

Truth to Help Us Navigate the Trials of Life

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. Truly a joyous day today, and with a happy heart, I invite everybody to open up to James chapter 1, verse 9. You can follow your Bible or also read on the stage.

Starting in verse 9, we read, Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

[1 : 07] But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. This is the word of God.

Great, thank you. Okay? Great, thank you. Let's pray together as we look at this passage. Heavenly Father, your word is so rich and deep and wonderful.

It's amazing, God. Being written 2,000 years ago, can still speak to our own lives today. In a different city, a different culture, a different context, your word is alive. And we pray that it will be alive today.

[2 : 10] We pray that you'll speak to us and encourage us. Draw us closer to yourself. God, won't you pour faith into our hearts? May your word do the work that you want it to accomplish. And so, God, we pray.

We just bring the next 30 minutes before you. Won't you speak to us, God? We want to hear the voice of heaven. Come and speak to us from your word, we pray. In your awesome and wonderful name.

Amen. Well, as you heard, we're continuing to preach the book of James that we started last week. And in some ways, today is kind of part two to last week.

Last week, I wasn't particularly, I wasn't sure if I was particularly clear. Hopefully, today will be a little bit clearer. But the big idea in this section of James 1 is when trials and difficulty come your way.

Or another way of saying it is steadfastness under trials. How do we be the kind of people that remain steadfast when challenges and difficulties come our way?

[3 : 12] This letter is written by this guy called James. He's Jesus' half-brother. And it's written to a group of Christians who were dispersed around the Roman world because of their faith in Jesus.

They were persecuted. And so, they needed to flee their homes and go and settle somewhere else. James, in the first line, he says, Count all joy when you face trials of various kinds.

James is arresting the modern notion that we deserve life to be easy and comfortable and problem-free. We tend to think that difficulties and challenges are these anomalies to life that we need to get over as quickly as possible so we can get on with the rest of our life.

And James arrests and says, No, trials and challenges are the normal part of life. And what we saw last week is that trials and challenges are not the great enemy to be avoided at all costs, like we so

often think.

Because actually, the goal of the Christian life is not comfort and ease and convenience. It's maturity. It's godliness. And these trials and challenges have a way of maturing us and growing us. [4 : 25] They're kind of like the gym waits for your soul and your character. As you go through them, they have a way of maturing you and growing you. In fact, you almost cannot mature without going through some kind of challenges.

Now, in our passage today, James continues on the same theme. And he's wanting to show how Christian faith helps us endure the trials and the challenges that we face.

Okay? Look at verse 12 with me. If you've got your bulletin or your Bible, he says, Blessed is the man or the woman, the person who remains steadfast under trial. That's his theme. Steadfast under trial.

But how does your Christian faith actually help that? If you're a Christian this morning, how does trust in the gospel and God help you in these trials? Well, that's what we're going to look at today. Okay? So a few weeks ago, Chris was preaching and he spoke about bouldering or rock climbing. I don't know if you remember that. When you're bouldering or you're rock climbing, you've got to make sure that you're holding onto grips properly, right?

[5 : 26] If you don't have a good grip, you're going to fall. And that could be dangerous. You've got to make sure you're holding onto grips that can sustain your weight and carry your weight. But in the section we're going to look at today, James is going to give us three kind of grips, rocks to hold onto, that will carry us and sustain us through the trials and the challenges.

And you've got to know these grips. You've got to know these rocks in order to hold onto them and be carried through. Okay? So these are the three. He's going to talk about your identity, your heart, and your father.

Your identity, your heart, and your father. So let's dive in. Let's look at the first one. Your identity or your Christian identity. Verse 9 to 11. Why don't we read it again together?

He says this. Let the lowly brother or sister boast in their exaltation and the rich in his humiliation. Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away.

The sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flowers fall and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich person fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

[6 : 35] But blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial. For when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life. As we mentioned earlier, the Christians that James is writing to are people that had to flee their homes because of persecution and difficulty and hardship.

Some of us here this morning may be the children or maybe the grandchildren of immigrants. People that had to one time flee their home and settle somewhere else. Most people that are immigrants, they leave with nothing.

And when they have to settle, they start out again from the bottom. Some people say, you know, they left mainland China to come to Hong Kong in the 50s or the 60s with nothing but the clothes on their back or one suitcase.

James here writes, and look what he says to these Christians. He's writing to many of them that are economically poor or disadvantaged. He says, let the lowly brother or sister boast in their exaltation. So lowly here means economic lowly. Exaltation means the fact that they're privileged. They're raised up. What's he saying? He's reminding them of the fact that in one sense, they're lowly, they're disadvantaged, they are underprivileged.

[7 : 49] But in another sense, because of who they are in Christ, because of the status and their identity they're given in the gospel, actually they're mightily privileged. They're exalted.

He says, he's calling them to remember who they are and what they have in Christ. So in a city like Hong Kong, which is very hierarchical based on meritocracy, for many people, your position in society determines your identity.

Your economic status determines how you feel and think about yourself. Where you are on the social ladder determines how you feel about yourself. And that means we as a society tend to look down upon those that are lower down on the rungs of the socioeconomic ladder.

James here reminds these Christians that though that may be true of them, they have an identity, a status, which is given to them by God in the gospel, which has mightily exalted and privileged them far above everything that society can put upon them.

James reminds them that if you are in Christ, you have an identity that's not formed by society's opinions of you. It's not earned or achieved by your accomplishments or your accolades or how you've done business.

[9 : 05] It means that it's stable and steadfast and it's given to you by grace. Friends, if you are a Christian, who are you? The scripture tells us that irrespective of your economic status, your career, your job title, you are a son or a daughter of the king.

You are in one sense God's immense treasured possession. You are a co-heir with Christ. And one day you will rule and reign with Christ over the new creation.

In Ephesians it says, you have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power. I watched a video this week, I just happened, someone sent it to me, of a guy who collects cans and rubbish bottles on the streets.

That's his job. He had a good job. He was involved in some terrible crime. He was smuggling people in and out of America, got caught, went to federal prison for 10 years. Now he's got this criminal record, can't get a job.

And so now he's a street cleaner. But in prison he became a Christian. And in this interview he's laughing and he's smiling. He's the most joyful guy you've ever encountered. And the interviewer says, explain this to me.

[10 : 18] He says, I'm seated with Christ in the heavenly places. What more could I want in life? Here is a man who knows his identity, his status. Friends, others may look down upon you, but in the sight of the only one who really matters, you are loved and exalted and highly regarded as you could possibly be.

And so look what he says in verse 12. Blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial, for when he stood the test he will receive the crown of life. Okay, so maybe you don't have the fanciest job in the world.

Maybe you don't have the best education. Maybe you don't have the best job title. But what do you have in Christ? The crown of life. We tend to think that that means this gem-studded headpiece, the kings and queens wear.

I think what James is talking about is, in the Roman world, those that won an athletic contest, were given a laurel wreath, a crown, James is saying that, even though you may be lowly, economically disadvantaged, you win.

You're put on the podium. You win. Friends, you may look around at those that have done very well in the world, and are very economically successful, and it looks like they don't have care in the world.

[11 : 29] They're just printing money. COVID comes along, and everyone's doing badly, but they're doing well, because they've got money to invest when the market crashes, and they make even more money. And you think, oh, this is so unfair.

James reminds us, that that status, that identity, is temporary. It's like the flowers of the field. It's going to die. And soon, very soon, that identity, that status, is going to be worth nothing.

But if you're in Christ, you're given a status, you're given identity, that can never be taken from you. A status that in the eyes of the only person, that ever matters and counts, you're exalted to the heavens.

So rejoice in your exaltation. Now, what does that mean for those of us that are wealthy? Because, if we're honest, compared to the average person in the world, many of us here are pretty wealthy, right?

Not too many of us here, are wondering where our next meal is going to come from, or how are we going to put groceries in the table next week. Most of us on the other side of the equation. In the eyes of the world, to be wealthy, is to have succeeded at the game of life.

[12 : 39] But see how the Christian gospel, actually reframes the narrative. For the rich Christian, no matter what you're standing, or position in society, whether you're CEO of the bank, partner at the law firm, vice president of your multinational conglomerate, it doesn't matter what your position is, the gospel is both exalting, as we just heard, your son and daughter of the king, but it's also profoundly humbling.

Because the gospel tells us that no matter how materially wealthy you are, no matter what your status, or your position in society, actually all of us are spiritually bankrupt. The gospel tells us, no matter who you are in society, if you're a Christian, you're a sinner that's saved by grace alone, and

not by your material wealth, or anything that you've done.

The gospel tells us that all of us have nothing, or deserve nothing, other than judgment and hell, but God's grace gives us what we have. And so whether it's our material, our spiritual blessing, that's not given to us by our accomplishments, or our accolades, or our brilliance, or our hard work, it's God's mercy alone.

We might never say it, but the mother tongue, the heart language, of almost every human being is this, God helps those who help themselves. Okay? And so we tend to think, well, you know, God's been good to me, but that's because I did a whole bunch of good things, or I'm not such a bad person really.

Friends, real Christians know that everything we've been given, our position in Christ, our material wealth, our identity in Christ, God's favor and blessing, is because of the profound mercy, and kindness of God.

[14:16] It's His mercy alone. And so let the rich brother, those who's tempted to think highly of himself, actually meditate on his humiliation, the fact that the gospel brings you lower.

Listen to how Alec Mottier describes it. He says, the gospel says, those who are lowly, and look down upon in this world, can live with a sustained awareness of the heights to which they've been lifted, and the riches they've been given in Christ.

And those who have a rich supply of goods and wealth, are to constantly look at the depths, from which Christ has rescued us, where but for the grace of God, we would still languish, and to which in our own hearts, if we're honest, we know we are still prone to go.

See what he's saying there? You see why James says, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation. In Christ I have all that I need. Let the rich who's tempted to boast in his material wealth, actually dwell on his humiliation in the gospel.

James is saying that when trials and challenges come your way, you must, you must be anchored and rooted in an identity, a status, that is not given to you by society, or your economic wealth, or where you live, or your passport.

[15:30] It must be rooted in something, someone outside of yourself, that can anchor you, and root you in the storms of life. Because if your identity and status, isn't rooted in you, and what you've accomplished, and you've achieved, that is a fragile identity.

And it's just a matter of time, before it comes crumbling down. Only in Jesus, and what he says about you in the gospel, as you start to take that on, and live it out, can you have an identity, that can manage the storms, and the trials, and the challenges of life.

Does that make sense? Okay. Yeah. First thing, your identity. Second thing, your own heart. Your own heart. Now, James is showing us here, that the trials that we experience, can be a blessing, because they can lead to maturity, and growth.

But that's not automatic. In other words, they don't have some inherent power in them, that's automatically going to make you, a better person. It depends on your response.

Every testing circumstance, we come across, requires a decision. How will I respond? Will we hold on to Christ, secure in our identity, and the gospel, and allow the trial, to do its work in us?

[16:38] Or will we tap out, and try and find an easy way, out of the trial? Okay. Look at verse 13 to 15. With me. James addresses, one of the biggest trials, that Christians face.

You could call it, the trial beneath the trial. Okay. It's not so much, the external trial there, the economy, our boss, our parents, et cetera, et cetera.

It's the trial, that's going on inside of our heart, when we experience, that outside trial. It's the battle within. We know this is part, of James' thinking, because in the Greek language, which is the language, that the New Testament, was written in, the word for trial, verse 12, is the same word, that's used for temptation, or tempted, in verse 13 and 14.

So James says, verse two, consider it great joy, you'll face trials, of many kinds. Verse 13 and 14, you're going to be tempted, in many ways. It's the same word. The question is this, so in other words, the point James is making is this, we will face trials out there, no doubt, but there's this trial, in your heart, that you're going to experience, when you face the trials out there.

How are you going to respond? Are you going to engage with God, or are you going to make an excuse, and run away? Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, has one option.

[17:57] Listen to how he suggests, we handle these trials. He says, thou knowest, that thou has formed me, with passions wild and strong, and listening to their witching voice, has often led me wrong.

Robert Burns is saying, in very old language, God you put these desires in me, they're wild and strong, and God you put me in situations, I couldn't do much about it. It's not my fault, I just acted on the personality, that you gave me.

God, you gave me a strong temper. God, you made me a passionate man. What was I meant to do, when my kids pushed my buttons, or when my boss, you know, did whatever they did?

God, it's your fault. We could say, listen God, you are sovereign, you allow everything to happen, you put me in that situation. God, if you hadn't brought that person, across my path, if you hadn't allowed that to happen, I wouldn't have responded like this.

Yeah? But really, that's just an excuse, isn't it? Look what, let me go here. When I was growing up, I loved cricket.

[19:06] I know cricket's not such a big thing in Hong Kong, but I loved cricket. I knew everything there was to know about, every player, I loved watching cricket. In 1993, the South African, the captain of the South African cricket team, his name was Hansi Kroenier, really well respected, good guy, Christian man, he was caught cheating.

And what happened was, he took bribe money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, to lose certain matches, or to go out early, or to drop catches, et cetera. And so these betting companies, if they knew the outcome of the game, they could bet, hedge their bets, make tons of money, because they knew the outcome.

So Hansi Kroenier takes this money, loses a couple of games, and he's caught. And at first he denies it, not me, but then eventually he owns up, and he confesses. But what is startling, was the nature of his confession.

Listen to what he says. He says, in a moment of stupidity and weakness, I allowed Satan and the world, to dictate the terms to me. See what he's saying?

He's saying, I was put in a corner, Satan made me do it. The devil made me do it. They dictated the terms, what could I do? Right? Friends, maybe you've experienced this.

[20:17] Someone treats you badly, maybe they say some horrible things, or they lose their temper, or they send you a nasty text message, and then a few days later, you run into them. And it's a bit awkward, but then they say, hey, I'm really sorry about what I said, but I've been under such pressure at work, it's just been so intense, I'm really sorry.

Or maybe they say, I'm sorry what I said the other night, I was really drunk, I didn't mean it. Right? Or, I'm sorry about that thing, but the devil made me do it. I've been under spiritual attack at the moment.

Look at what James says. James says, verse 13, let no one say when he's tempted, I'm being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

He's saying, by nature, God is never party to evil and wickedness. God doesn't bring temptation our way just to trip us up and see how we'll handle it. Verse 14, but each person is tempted when he's lured and enticed by his own evil desires.

James is reminding us here that the real source for our bad decisions and our bad words and our bad actions and our sinful behavior is not just the circumstances that brought it about, it's not just the pressure we face from outside, it's something that's going on inside of us.

[21:32] It's our own hearts. It's actually what's going inside of me, and the circumstances just bring that to the surface. But they're not the occasion for my sin, they just reveal it.

So, Tim Keller's got this great analogy. He says it's like taking an exam. Now, I know as Hong Kongers, you're all very studious, and you work very hard, and nobody has ever failed an exam, right?

But, a long time ago, I wasn't a Hong Konger, and I was a terrible student, and I, the worst student you could imagine. And, I, I don't know how I passed university, but I did.

Very close, but I did. Didn't fail the course. I'm not lying. That's, in case you think God is trying to strike me dead for lying to you, it's, it's true.

What does every student say when they fail an exam? And their parents say, what happened? How did you fail? They say, it's not my fault. The exam was so hard.

[22:33] Or, the lecturer never told me that material was gonna be in there. Or, they changed the syllabus. Or, my friend told me we didn't have to study this, right?

It's not my fault, it's somebody else's fault. But what's the real reason for my failing an exam? It's not the lecturer, it's not my friend, it's not the typhoon, it's actually, I didn't know the material.

I bunked too many lessons, or I procrastinated, or I didn't study hard enough. It's me. The exam wasn't the reason I failed, the exam just revealed the reason.

The real reason was me. The exam was the occasion that revealed what was inside, but the reason I failed was because of me. James is saying the same thing. We can blame God and say, God, you put me in this situation.

God, my boss is like this, the economy's like this. That's why I freaked out. I had too many beers. No, no, but what is inside of you? That may be the occasion that reveals what's in my heart.

[23 : 32] Friends, one of the greatest trials that you will ever face and I face is the challenge to reckon honesty with our hearts. God will allow circumstances to come our way that will expose us and reveal and show us there, and when that happens, how are we going to respond?

Are we going to make excuses, get defensive, blame others? Why are you going to face the trial? Face the trial beneath the trial. Face what's in your heart, your own sinful nature and bring it before God.

Friends, it may be true that your boss is a psychopath. Okay, that's true, but what's in your heart? How are you responding? It may be true that your family is overbearing.

Okay, that's true, but what's in your heart? How are you responding? It may be true that your family member or your colleague or your CG member drives you mad. Okay, that's true, but what's in your heart?

How are you responding? Maybe the economy turns, you lose a ton of money. Hey, that's really difficult, but what's in your heart? How are you responding? If you want to become a mature Christian, Christ-like and character, if you're going to grow in godliness, you have to grapple with our hearts and engage with the trial beneath the trial and engage with God.

[24 : 44] We've got to turn with God and be honest about our sinful nature because it's infinitely easier to blame all sorts of other people, our circumstances, the devil or God, rather than admit the uncomfortable truth that my sinful behavior is my own, that I am my own worst enemy.

Let no one say when he's tempted, I'm being tempted by God, the devil made me do it. No friends, each person is tempted when he's lured and enticed by his own desire. Now, last thing on this point, we may say, okay, what's the big deal of temptation, right?

Sometimes I'm tempted to lie, tempted to look at porn, tempted to, I'm a chronic people pleaser, right? Okay, I went away with my girlfriend. Okay, what's the big deal? Look what he says in verse 15.

Desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it's fully grown, gives birth to death. Listen to how Sam Albury explained this.

I can't say it better than him. He says, sometimes we like to think that giving into sin is a way of getting it out of our system. That if we give into it, it'll go away and it'll leave us alone.

[25 : 51] James shows us just how deceptive our thinking is. Acting on temptation to sin is never the end, rather it's the beginning that begins to cultivate it. Great point.

Friends, if you're going through some trial, if you're going to come through the trials of life and more refined, more godly, more mature, a better person, you need to reckon with our sinful nature, with our hearts, the lures and the temptations.

We need to turn to God and say, God, you've allowed the circumstance to come, but my heart is tempted to run off these things. God, come and help me. I want to be like you. I want to know you. Okay.

Our own heart. So, James has given us two grips to hold on to. Your identity, your own heart. Look at the third thing, your father. Your father. James says that if you're going to handle the trials and the challenges that come, you've got to know deeply and profoundly the nature of God, who he is. When trials and temptations come our way, one of our tendencies is to forget our own sinful hearts. The other tendency is to forget who God is. But look at what he says here. You must know how gracious God is.

[26 : 59] Verse 16. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good and every perfect gift is from above. Coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Remember James' big idea here. His big idea is steadfastness under trial.

Navigating the challenges of life. And the way he's helping us do this is to see how our Christian faith helps you go through the trials of life. And here he tells us you've got to know who God is. And who is God? He's a gracious and generous Father. Now, I know that for some of us here, well let me say, for all of us here, we were born to less than perfect fathers.

There is no perfect father. Some of our fathers were worse than others. Some of us may have never even known our fathers. Some of us, our fathers abandoned us when we were young.

[28 : 01] And hearing that God is a father is sometimes not good news. It can come across as bad news. That can be really hard to accept. James here wants to tell us a little bit about who God is and his father heart.

He says a couple of things. Firstly, he says he's the father of lights. That means he's the father of the stars. James is saying that this father, this God, is the creator of the universe.

He's the one who's omnipotent and omniscient. He knows all things. He's all powerful. Friends, I don't really understand how the universe works. Does anybody really understand? But God does.

He knows what's way beyond the furthest reaches of the best telescopes. He knows what's on the other side of black holes. Charles Spurgeon said this, he who hung the stars in space and calls them by name is in no danger of forgetting his own children.

Friends, if God knows the stars and the galaxies that are hundreds of billions of miles away, you can bet he knows everything that's going on about you. Your earthly father, your physical father, he doesn't know everything.

[29 : 07] He's not omnipotent. He's not strong enough to handle the trials and the challenges that you face. You've got a father who is. He's the creator of the entire universe. One of the problems with trials is that as we said a few weeks ago, they can exasperate our loneliness.

We feel like no one understands. No one knows what I'm going through. We're in it alone. Friends, if you're a Christian, it's not true. You've got a father in heaven that created the universe and he knows every detail of your life.

He knows your struggles. He knows your challenges. He knows your pain. He knows your fears and your worries. He knows that you're going to move to another country and you're anxious about it. In verse 5, we looked at this last week. It says, James says, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all.

God doesn't just give wisdom. He gives us every gift that we need. Look at how he says this. He says, every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of lights. God knows exactly what you need to face this trial and this challenge and he'll give you the resources if you'll look to him.

Friends, when trials come, it's easy to think, God is tempting me. God is testing me. God's brought this thing my way to trip me up, to see how strong I am, to see whether I'm weak. No, he doesn't.

[30 : 19] He gives you the gifts and the grace to handle the trials of life. God is so gracious. Look at what else James says. He says, with him, there's no variation or shadow due to change.

God has not changed. He's not shifty. God made the stars and the moon and the sky, but he's very different to them in one way. He does not move and he has no shadows.

Friends, the one translation says, our heavenly Father does not change like shifting shadows. He's not one moment sunshine, the next moment darkness. And unlike so many of our earthly fathers, he's not one moment commitment, the next moment abandonment.

God's love and commitment does not wax and wane like the phases of the moon. There's no shadow or variation to him. He never changes. He is absolutely consistent and patient and gracious day in, day out, week in, week out, year in, year out.

In the last few years, we've all probably been devastated by the news articles about these Christian leaders that have fallen terribly, right? On stage, they're one thing, they're great leaders, lead these amazing ministries, but at home, there's another side thing, or there's a private aspect of their life that nobody knows about.

[31 : 35] And then they get exposed and we all are horrified that this happens. A few years ago, Sam Albury, who I quoted earlier, worked with such a leader. He worked in an organization and this leader was very, very famous, well known for years and years and years.

And after he died, there was a whole shadow side to his life that nobody knew about that was exposed. And Sam Albury, this man was his boss, mentor in some ways, somebody he looked up

to and respected.

And he had to grapple with the fact that here was this person who was a fraud. There was another side to him that nobody knew about, a darkness. I listened to an interview of Sam Albury soon after that and he writes this.

He says, as Christians, our faith must be in Christ. People will let us down but Christ will never. You'll never find an ugly side to Jesus that has been hidden all along.

That line is amazing. You'll never find a dark side to God that has been hiding all along. You think you can trust him and suddenly behind the scenes there's another side to him that you didn't know. Friends, this God is faithful and consistent.

[32 : 40] Then look at the last thing. He is so gracious. Verse 18, he says, by his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth. That means he brought us salvation. Friends, if you're a Christian here this morning, that's not because you were so good that God looked at you and thought, okay, I guess they've earned it.

Friends, it was his will, his initiative. He took the initiative. When you were lost in your sin, when you had nothing to give, God by his own initiative poured out his grace to draw you in that you might know him.

Of his own will, he caused us to be born again by his word of truth. Such amazing grace. Friends, some of you have met my dad. He's preached here once or twice at the watermark.

I want to tell you, I have the best dad in the whole world. Many of you have got good dads. My dad's the best. He is the greatest father in the whole world. Honestly, he is always loving, always gracious, overflowing with hope, always encouraging.

As I've got older, and I guess as I've become more and more of a father, as my kids have grown up, I've realized, my dad is great, but he's fallible. He's getting old.

[33 : 49] He's not omnipotent. He can't help me in many of the trials and the challenges that I face. He lives on the other side of the world. He can't be there for me. But there is a father that I have, and if you're a Christian, there's a father that you have, that is consistent, that is omnipotent, omniscient.

He knows everything about you. He's there for you and you can bank your life on him. And when the trials and the challenges and the storms of life come, you can hold onto him, the father of lights. Friends, here's my question. Do you know him? Do you know him? Not just philosophically, not just theologically, not just in your head.

Do you know him? Do you know him? Do you know his grace? Do you know his immense love? Do you know his compassion? Do you know what it means to draw near to him in the trials and the storms of life?

Have you experienced his strength and his tenderness? Friends, do you love him? If you don't, you may not be a Christian at all. But that's okay.

[34 : 59] Jesus Christ came. God so loved the world that he gave his only son that you might know him and experience him like that. Friends, we will all face trials. If you don't believe me, believe James, the man who saw his older brother being crucified on the cross and who saw his whole congregation being dispersed because of persecution.

You will face trials. And when you face those trials, what are you going to hold onto? What grips do you have that's going to carry your weight? What is your worldview? Is it going to carry your weight? James here gives us three things to hold onto. That in Jesus Christ, we have an identity which is not achieved or earned or given by society or our status or our economic condition. It's an identity that is rock solid, rooted in heaven because it's given by grace and Jesus.

Jesus Christ helps us to reckon with the trial of our own hearts, our sinful nature. And he says that if you come to me, I will redeem you, I'll change you, I'll purify you, and I'll give you grace.

And Jesus Christ gives us access to a father that is unchanging and immensely gracious who gives us everything we need for life and godliness and trials and challenges. Let's come to him now.

[36 : 07] Let's pray. Father God, your word is so glorious and so beautiful. Father, I know that many of us maybe are facing trials at the moment.

Maybe we feel alone in it. We feel like nobody understands. We feel like life is so hard. God, in your word, you give us innumerable rocks to hold on to. Thank you for these three this morning.

Who you are, who we are, and who we are in you. The gospel, our own hearts, and our new identity in you. God, we thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

God, I pray that we will come to you. Won't you help us to come to you now? God, for those of us that aren't Christians this morning, help us, God, to truly come to you and open up our lives. Won't you pour faith in our hearts to believe that it's real. You, Jesus, died and rose again that we may know you and have this hope, this hope that will never perish, spoil, or fade.

[37 : 03] God, come and cause friends to be born again, I pray. Help us to hand over our lives to you. And for those of us that are Christians, God, help us this week to trust you, to not tap out, to not avoid the trials too easily, to not find excuses, but to push through the trials holding on to you. God, I pray, help us to do this. In your name, amen. Amen. Thank you.