

Introduction

In 1997, we planted our first church, and during that first year we had Mike Haley, a minister out of Oklahoma, come and minister to our congregation. He preached a message on going through the storms, and his text was Acts 27, where Paul was shipwrecked while being taken to Rome. It was an excellent message, and since we all go through various storms in life, it was relevant to everyone. We did not realize it at the time, but Mike was in the storm of his life. He had colon cancer and did not tell any of us that he was battling it. He died just a few weeks after coming to our church. His message to our church was the final message that he ever preached. During his message, Mike made a statement that I have remembered all these years, even though it was not his main point. He said, “A seasoned sailor is not made in calm seas.”

We are in the midst of a series on being complete or mature in Christ. Maturity in Christ does not come without some storms or trials in our life. Our text today is James 1:2-8, and James exhorts us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. Why? It is because “the testing of our faith produces endurance, and the perfect (teleios) result is that we may be perfect (teleios) and complete, lacking in nothing? Seasoned or mature believers have been perfected or matured through the trials that they go through in life.

(Jas 1:2–8) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. {4} And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. {5} But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. {6} But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. {7} For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, {8} *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

When facing trials, the mature believer has learned to rejoice in them. Second, a mature believer has learned how to persevere. Third, a mature believer has received God’s wisdom to get through the trials.

Mature Believer Has Persevered through trials (James 1:2-4)

1. Has learned to rejoice in trials (James 1:2-4, Heb 5:7-9)
2. Has learned to persevere in trials (James 1:3, Rom 5:3-5)
3. Has received wisdom in trials (James 1:5-8)

1. **Has learned to rejoice in trials** (James 1:2-4)

God tells us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. We immediately gather that our joy is not dependent on external circumstances. We can be full of God’s joy in the midst of trials and suffering. That is easier to say than to do. When we are going through any kind of trial, whether it is a conflict, loss of any kind, health issue, or other type of trial, it is difficult to rejoice. When I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma cancer last summer, my first reaction was not to rejoice. I was in shock and disbelief about it. I felt great and had not experienced any symptoms, so it was quite a surprise. My next reaction was to question, “How did I get this? What was the cause of it?” I did research on the cancer to learn more about it. My next set of questions were about the treatment, and what I could or could not do while being treated, and what I should be able to do after treatment. Again, it was not a focus on rejoicing, but on the trial itself. God tells us to rejoice when we encounter various trials, something easier said than done.

(Jas 1:2–4) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. {4} And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

James also tells us why we should rejoice when we encounter various trials. He said that the testing of our faith is going to produce endurance, and that endurance is going to have its perfect result, that we may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. The word that we have been focusing on in this series of messages is the Greek word, *teleios*, which means complete, perfect, or mature. *Teleios* is used twice in verse four. Endurance will have its perfect (*teleios*) result, so that we may be perfect (*teleios*) and complete, lacking in nothing. We are to rejoice in trials because the end result is that we are going to be made perfect, complete, or mature. God’s will for us is to be made complete, and the trials that we go through help us become mature and complete. We should rejoice because God’s will is being accomplished in our lives.

We like to rejoice when our will and desires are being accomplished. We like to rejoice when we get a bonus or raise at work, or some other positive event happens in our lives. When an accident or other unexpected trial comes into our lives, it is not normal to rejoice. But rejoicing is what God wants us to do when we encounter various trials. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul exhorted the church to rejoice always. When good things happen, we should rejoice; and when trials come, we should also rejoice.

(1 Th 5:16) “Rejoice always;”

When Jesus was on the cross, He endured it with joy. In Hebrews 12, we are told to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter (*teleiotes*) of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. Why was Jesus full of joy while enduring the cross? It was because our sins were being paid for, and people were being reconciled to God. He was focused on the end result, which was our sanctification. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus and learn from Him. We are to look at the end result, which is to be made perfect and complete, and rejoice because the trials in our lives are bringing about this perfect result.

(Heb 12:2–3) “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. {3} For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Athletes have a similar attitude to Christ. They train hard so that they can win the prize. They are not looking at the pain that they are experiencing while exercising; they have their heart set on winning the prize. They know that disciplining their body and training hard is what it takes to win. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul said that all who run in a race all race, but only one receives the prize. He said to run in such a way that you may win. He said he ran in such a way, as not without aim, and boxed in such a way, as not beating the air. He disciplined his body and made it his slave so that he could win. Athletes have their eyes set on the prize. That is the attitude that we have to have when going through trials. The prize for us is to be made perfect and complete, and we should rejoice in these trials because they are going to help us accomplish that.

(1 Co 9:24–27) “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. {25} Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. {26} Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as

not beating the air; {27} but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

In addition to looking at what the trials will accomplish in my life, I have found some other things to be very helpful. First, I know that God is sovereign. My steps are established or ordered by God, and there are no trials in my life that He has not allowed. Nothing has escaped His notice. My days were ordained for me before there was yet one. When going through trials, Psalm 139 will give you great comfort. I can rejoice in all circumstances since He is sovereign.

(Ps 37:23) “The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way.”

(Ps 139:16) “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them.”

Second, God is for me. God is never against you. He is a loving Father who wants the very best for his children. I was blessed to have parents that have always been for me. They have been behind me all my life. They have encouraged me and done whatever they could to help me succeed because they are for me. When you are faced with a trial, rejoice because God is for you.

(Ps 56:9) “Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; This I know, that God is for me.”

Third, God has a plan for my life and He will work things out for my good. He predestined me to become conformed to His image, and He will work these things out in my life to make me perfect and complete. David said that He would have despaired unless he did not believe that he would see the goodness of God in his life. When trials come, we can rejoice because we know that God will work this out for good in our lives.

(Ro 8:28–31) “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. {29} For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; {30} and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. {31} What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?”

(Ps 27:13) “*I would have despaired* unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.”

Fourth, God is with me. There are no trials in my life that I have to face alone. God is with us, and nothing can separate us. Paul continued in Romans 8, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” He ends by saying, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God.” God is with us in everything that we go through. When we face trials, we are not facing them alone. We can rejoice that God is with us.

(Ro 8:35–39) “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? {36} Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” {37} But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. {38}

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, {39} nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In Hebrews 13:5, God promises to never leave us or forsake us. God is always with us, and will never leave us. He is with us in our trials.

(Heb 13:5) “*Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,”

In Psalm 23, David came to the same conclusion. He wrote that even though he walked through the valley of the shadow of death, he was not going to fear any evil because God was with him. When we go through trials, we need to realize that God is sovereign, He is for us, and He is with us. He will use these things to perfect and complete us. He will work things out for our good.

(Ps 23:4) “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

In 1993, while I was still playing professional golf, I had to go back to the PGA Tour Qualifying School. I was exempt through the first stage, and made it through the second stage. At the finals I was playing fairly well and on the sixth and final round of the PGA Tour Qualifying School I was about seven under par going into the last hole of the tournament. They did not have score boards so nobody knew where they stood. I thought I needed to birdie the last hole to earn my card for the next year. My game plan was to hit a 2-iron off the tee and a mid-iron to the green, two-putt and take a par every day. However, since I thought I needed to make a birdie, hitting a driver and a short iron made more sense. Since I was playing pretty well, I took out my driver and played more aggressively. There was water down the right side, but it was right of a long fairway bunker. Most of the time the sand in the bunker would stop balls from going in the water. My tee shot hit left of the bunker and kicked straight right all the way across the bunker and rolled into the edge of the water. To make a long story short, I made a triple bogey on the hole, only to find out that a bogey would have earned me my card. I was pretty disappointed as I walked from the scoring area to my car. As I walked the Holy Spirit gave me a song. He gave me a melody for Romans 15:13. “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” God filled me with a supernatural joy in that instant and I abounded in hope. As I returned to the scoring area the reporter from Sports Illustrated wanted to ask me some questions. He could not believe my attitude, and he ended up doing a story on my family and I. During the next year God did some amazing things in our lives on the Nike Tour, and He used us mightily. It all came about because of the joy and hope that the Holy Spirit gave me in the midst of my trial.

(Rom 15:13) “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

2. **Has learned to persevere in trials** (James 1:2-4, Heb 5:7-9)

When trials come in our lives, we are to rejoice in them because they are going to help mature us. There is another step in the process, and that is endurance. In verse three, we read that the testing of our faith produces endurance. The Greek word for endurance is hupomone (Strong's G5281), which is used thirty-two times. Hupomone is a compound word that means to remain

under or to dwell under. In the NASB, it is translated as endurance or enduring eight times and perseverance twenty-one times. In the KJV it is translated as patient thirty-one times and enduring one time. The context is that we are to remain under, endure, persevere, and be patient in the trials that we face. The testing of our faith produces this endurance. We should rejoice in our trials because they are helping us to develop endurance and perseverance.

(Jas 1:2–4) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. {4} And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

In Romans 5:3-4, Paul wrote that we are to exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.” The trials and tribulations in our life bring about perseverance or endurance, and then proven character and hope. We can exult in our tribulations and consider it joy because God will use tribulations and trials in our life to bring about perseverance in our lives.

(Ro 5:3–5) “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; {4} and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; {5} and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Paul did not just write about gaining perseverance through tribulations, he also said in Romans 15:5 that God gives perseverance. When we are faced with trials in our lives, we need to ask God to give us endurance and encouragement so that we can get through them.

(Ro 15:5) “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,”

In 2014, the oil and gas industry went into a downturn. I saw the downturn coming and immediately took a 20% pay cut, and gave up my bonus for the year to help our company withstand the storm I saw coming. Over the next couple of years, I had five pay cuts. Karen and I had to pull from our savings every month to make ends meet. These were trying and difficult years for me, our company, and our industry. Many companies in our industry went out of business, and many others went through bankruptcy, some more than one bankruptcy. My attitude was not one of grumbling or complaining, but was joyful. I rejoiced that God was taking care of me in the midst of these trials. I also rejoiced in the fact that God was giving me more perseverance. I prayed for God to give me more perseverance and He did. God wants you and I to exult in our trials, knowing that He will use these things in our lives to transform us into His image and give us more perseverance.

Peter also wrote about the importance of perseverance. He gave seven qualities that we need in our lives that will make us useful and fruitful. He said, “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, {6} and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, {7} and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. {8} For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I pray for these qualities in my life because I want to be useful and fruitful. God uses trials in our lives to develop this perseverance and endurance that is so important.

(2 Pe 1:5–8) “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, {6} and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, {7} and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. {8} For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus also spoke about perseverance. In the parable of the four soils, the seed that was sown in good soil represented those that hear the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. Jesus and Peter both taught that perseverance is required to bear fruit. We should rejoice in our trials because they will produce perseverance, which will help us be fruitful.

(Lk 8:15) “But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”

Similarly, in Hebrews 12, we are exhorted to fix our eyes on Jesus so that we can run with endurance. Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross; and we can get great encouragement from His example.

(Heb 12:1–2) “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

In one of the most difficult chapters of my life, I worked as a head professional at a golf course in Florida. My core values were very different than the owner of the course. So, my staff and I were often asked to do things that may generate more money, but did not create positive experiences for our customers. I wanted to leave that position many times, and the word that was given to me by the other elders at the church was to stay and remain at that job. I would get beat down for six days during the week, and built up on Sunday. It was during this time that I received a prophetic word from a visiting evangelist to grow up. God was using this difficult job situation to give me perseverance, and was growing me up and maturing me. Eventually, the Lord sent me back out onto the PGA Tour, and I was really thankful to be done with the previous chapter of my life. The trials that we go through are sometimes painful and difficult, but God can give us perseverance to get through them, and He will use them to mature us.

3. **Has received wisdom in trials** (James 1:5-8)

As we patiently endure and persevere through the trials in our life, the end result is that we are made mature and complete. However, if we are lacking wisdom in those trials, we are to ask God for wisdom. After exhorting us to count it all joy when we encounter various trials, James said that if we are lacking wisdom, we are to ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach.

(Jas 1:5) “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

I regularly pray for wisdom in my life, and for others. On Wednesdays, I specifically pray for wisdom. We need wisdom in every area of life. We need wisdom in our marriages. We need wisdom raising children. One woman recently told me that they really appreciated my prayers for them since they have three teenagers. We need wisdom raising teenagers. We need wisdom with our finances. We need wisdom with in our work. We need wisdom in our relationships with others. We need wisdom in our health decisions. We need wisdom in our gardening and/or other hobbies. I cannot think of a single area of our lives that we do not need God's wisdom.

When we have trials in our lives, we need wisdom in how to handle those difficult circumstances. One of the most common trials that people go through is relational conflicts. We need to ask God for wisdom about diffusing and resolving situations. We need wisdom in how to communicate. We need wisdom in how to prevent these problems from re-occurring.

One year I was playing at the Richmond Open, in Richmond Virginia. I pulled my seven-iron approach shot on a hole, and it flew into the left greenside bunker. It was never close to being outside the ropes and into the gallery. However, when I got near the greenside bunker, an older lady gave me an earful. She was mad as a hornet. I was not too happy about my golf shot, and I was certainly not in the mood to hear this lady give me a piece of her mind, especially when I had not done anything wrong. She said I nearly hit her and should have yelled "Fore." My ball had never been close to hitting anybody, and so yelling "Fore" was not necessary. But this lady was angry. In that moment, I asked God for wisdom in how to respond. Immediately, the Holy Spirit reminded me of Proverbs 15:1, which says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." So, with as much gentleness as I could, I said, "Mam, I am sorry for not yelling "Fore" and for scaring you. Will you forgive me?" The countenance of the lady changed immediately, and her wrath had been turned away. She followed me the remainder of the tournament. God's wisdom in that situation was perfect. Solomon wrote that "there is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord." There is nothing better than God's wisdom and counsel.

(Pr 15:1) "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

(Pr 21:30) "There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord."

When we ask God for wisdom, He promises to give it generously and without reproach. He is not going to reprove, reproach, ridicule, or put us down for asking for His wisdom. He loves to give us wisdom, and He generously gives it to us. I think that God included this in James' letter to encourage us to ask Him for wisdom.

(Jas 1:5) "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

In Psalm 32 God promises to instruct, teach, and counsel us with His eye upon us. That is personalized instruction, not group instruction. You cannot get any better counsel than His one-on-one offer. Then, God says, "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you." God does not want to have to use a bit and bridle to get us to go to Him. He does not want to have to bring circumstances into our lives where we have no recourse but to go to Him. He wants us to go to Him all the time. He loves us to come to Him for counsel. He will give it generously, without reproach, and with His eye upon us, to make sure that we have it.

(Ps 32:8–9) “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. {9} Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, *otherwise* they will not come near to you.”

How do we get His wisdom? James tells us to ask God for wisdom, and that is a great place to start. God can give us a word of wisdom, a thought, or a verse like He did with me. We should not hesitate in asking God for wisdom. James gives us an important consideration when praying for wisdom; we should ask in faith, without any doubting. He said that if we doubt, we will be like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. We ought not expect to receive anything from the Lord when we are double-minded. When we ask God for wisdom, we need to have faith that He is going to answer us. We cannot second guess His answer; we need to receive His wisdom, and act upon it.

(Jas 1:5–8) “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. {6} But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. {7} For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, {8} *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

There are two kinds of wisdom, the wisdom of the world, and the wisdom of God. In James 3, we find the characteristics of both types of wisdom. The wisdom of good leads to good behavior and it is gentle. The wisdom of the world is referred to as earthly, natural, and demonic. The fruit of this wisdom is jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder, and every evil thing. God’s wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, and without hypocrisy. The fruit of God’s wisdom is righteousness, and it is sown in peace. A double-minded person is vacillating between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. We have to make up our minds which wisdom we are going to operate under. When we ask God for His wisdom, we need to accept His wisdom and follow it.

(Jas 3:13–18) “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. {14} But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. {15} This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. {16} For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. {17} But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. {18} And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

Often, I pray for people to have a desire for God’s wisdom. Solomon wrote that the beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom.” I pray for people to have a desire to acquire. When someone has a desire to acquire, they will do some other things to receive God’s wisdom.

(Pr 4:7) “The beginning of wisdom *is*: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding.”

In Proverbs 1:1-6, Solomon gives us the purpose of the Proverbs. First, they are to given so that we may know wisdom and instruction. God has already given much wisdom to us; we just need to receive it. I think of the book of Proverbs like a multi-vitamin. We need a daily dose of Proverbs so that we can know wisdom and instruction, discern the sayings of understand, receive

instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity, to receive prudence, knowledge and discretion, to hear and increase in learning, to acquire wise counsel, and to understand proverbs and the words of the wise. God has given us all this wisdom; we just need to avail ourselves to it, and receive it. In my daily scripture reading time, I include a chapter of Proverbs. There is wisdom throughout God's word, but there are heavier concentrations of it in certain books, which are known as the books of wisdom. These include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Personally, I also include James in the New Testament.

(Pr 1:1–6) “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: {2} To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, {3} To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; {4} To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, {5} A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, {6} To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles.”

I also pray for a fear of the Lord. I pray this for myself, and I pray it for other people. Solomon wrote that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. He also wrote that the fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom. So, I pray for the fear of the Lord so that I and the people that I regularly pray for might increase in wisdom.

(Pr 9:10) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

(Pr 15:33) “The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor *comes* humility.”

(Ps 111:10) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*; His praise endures forever.”

Another way to increase in wisdom is to walk with wise men. Solomon wrote that he who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. When we walk with the wise, we learn how they act, and why they act a certain way. The converse is also true. When we walk with fools, we learn foolish habits, and we suffer harm. This is also why Solomon wrote for us not to associate with men given to anger, lest we pick up their habits.

(Pr 13:20) “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

(Pr 22:24–25) “Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, {25} Or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.”

Conclusion and Applications

Just as seasoned sailors are not made in calm seas, mature believers have to navigate through some trials in their lives to become mature. God uses trials in our lives to complete or perfect us. In 1 Peter 5:10, Peter wrote, “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” We can rejoice in the trials in our life because we know that God will use them to perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish us.

(1 Pe 5:10) “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.”

We don’t rejoice in the suffering; we rejoice in what God is going to accomplish in our lives as we persevere through the trials. God builds our endurance through trials, and through our perseverance, our character is proven. Perseverance not only proves our character, but it also helps us to bear fruit in our lives.

(Ro 5:3–4) “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; {4} and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;”

We need wisdom to get through trials, and God promises to generously give us wisdom when we ask Him. He will not reproach or think less of us if we ask Him for wisdom. He welcomes and invites us to ask Him, and He gives it to us generously. He has one condition; we must ask in faith. We cannot doubt and be double-minded. When we ask in faith, He will give us wisdom to endure and overcome the trials we face. He will bring us to a greater level of maturity, which is God’s will for our lives.

Closing Prayer

Father God, we praise You for being the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Thank You for working all things out for good in our lives. Thank You for going through the storms in our lives with us, and for Your promise never to leave or forsake us. Thank You for generously giving us wisdom. Thank You for using trials to prove our character, and to mature us. You are the One who began a good work in us, and You will be faithful to complete that work. Help us to become more like You each and every day. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- What is a trial in your life that God used to teach you perseverance or wisdom?
- What have you found to be helpful in being joyful in trials?
- What Scriptures have been helpful to you in trials?
- Why is encouragement from one another so important? (See Heb 3:12-14.)

Mature Believer Has Persevered Through Trials

Introduction (Jas 1:2–8)

1. **Has learned to rejoice in trials** (Jas 1:2-4, 1 Th 5:16, Heb 12:2-3, 1 Co 9:24–27, Ps 37:23, 139:16, Ro 8:28-31, Ps 56:9, 27:13, Ro 8:35-39, He 13:5, Ps 23:4, Ro 15:13)
2. **Has learned to persevere in trials** (Jas 1:2-4, Heb 5:7-9, Jas 1:2–4, Ro 5:3-5, 2 Pe 1:5–8, Lk 8:15, Heb 12:1-2)
3. **Has received wisdom in trials** (Jas 1:5-8, Pr 15:1, 21:30, Ps 32:8–9, Jas 3:13–18, Pr 4:7, 1:1-6, 9:10, 15:33, Ps 111:10, Pr 13:20, 22:24-25)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Pe 5:10, Ro 5:3-4)