelation 14:12 offers a first century Christian definition of ἡ ὑπομονή: Ὡδε ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν, **οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ.** Here is a call for **the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to faith in Jesus.** Obeying God and consistent commitment to Jesus are the essential elements of ἡ ὑπομονή from a Christian perspective.

targeted by maturity which James defines in the ἵνα clause: spiritual maturity by the individual. ²⁴

Here is something of the distinctive of James' use of this Christian tradition in early Christianity. The end product of ὑπομονή in Paul is δοκιμήν, 'provenness' or character. And this leads to hope. Peter does not bring ὑπομονή into his discussion in First Peter. But in Second Peter (see the above quote) ὑπομονή comes out of τῆ ἐγκρατεία, self-control, and then produces τὴν εὐσέβειαν, godliness, as part of a process of growth. The New Testament writers as a whole place great value on tested character that endures sufferings successfully.²⁵

In this emphasis James is drawing heavily on his Jewish heritage which placed great value on endurance in faithfulness to keep the Torah.²⁶ In chapter five, James will appeal to both Job and the prophets as inspiring examples of ὑπομονή: ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας· τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰὼβ ἠκούσατε, καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε, ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων, *Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful* (5:11). Out of the Hebrew scriptures and the heroes of ancient Israel came the core understanding of ὑπομονή.²⁷ Endurance is centered on God and is achieved through the resources that God makes available. It is more than brave resistance to pressures to compromise or unwillingness to submit in defeat, as the Greeks taught. Instead its focus is on faithfulness to God and His ways in the face of adversity.

For the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who heard James preach on this -- probably numerous times over the years -- such was encouraging. Their ὑπομονή to God and His demands in the Law were still valid, but now took on new contours. Their steadfastness was to be centered on following the ways of God revealed through Jesus Christ. And it was out of this faithfulness that God supplied the necessary resources for endur-

²⁴We should resist the temptation of many scholars who see ἔργον τέλειον as pointing to another unnamed virtue. Grammatically the ἔργον τέλειον is defined by the ἵνα clause that follows. Note Davids survey of the pointless speculation at this point:

This statement raises the expectancy that James will name some particular virtue as the "perfect work," and thus many suggestions have been given about its nature. For Ropes it is the fruit of the Christian life (citing Gal. 5:6 and Rom. 6:22), but for Marty this suggestion is too passive — he prefers "deeds of moral integrity" (a theme which one must agree lies close to James's heart). Now it is clear that James almost tempts one to name a superlative virtue, and one is drawn to Cantinat's suggestion that love would fit very well (cf. Rom. 13:8; 2 Pet. 1:6) — James surely includes the idea in the epistle — but the fact remains that no single virtue is actually named. The perfect work, as Mayor, Mitton, Laws, and Dibelius all agree, is not a single virtue, but the perfect character, which James describes in the following clause: ἵνα ἦτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

[Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 69.]

²⁵^cThe Christian church valued this virtue, for only those with such a tested character knew that they would stand to the end. That Paul values it is evident from the 16 times that he uses the term (e.g. 2 Cor. 6:4; 12:12; 1 Thes. 1:3) and naturally it occurs frequently in Revelation (e.g. 1:9; 2:2; 13:10; 14:12). The battle-tested soldier, the heroic warrior for the faith, is highly valued. Or, to change to a more accurate metaphor, the tempered metal is more precious than the raw material. So, says James, testing does a service for the Christian, for the virtue of fortitude comes out of the process, however slow and painful it may be. (Both the multiplicity of tests implied in v 2 and κατεργάζομαι in v 3 indicate that process, not instant perfection, is in view.)" [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 68-69.]

²⁶^cThis is the virtue of the much-tested Abraham (Jub. 17:18; 19:8), of Joseph (Test. Jos. 2:7; 10:1; in reality the whole Test. Jos. is a midrash upon this theme), and above all of Job, whom James will later cite, probably referring to traditions now recorded in the Test. Job (cf. comment on 5:11)." [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 68.]

²⁷^cThis OT use of ὑπομονή carries with it a shift of content as compared with the current use in secular Greek. Attention is not directed earthwards to hostile powers which one resists, nor does the one who endures draw the power of resistance from within himself. The point of nerving oneself is to hold fast to God and not to mistake His power and faithfulness. This divinely orientated ὑπομονή is also an active attitude full of the strongest inner tension. It is manly perseverance (so ψ 26:14 along with ἀνδρίζεσθαι). This pious waiting on God prevents us from falling into αἰσχρόνη (Is. 49:23). But the righteous man does not endure in the power of his own steadfastness (Job 6:11). His strength to do so has its source in cleaving to God. It is the result of his waiting on God (Is. 40:31). Thus OT religion does not incite the righteous directly to manly and courageous steadfastness. With confidence in the God who protects and finally establishes the right, it grants indirectly a strong inner ability to persevere which can then take on strongly the quietistic character of a patience which waits and endures. While the Greek moralist censured the linking of ὑπομονή with hope as an inadmissible weakening, OT ὑπομονή issues almost wholly in hope. What sustains the righteous is that God will establish justice and reward righteousness (ψ 141:8; Sir. 36:15)." [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 4:584.]

ance of the hardships that came to them. The message would have resonated well with Hellenistic Jewish Christians in the Diaspora. And perhaps even more since their greater exposure to Greek understandings of this character trait would have made this Greek view stand in even sharper distinction from the traditional Jewish viewpoint.

The targeted objective for enduring trials is stated emphatically by James as ἵνα ἦτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. We face trials with joy not because our endurance will be increased. It does that when it is given freedom to do its full job on us. But something more significant is in mind: we become deeply mature spiritually as a consequence of enduring trials. For Paul the outcome of facing trials with joy was a strengthening of our ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ. The future eschatological aspect is clear in Paul's language of hope. The spiritual maturity goal defined by James also shares ultimately in this future standing before God in judgment; it is just not as prominent in James as it is in Paul. The preparing for future judgment that facing trials with joy produces is most directly stated by Peter ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως...εὐρεθῇ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, [so that the testing of your faith...may be found to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ](#). All three writers share an eschatological understanding of the ultimate objective of facing trials with joy, but they express it differently and with different levels of emphasis.

James resorts to his Jewish heritage in placing heightened emphasis on the goal of spiritual maturity as the outcome of facing trials. In the threefold emphasis, he first uses two synonymous words -- τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι -- that underscore the positive aspect. Then he immediately follows this synonymous parallel with the stating of the opposite in antithetical parallelism: ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. The ancient world did not have the modern devices for emphasis such as bold face print and so a variety of literary devices were developed to achieve something of the same effect. Especially among Hebrew writers, the use of parallelism was a favorite way of achieving heightened emphasis on one central point. This James does this quite effectively here, and will do it several more times through out the document. The three expressions -- τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι -- strongly emphasize the one point of spiritual maturity. The first predicate adjective, τέλειοι, highlights being fully grown as an adult as opposed to being a child or a baby. The second adjective, ὁλόκληροι, emphasizes wholeness as opposed to incompleteness. The negative, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι, stresses no deficiency being present in any part of one's life.

The picture here is of eschatological completeness or perfection. In this world we do not achieve such, but at the disclosure of Christ at the end of time we step into that completeness that enables us to share fully in the divine Presence of God through Christ. What James, Paul, and Peter understood is that one important experience in this world which helps move us toward that ultimate completeness is enduring trials and suffering. In that realization we then should rejoice and take deep pride when these trials come our way.

How James compares to Paul and Peter.

Rom. 5:2b-5. καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ· 3 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται, 4 ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα. 5 ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ κατασχύνει· ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.

[and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.](#)

Our contention has been that James, Paul, and Peter have been drawing off a basic Christian teaching that circulated in first century Christian churches. Clearly this teaching about facing trials positively had its roots in the Jewish background of Christianity, much more so than from Hellenistic Greek influences. But the teaching that linked joy (χαρὰν) to trials (πειρασμοῖς) because these trials were a testing of one's faith in Christ (τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) represents a uniquely Christian viewpoint that has significantly modified the Jewish tradition. The additional factor of knowledge (γινώσκοντες / εἰδότες) as the connecting link between joy and trials is common to both Paul and James. Paul's language -- καυχώμεθα, ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες -- is different than James' but both go the same general direction. Paul puts greater stress on trials as religious persecution, while James' scope is broader and more inclusive of all hardships. Paul does not use the language of trials as a test of one's faith, although in the background it is clear that he understands

this. The outcome of trials is stated differently between these two. For James it is profound spiritual maturity, while for Paul it is a deeper hope of acceptance by God in final judgement. Paul also brings into the picture the divine resources of God's love and the presence of His Spirit. These not only enable us to rejoice in trials but they confirm the validity of our hope of standing in God's presence in eternity.

1 Peter 1:6-7. 6 ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς, 7 ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου τοῦ ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου εὐρεθῆ εἰς ἔπαινον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith — being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Peter's use of this common tradition puts more emphasis on outward expression of the joy with ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, *leap for joy*. He shares with James the inclusive view of trials with ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς, but he sees suffering, λυπηθέντες, as inherent in these trials. Additionally he redefines trials as τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως, *the testing of your faith*, in repeating the same phrase as found in James. He also adds intensity to this testing process with the graphic image of calling it a refiner's fire, διὰ πυρὸς δοκιμαζομένου. Further, all through the passage these experiences are linked to being in union with Christ: ἐν ᾧ, ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃν οὐκ ἰδόντες ἀγαπάτε, εἰς ὃν ἄρτι μὴ ὀρώντες πιστεύοντες δὲ (v. 8). Clearly rejoicing in trials is exclusively a Christian approach rather than Jewish and certainly not humanistically Greek or Roman.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

The cultural gap between the then and now meanings of this passage is very small indeed. To be sure the Jewish heritage of the Christian understanding expressed here is of lesser importance to us as Gentile Christians many centuries later. What does, however, stand close to our modern world is the Greek cultural perspective especially on ὑπομονή. We live in a world where resisting wrong and being firm in one's convictions is seen as ἀνδρεία, manly bravery, as did the ancient Greeks. All kinds of catch phrases are used to describe this: iron in your spine; steel not noodles for a backbone, hard as a rock, unbending et als. But modern western society sees endurance as human based heroic actions that are achieved inwardly by sufficient resolve and determination we come to possess ourselves.

James dismisses as completely irrelevant and utterly worthless this understanding of ὑπομονή. Instead, it is a religious based quality focused to faithfulness to Christ in the midst of agonizing suffering. The understanding of how God will use the experience of πειρασμοῖς, *testings*, as τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως, *testing of our faith*, to get us ready for Heaven is the key to rejoicing over these hardships. It is not the expectancy that we in having stood up to hardships and wrong will receive a ticker-tape parade in heroic welcoming of us. Nothing of the sort is in this scripture text. In fact it is condemned by James' words, as well as by those of Paul and Peter. We are on a journey as believers in this world that has Heaven as its goal. James reminds us that facing trials with joy will help get us to that destination in much better spiritual condition!

1. Do you connect up joy with the hardships in your life?
2. What do you understand endurance to be? Which of the three images of endurance do you identify with? The sad sack cartoon figure, John Wayne, or Christ?



3. How valuable is spiritual maturity to you?
4. Name some of your hardships and reflect on them as testing the quality of your faith commitment.