

**James
Just Do It
Part 1
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Now let me ask you to turn in your Bibles to the Book of James. James is located towards the end of the New Testament. If you go to Revelation, turn left, and you will find it along there beyond John and Peter's letters.

And I want to spend a number of weeks looking into this little book. I say little; it has five chapters. But as I study it, there is so much in here; we could spend a lot of time. But we are going to have to limit it to eight Sundays in which I want us to share together the message that is in this book.

I am going to read the first 12 verses. It begins,

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

“because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

“But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

“That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

And then down to Verse 12, just Verse 12:

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

Keep your Bible open there.

There are two problems that we have when we are reading Scripture. One is a mental problem, when we don't understand it. And there are times we don't understand what does this really mean.

The other problem is a volitional problem when we do understand it but don't live it, don't do anything about it.

And I suggest to you that many more people have a volitional problem than have a mental problem.

I think it was Mark Twain who said, "*the parts of the Scripture that I dislike most are not the parts I don't understand but the parts I do understand,*" because they place demands upon us.

And the Book of James addresses this issue like no other New Testament book. And I suggest a theme for this book is the statement in Chapter 1:22:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

We can deceive ourselves this morning listening, listening – yes, I agree with that – make this note, make that note, underline this bit, but close the book and go out and do nothing about it.

And so with apologies to a certain sports company, I am calling this series, "Just Do It" because James' message is do it!

In Chapter 1:23:

"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he look like."

"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does."

Four times in those two verses: do, do, do, does.

You are blessed not on what you know but in what you do.

Chapter 2:17:

"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Chapter 2:18:

"Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

There you will see the reality of what is going on in my life.

Chapter 4:17:

“Anyone who knows the good he ought to do but doesn’t do it, sins.”

Have you ever thought about this? What environment can you put yourself in that is likely to create a capacity for most sin in your life? What kind of environment?

I mean you go out to a night club and you might get all caught up in things. Is that where you are most vulnerable to sin?

No, do you know the place where you will increase your capacity for sin? It’s here this morning in church because he that knows what to do and doesn’t do it, for him it is sin.

And if you come every Sunday, 52 weeks of the year, take a month off; that’s 48 Sundays, and you learn just one thing every Sunday, just one little thing maybe, you will have increased every year your capacity of sin by 48.

And so James says that of all the things that you hear, when we stand before God, we are not addressing a theological examination – what do you know - but it’s what do you do?

And that’s why I suggest the theme is that “Do not merely listen to the word” (in 1:22); “do what it says.”

There are 108 verses in the Book of James. 54 of them give a command. That’s one in every two verses is saying, “Here’s something to do. Here’s something to do. Here’s something to do.”

Alan Redpath, who has been in heaven for many years, but he preached in the Peoples Church on a few occasions; Alan Redpath used to say the biggest need of most Christians is not to know more, but to start doing what they already know.

This book therefore is extremely practical and some have not liked it for that reason. Martin Luther, who triggered the Reformation in Europe that transformed Christendom; Martin Luther didn’t like the Book of James.

He thought it contradicted Romans and the doctrine of justification by faith alone, because James says (we will see this later) a man is not justified by faith alone; he is justified by his works.

And Martin Luther said, “What in the world is he saying? This is the complete contradiction of what Paul has written.”

He called it *“the epistle of straw which should be thrown out because it doesn’t amount to much.”*

That was Martin Luther’s view of the Book of James.

Doctrine of course is the basis of action, but detached from action, doctrine is dead. Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead, he writes in Chapter 2:17.

I want to look at three things with you this morning, and we will get into the first few verses. But I want to talk about the writer, first of all (so we have the context of this book), the recipients (who is he writing to?) and then the issues as he introduces them in the opening verses.

Let's talk first about the writer.

Chapter 1:1, he says,

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...”

But the big question is which James is this? There are five people called James in the New Testament. And of those five people, two of them have been regarded as candidates for writing this particular letter.

The least likely of the two is James who was one of the sons of Zebedee, a brother of John, who were both amongst the twelve disciples and in the inner circle of Jesus when He often took Peter, James and John away on his own with them.

And his brother John lived till an old age and wrote five books in the New Testament. He wrote the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John (he wasn't very good at thinking of titles) and then he wrote a book called Revelation.

And so some have thought maybe James, his brother, was responsible for this book. But the problem with James is he was executed in Acts Chapter 12, which was early in the church's history. And when he was executed he immediately lost interest in writing anything.

And so it is highly unlikely that James, by that time, had written this book.

It is most likely the other James, which is James, the brother of Jesus, half-brother of Jesus - Mary, his mother, Joseph, his biological parents.

And it is very interesting in light of that, he introduced himself as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

He could have introduced himself in other ways that might have carried a bit more ring of authority about them. He could have said, “James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem” because in Acts 21:17 Luke writes at the end of the third missionary journey of Paul,

“When we arrived at Jerusalem... Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.”

And whenever you see the church in Jerusalem operating, you will find after about – certainly by Acts Chapter 15, James is the leading person within that community.

So he could have said, “James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem.”

He could have said, “James, a pillar of the church” because actually Paul called him that in Galatians 2:9. He talked about,

“James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars...”

So he could have said, “I am a pillar of the church.”

He could, of course, described himself as “James, the brother of the Lord Jesus” because when Paul went to Jerusalem in Galatians 1:19, he says,

“I saw none of the other apostles – only James, the Lord’s brother.”

And he could have said, you know, “I am a brother of Jesus” and he could have basked in the reflected glory of being conceived in the same womb, and being brought up in the same home as the Lord Jesus Christ, but he doesn’t.

He says, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word servant here – the Greek word, *doulos*, literally means slave.

Slavery, of course, was a common feature of the Roman Empire in New Testament times. And in the New Bible Dictionary published by InterVarsity Press, there is a summarizing of what it meant to be a *doulos*, to be a slave.

It says, “Under the influence of Roman law, a slave was usually considered to be a person, male or female, owned by another person without rights and, like any other form of personal property, to be used and disposed of in whatever way the owner may wish.”

Now you read that into James’ introduction and he is saying, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, owned by God and the Lord Jesus Christ without rights of my own to be used and disposed of in whatever way my owner may wish.”

That is the level of servanthood and true discipleship that James has entered into, that every true disciple must enter into where I am not my own. As Paul says you are not your own; you are bought with a price. You belong. You are owned by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And whatever barbarous ways slavery has been an abuse of freedom and dignity, which it has throughout history, James uses this word to describe his relationship to Jesus Christ. “I am His servant. I am His slave.”

If he was a brother of Jesus, let me just say a few things about the family of Jesus to get a little bit of understanding of James in this context.

After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph went on to have 5 sons altogether. They were called Jesus, then Joseph, then James, then Jude and then Simon (they must have run out of J's). They also had a few daughters and the daughters are unnamed in the New Testament and they are unnumbered.

But if you read carefully, the relationship that Jesus had with His family, His siblings and so on; you will find from the Gospel that it was a strained relationship. And every time His brothers and sisters figure, there is tension, for the simple reason none of His brothers or sisters were believers in Him – none of them.

So in John Chapter 7 – this is at least a year into His public ministry – it says,

“His own brothers did not believe in him.”

They didn't believe in Him. They had grown up with Him; they did not believe in Him.

Actually they thought He was crazy because in Mark 3:21,

“When his family heard about this...”

(He had just appointed for Himself the twelve disciples.)

“When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’”

These are His brothers, embarrassed, trying to drag Him home because “this is nonsense; the boy is out of his mind.” That is what they thought about Him.

In turn, Jesus seems to have been quite cold towards His family because in Matthew 12:47 it says that when He was busy,

“Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’

“He replied, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’

“Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here is my mother and here are my brothers.’”

I can't help but think that must have been quite hurtful to Mary, but He dissociated Himself from them as having claims on Him as brothers – “these are My brothers and these are My mothers” pointing to His disciples.

At the cross His brothers and sisters were nowhere to be seen. In fact, do you remember that Jesus entrusted His mother Mary to His disciple John.

Now, logically He would have entrusted her to the second brother, which was called Joseph, or the third brother, James or the fourth one, Jude, or the fifth one Simon. But He entrusts her to John and He said to His mother,

“‘Dear woman’ (John 19:26) ‘here is your son,’

“And to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took Mary into his own home.”

That begs the question, where were the real sons of Mary - Joseph, James, Jude, Simon? I don't know, but they weren't around. They weren't around.

Yet, in spite of their suspicion and disdain during the time of His ministry, two of His brothers were converted. I will show you how it is likely James was converted in a moment, but two of them were converted and they both became writers of New Testament books - James and then Jude, was also a brother of Jesus.

Now James' conversion may well have been after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead because in 1 Corinthians 15:7, after His resurrection it says,

“He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.”

He had appeared to one or two before but He appeared to James specifically, personally, James who has not been around beforehand. He has gone and appeared to James, and it may have taken the resurrection of Jesus to convince James that the boy he had grown up with, who he had shared his toys with, who had kicked a ball around in the yard with, who had begun to act very strangely and bring embarrassment on the family by the claims He was making, that this actually was the Son of God. But it wasn't until after the resurrection that James was confronted with that.

And then his younger brother Jude was also converted and he wrote the short letter of Jude and he introduced himself there as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.” Same word, *doulos* – “I am a slave of Jesus Christ; I am a brother of James.”

I find that interesting. If I was Jude, I would have said, “I am a brother of Jesus Christ.” But no, he said, “I am a brother of James.”

Probably acknowledging James was well known then when he had become leader of the church in Jerusalem. But he is content with being nothing more than being known as the servant, the *doulos* of Jesus Christ.

That's the writer then – James.

By the way, if in your family, you have sought to live a godly life, you have brought God into every part of your life, you have prayed together as your family, but your kids seem to have wandered away, don't give up.

If you worry if you have been Christ-like enough for your children, Jesus was Christ-like because He was Christ. And His own brothers never saw it and His sisters never saw it.

Give them time for God in His grace to reach into their hearts.

Now the recipients of this letter – he says,

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.”

Now you know that the Jews had been scattered among the nations since the Greek era really when there was introduced a common language and everybody could speak Greek and they all moved around the empire.

But this is not the general Jewish diaspora that he is talking about here, which is large and scattered and by and large unbelieving, of course, in Jesus.

But these were the believers in Jesus who were scattered after the first wave of persecution that came against the church in Jerusalem in its early days that led to the stoning of Stephen (the first martyr) and from that a persecution that broke out against the church in Jerusalem.

Stephen was stoned to death. He had addressed the Sanhedrin Council. They had arrested him because of his activities and he addressed them and he gave them such a lambasting that when he had finished his message it says to the Sanhedrin Council, they were furious and they gnashed their teeth at him. And they picked up stones and stoned him to death.

And Acts 8:1 says,

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”

But they were driven further than that because in Acts 11:19 it says,

“Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia” (that’s in Lebanon as we know it today), “Cyprus” (that’s an island out in the Mediterranean)“and Antioch” (that’s up in Syria as we know it today).

And later he mentions Cyrene, which was in North Africa.

So, on the persecution of Stephen, many of them scattered north, south, east and west. And it’s most likely that James, as the leader of the church in Jerusalem, is writing a pastoral letter to these dispersed persecuted and scattered Christians who had originally been part of the congregation there in Jerusalem.

There were a lot in Jerusalem, remember. 3000 were saved on the Day of Pentecost. In a few chapters, two chapters, there were 5000 disciples. But when the persecution hit most of them went away. And so he is writing to them.

Now what are the issues, the third thing – the writer, the recipients, now the issues.

Well of course there is a lot in this book, but he starts here by suggesting that in scattering these people who had run away from the persecution in Jerusalem; they have actually gone out of the frying pan into the fire. They ran from trouble only to find themselves running into trouble and they don't seem to be handling it very well.

Their track record is running away from trouble. Now they are in it and they are having difficulties.

So he says in Verse 2,

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

So his headline subject, if you like, are trials and troubles that these people have found themselves in having run away from the trials that were in Jerusalem; they ran smack into some others.

Now again, if you read it carefully, you can pick out – I picked out five things he says about trials, five brief things.

First in Verse 2,

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials.”

Trials are continuous, whenever you face them; you are going to face them.

That's a sort of pessimistic view of life but if you are not in a trial today you probably will be in one tomorrow. In fact, if you are not in one now, you have probably just come out of one and you are probably just about to go into another one. They are continuous.

Secondly, in Verse 2 also he says,

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

They are numerous as well as continuous - many kinds. This is also a bit pessimistic. They come from many angles and many guises - you think you have got that one sorted out and bang, here comes another one.

You have got that one worked out and phew, here comes another one, catches you completely by surprise. They are numerous as well as being continuous.

And then in Verse 3 he says,

“Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.”

In other words, trials are prosperous; they are producing something.

Now he starts to get a bit more optimistic. He begins with this pessimistic, you know, whenever you face trials of many kinds; but now he says they are going to test your faith to develop perseverance.

If you fear that trials may destroy your trust in God, you may discover in actual fact the reverse will be true because in your trial you have opportunity to trust and experience God in a way you don't outside of the trials.

This is why trials are good for us.

And we don't know whether we can cope with them until we are in them.

Corrie Ten Boom was a lady, Dutch lady, who spent years in a concentration camp. And some of you have read books about her; some of you have seen her film, a Hollywood film that was made about her life some years ago, called *The Hiding Place*.

I only ever heard Corrie Ten Boom speak on one occasion. It was about 40 years ago in Switzerland. And she told us something there which was a powerful truth. She said that she told her father when she was young that she did not feel she could ever face suffering.

In actual fact she did, enormously so. Her sister died in the camp. Her parents died in the camp. She was reduced to skin and bone.

She had said to her father, I don't feel I could ever face suffering; I wouldn't be able to do it.

And he said to her, “When we go to Amsterdam on the train, when do I give you your ticket?”

And she said, “At the station.”

He said, “Why don't I give it to you before?”

She said, “Because I don't need it.”

He said to her, “God will give you what you need when you need it, but not before. So if you feel you cannot face trials and tribulations now, it's because you are not in them. But when you are in them, He will give you what you need.”

And Corrie Ten Boom, in telling us that, said that had become so true for her. She was so fearful of what she knew would be the inevitability of suffering when they were arrested for hiding Jewish people in hidden parts of their home during the Second World War.

Your faith is tested. That is, your trust in God is tested and you learn to persevere in that.

And the fourth – Verse 4 says,

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

Trials are desirous. I mean this is an optimistic, verging on ridiculous, statement that if you go through your trials and you trust God in them and you persevere through them, you will be made mature, you will be made complete and you will not lack anything.

So how do I grow in my Christian life?

The answer is not a very nice one – get into trouble. That’s James’ answer.

And you know, again and again in history, in our personal experience, trials produce a maturity and a growth that nothing else does.

In Peru, as I just mentioned, when we were there last week, the evangelical churches grew between 1960 and 2010(a fifty year period) forty-fold. Less than 1% evangelical Christians in 1960 became more than 10% in 2010, and that is still growing.

But the book Operation World(which gives prayer information for every country in the world, and I recommend that book to you if you don’t have it); Operation World, on its article on Peru, says the greatest growth came at the worst times of violence and social breakdown.

Over 750 evangelical leaders were martyred – 750 leaders were martyred, much of this at the hands of the Shining Path Marxist Movement, which now is pretty well defunct.

But you say the church in Peru grew 40 times in 50 years – what happened? Did they raise up their own Billy Graham? No, they went through dark trials. They lost 750 of their best people and they have grown.

And so back to Verse 2 – I will give you the fifth thing.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

In other words, trials are joyous. Now that is optimistic and crazy to say that. Most of us are not looking for more trials, of course, and neither did these 12 tribes scattered among the nations.

But James' message to them is this: that when you face trials, don't go looking for them, don't create them out of some foolish actions - but when you do go through trials, understand about them that they are continuous, they are numerous, but they are prosperous, they are even desirous and they will be joyous.

But when you enter in it's very negative – continuous – oh no! Numerous – oh I can't stand it! Prosperous – really? Desirous – that's a very different attitude isn't it? Joyous – consider it pure joy.

And James' message is don't run away from your trials. You have already done that from Jerusalem; that's why you are scattered. Don't run away from your trials. Face them, embrace them, and consider them even as friends, and be positive about them.

Do you embrace your trials and your difficulties and your troubles or are you all the time fighting them?

A newspaper I read two weeks ago; I jotted down something it said in that paper. It said (this is a result of a survey that was done), staying positive is the key to a longer life, scientists have found. Research suggests it can slash the risk of a heart attack by half (didn't work for me, but that's okay). It can slash the risk of a heart attack by half. Being cheerful and optimistic can drastically reduce the chances of premature death.

And this is research based on interviewing hundreds and hundreds of hospital patients. But you know they could have saved some money; they could have read the Book of James and they could have discovered if you consider it joy when you face trials, you are going to do okay.

Andrew Murray was a South African pastor in the 19th Century – great writer – his books are still around – and he wrote what he called his formula for trials. I have updated the language a little bit.

He says, "When in trouble say, 'God brought me here. It is by His will I am in this trial and in that fact I will rest.'"

Secondly, "God will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child."

Thirdly, "God will make the trial a blessing, teaching me lessons He intends for me to learn."

Fourthly, "In His good time God will bring me through them; how and when only He knows."

So to summarize that: I am here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time.

And that is a good thing to remember and to say as Andrew Murray recommended.

But what if this isn't working? What if it just isn't working?

Let me read again Verse 2,

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

Notice that? You let it have its course and you will be not lacking anything. (That’s in Verse 4.)

But the next verse, Verse 5 says, “If you lack something” – oh, this is supposed to be so we’re not lacking anything, but if you lack something, what do you lack?

Well in Verse 5:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

Now James is not changing the subject here to talk about wisdom – that was trials; end of that. Now there is a new subject: talk about wisdom.

But rather he is saying the only way you can face trials and live with them and they become productive and you begin to experience joy in them is when you have the wisdom to understand them and see them as God would like you to understand them and see them.

Here’s his development of thought, if you like. If you are not embracing your trials with joy, if the testing of your faith is not producing perseverance, so perseverance is not leaving you mature and complete so that you are lacking something, then ask, “What am I lacking?” And the answer is: wisdom.

If joyless in trials, maybe we need a good strong dose of wisdom. Wisdom here seems to be a disposition of humility in the face of trials.

Later in the book, Chapter 3:13, James writes,

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”

Wisdom gives humility. If we are not humble about our trials, if we keep asking the question, “why me?” which is a question that makes an assumption, “I am entitled to be different and free from these things”; if that is your question, why me, about your trials and tribulations, ask for wisdom, this disposition of humility, and it will change your negative experience into a positive experience.

It will cause you to consider it pure joy, says James, and instead of why me? You will be quite at home asking the question, why not me, why not me? I don't have to be exempt from these things.

Now is this unrealistic? Yes, of course it is, humanly.

That's why in Chapter 3:17 he speaks of the wisdom that comes from heaven. You see this is heavenly wisdom, not human wisdom. And if you lack wisdom, you ask God, he says, He will give it to you without finding fault. He won't say, "Yeah, it's about time; where have you been these last months, huh? You have been messing up."

No, no, he doesn't find fault. You ask God. He doesn't say, "Oh at last, I have been waiting for that."

No, without finding fault – that's an important statement.

He will give it to you, because there is a process in our lives when we are not ready to hear these things. There are some of you today, what I am saying will be bounced off you and in three days' time you won't remember what it was.

But there are others of you and you are ripe, you are ripe for this. You have been brought to that point in your life of frustration where you need to begin to ask for wisdom. And when you ask for wisdom He says He will give it without finding fault.

God's provision in your life and mine is proportionate to our sense of need. If we don't live with a sense of need we won't live with a sense of provision either. If we are self-sufficient in any area of our lives, we have put God out of a job. When we come and say, "I lack, I lack this wisdom; I lack the ability to cope with these trials in the way that these verses talk about; I need wisdom" and He will give it to you.

How do you ask for wisdom?

Verse 6 very quickly and I am finishing – Verse 6,

"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt."

So when you ask for wisdom, believe God has promised this to you.

"...not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

"That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

If you doubt His ability to give you what He promised to give you, you will be unstable. That's why you say, "Lord, against all the human odds with the heavenly wisdom I recognize that You will give, You promised to give if I recognize I need it and ask You for it."

And if you don't ask believingly, we are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind, here one day, there another, up one day, down another day. And of course there will be emotional ups and downs and roller coasters, but deep in your heart, one day up, one day down, one day on top, one day below, and he calls this double-minded and unstable in all his ways, not on an even keel.

And then the end, Verse 12, he says,

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

Notice now he takes the focus away from where you are – here, now, in your troubles – and he puts the focus on something future, a crown of life to be received (future) that God has promised to those who love Him.

So consider it pure joy, he says in the beginning, because these trials will do you a lot of good. You will learn a lot about yourself and a lot about God.

And at the end of it all, persevere under trial and when you have stood the test, you will receive a crown of life.

I wonder where you are today in your trials. We all have them, of course, because they are numerous and constant and all the rest of it. Do you consider them with joy? Probably not when they first arrive, but have you moved to that point?

If not, you are lacking in wisdom. You need to ask for that wisdom. And when you ask, believe it; don't be wavering. And then you will persevere under trial.

Remember I am here by God's appointment, said Andrew Murray, I am in His keeping, I am under His training, and I am here for His time.

So do you know what James really says about all of this when he says "consider it pure joy", you know what he really says? He says, "Just do it – just do it."

Let's pray. Father, Thank You for the practical down to earth wisdom of your Word. Thank You that these aren't just words written out in some seminary office somewhere, remote, detached, but these are written on the front line of warfare and battle. And in the midst of them, these men and women of God have learned to see beyond the comfort or discomfort of today and consider it joy that You have an unrelenting purpose to make us complete. And this is one of Your agents of that. And we live knowing there is a crown of life that is to be received. Help us to believe this.

