

How To Face Trials

James 1:1-12

Pastor John Miller

James chapter 1, verses 1-12 says, “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...”—or “testings”—“...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience...”—or “steadfast endurance”—“But let patience...”—or “endurance”—“...have its perfect...”—or “complete”—“...work, that you may be perfect and complete...”—or “equipped”—“...lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother...”—which is a reference to the poor man—“...glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field, he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits...”—or “ways”—“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he...”—or “she”—“...has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

The book of James has been called the epistle of applied Christianity. James is Christianity 101. The book of James is asking us, “Does your faith work? Is your Christianity real?” I’ve met people who say, “Well, I’ve tried Jesus, but it didn’t work for me. It just didn’t work.” Then you probably didn’t have real faith, because the book of James is faith that works. A real faith, a genuine faith or an authentic faith, produces works in our lives. So you might say that the book of James is applied Christianity. It is for those who are long on theory but short on practice.

The first place that James says our faith should work is in how we face trials, how we face testings, how we face hardships, how we face difficulties. Someone said, “Christians are like teabags; you don’t really know what flavor they are until they’re put in hot water.” I like that. If you’re a real Christian, “Let me see you through the fire. Let me see you in the heat. Let me see you face the difficulties. What does Jesus Christ do to help you through the hard times in your life?”

I say “hard times.” Let me tell you this: Whether you are a Christian or not, we all have hard times. All the money in the world can’t save you from trials. You can be a billionaire and get sick and die. You can’t save yourself with your money. Everyone reaches a point where they need help outside of themselves, and we have to trust in God. As believers, we not only have the Lord help us through life’s difficulties, but we have the hope beyond the grave. We have hardships like any other man, but we have the help of God, Who is with us. He said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” I can’t imagine trying to live life without the hope of Jesus Christ in my heart.

In Job 5:7, it says, “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” So we need to learn how to handle our hardships and our difficulties and our trials. James is going to give us five things we need to be able to face trials and difficulties.

But first let's ask a few questions about the book of James. The first one is in verse 1: Who is this James? Verse 1 says, “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” I can make it very simple and get right to the point here. This James is a reference to the half-brother of Jesus. You ask, “Well, what do you mean by ‘half-brother’ of Jesus?” After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph got fully married, they consummated their relationship and had other children. So Jesus had step-brothers and step-sisters. They didn't believe in Jesus until He was crucified and risen from the dead.

You can imagine how difficult it was growing up in a home where the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of God, is your big brother. You're constantly hearing, “Why can't you be like your big brother, Jesus? He's always so perfect.”

“I know! I know! I'm trying, you know. This is crazy.” And I can imagine that one day Jesus stood up and said, “I am the way, the truth and the life,” and his brothers said, “Mom, Jesus is flippin' out!”

This is the James, the brother of our Lord and Savior. But James doesn't use that title. He uses the title “servant.” The word “servant” in the Greek is the word “doulos” or “bond slave.” So he was the property of God; he belonged to God, and he was a servant of God. He had no will of his own. He devoted himself—and we also should—to being servants of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. James uses the full title for Him.

Who is James writing to? In verse 1, it says, “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” and he gives them the normal “Greetings.” The twelve tribes, by the way, are not lost; God knows who and where they are. The fact that they are called “scattered” or “diaspora”—we get our word “seed” from it—indicates that they are Jews living outside the land of promise. They are not Jews who live in Palestine or Canaan or the land of Israel, but they live outside the land and are of the diaspora, the dispersion. They were persecuted for being Jews outside the land and because they were also believers. James gives them a greeting.

Now James is writing early. It is believed that the book of James was one of the earliest epistles written. It was written about 41 or 42 AD. James is writing to tell them that if their faith is real and genuine, that it will be evidenced by the way they live.

Throughout church history, a lot of people have not really liked the book of James. It was kind of rejected by some people, because its emphasis is upon works. Paul's emphasis was on faith; James' emphasis was on works. They don't contradict each other. We're saved by grace, through faith, but a faith that saves is a faith that works. Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone; it produces works. If someone says, “I'm a Christian,” but they have no works in their life to back it up, then I have to believe that they are not really a child of God. To

what degree or to what amount—that's in the hands of God. Some people grow quicker and some people grow slower, but there has to be some evidence of new life.

A Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. When the Bible says that we have eternal life, it is the life of God in our soul. If we are a Christian, God actually lives in us, and we have the life of God in us. It's amazing to think about. So how can you go through life with God in you and it not be manifested out through you?

James tells us five things that we need to do when we face trials or troubles or hardships or difficulties as Christians in this world. The first thing we need to do is to have a joyful attitude. Yes, you heard me right; we need to have a joyful attitude.

I want you to notice that there are five key words in each of these points. The first word is count. That's the key word. Notice verse 2: "My brethren..."—he's writing to believers—"...count it all joy when..."—not "if" but "when"—"...you fall into various trials" or testings.

You might be saying, "Well, John, my Bible says 'temptations' there," and my King James Bible renders that "temptations." But the word "temptation" and the word "trial" mean different things, depending on the context. When you get down to verse 13, we'll be talking about temptation. That's where James begins to talk about a solicitation to evil. But in this section, verses 1-12, he's talking about trials or testings. We read, "Lead me not into temptation" in the Lord's Prayer.

There is a big stink about the Pope changing the Lord's Prayer. It isn't really changing the Lord's Prayer; there already are a lot of translations that render it that way. "Lead me not into testings or trials." Many times when we go into a testing or trial, Satan will capitalize on that by tempting us. So temptations and trials go hand-in-hand, and they are the first two topics in James, chapter 1. We are tried and tested by God to bring out our worth, and then we are tempted by Satan to bring out our worst. When I'm in a trial, I'm in a dangerous time in my life, because Satan comes along to tempt me to disobey God or tempts me to doubt God or tempts me to turn away from God, rather than to trust Him and obey Him in every aspect of my life. So I wanted to point that out that in verse 2, the word there should be rendered "trials" or "testings."

Notice, too, that James says not "if" you fall into them, but "when" you fall into them. It's part and parcel of the Christian life. You cannot be a Christian and not go through difficulty, because it is one of the chief ways that God uses in our life to produce maturity and equip us for ministry and service.

Notice that the trials differ: In verse 2, he uses the word "various" or "diverse" or "different." There are physical trials, financial trials, spiritual trials, emotional trials. There are different trials in relationships with people, and there are trials of persecution. They come in all shapes and all forms.

And the older you get, more often your trials are physical. You get together with your friends, and it's like an "organ recital." You talk about everything in your body that doesn't work anymore. That has hit me so hard lately. I'm with my friends, and we're all talking about what's

going wrong with our bodies. I go, "You know what? We are full-on old people right now." Official buzzards. That's what we do; we talk about what doesn't work right anymore. The older you get, the more trials your body brings you, but God is gracious. Is not the Lord with us and promised to be our help and our strength?

So what do we do when we go through different trials and difficulties? Verse 2 says, "Count it all joy." Now I know some of you are saying, "Please tell me that's not what it means in the Greek. There's got to be something a little deeper in there to indicate that's not really what it's saying; right?" No; that's actually what it's saying. "Count it all joy" is talking about a joyful attitude, even in our sorrows and in our sufferings.

This is something that the believer has that the non-Christian does not have. The non-Christian has all their eggs in one basket—this life. Things had better go smoothly, because this is all you get. "Get all the gusto. Get all you can get, because this is it." If something goes wrong, you lose everything. But for the Christian, we have the hope of heaven beyond this life. We have heaven now in our souls, and we have heaven to look forward to one day. So we can actually rejoice. Joy is that fountain springing up in my soul, that even though I am going through difficulty and sorrow, or someone I love has died and my heart has broken and I am grieving, the Bible says, "We sorrow not as others who have no hope." I love that. God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep or died in Jesus.

There are so many people I can't wait to see when I get to heaven. And I'm going to see them. And we're going to be together. And it's going to be wonderful. It's a blessing to know that we have that blessed hope, so we can rejoice.

By the way, this is a command, and James is famous for them in his epistle. In the book of James there are 108 verses, and of those 108 verses, there are 58 commands or imperatives. The book of James is very straight-forward and to-the-point.

As I mentioned, the first key word is count. It is a financial term. It means to "evaluate" or "what we value." It is all about your values. Your values determine your evaluations. If you value comfort over character, then your trials will upset you. If you value character over comfort, then, "Lord, have Your way. Do with me as You want to. Make me what You want me to be."

Jesus put it like this: He said in Matthew 5:12, "When you are reviled and persecuted for righteousness sake, rejoice and be exceedingly glad..."—why?—"...because great is your reward in heaven." We get there in verse 12. It's hard for me not to get ahead of myself, because my favorite is verse 12, the end of this section. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." That's what the end is. So when the outlook is bad, we try the "uplook"; we keep our focus on heaven.

In Romans 5:3, Paul said that as Christians, "We glory in tribulations." You say, "Well, you know, that's all fine and dandy, but I really find that very difficult." So what we need is the second

thing, and that is knowing. Verse 3 says that we need to have an understanding mind. This is how I am able to rejoice in my sorrows and sufferings. Verse 3 says, “knowing” something. That’s the key word. The key word in verse 2 is “count.” The key word in verse 3 is “knowing.” “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience.”

Some of you don’t want to read that word, because you don’t like that word. The minute you hear the word “patience” you get bummed out. We want everything fast. Turn the computer on—boom!—it comes on before you even touch the button. Just think, Computer, on and it comes on.

The other day I went into In-N-Out, and a church bus showed up just before I did. I was so hungry and about ready to die, so I felt like Esau—“Please, just one pot.” I went to the front of the line, I’m talking to these kids and I almost said, “I’m a pastor. Can I take cuts?” Praise God, I didn’t do that, but I almost did. It’s like, “I’m a man of God, let me in here. I want to eat. I need food right now!” I had to get in my car and drive somewhere else. We are tested and we are tried.

The word “patience” is not a passive concept. It’s a positive concept. It means “steadfast endurance.” It would actually be used of a person who is in a strong wind. He’s leaning into the wind and pressing forward. We think of patience as just standing when the wind is blowing hard, but patience is actually progress or leaning into the wind when it’s blowing. So this is how I can rejoice: knowing that God is producing steadfast endurance.

Now we need to know two things, and I want to make them clear from the text, verse 3. We need to know that my trials are designed by God—and that word “designed” is important—to test my faith. Notice verse 3 says, “the trying of your faith.” That which is being tried and tested is your faith. It’s like being put to the test.

If you find some gold or iron ore, you take it to the assessor, and they run tests on it to determine if it’s genuine or if it’s authentic. You say, “I found gold in them thar hills. I’ve got gold.”

“How do you know? Has it been tested? Has it been proven?”

You say, “I have faith.”

“How do you know? Is it genuine?” Someone said, “If it cannot be tested, it cannot be trusted.”

I think of Abraham, whose faith was tested in Genesis 22. God actually told him to offer his son as a sacrifice on a mountain. You talk about a trial or a testing! “God, you want me to do what?! You want me to offer my son on an altar?!” But the next morning, Abraham rose up in obedience, saddled the donkey, took Isaac and journeyed to the land of Moriah, and as they were going up the mountain, Isaac said, “Father, here’s the wood and here’s the fire and here’s the knife, but where’s the sacrifice?”

Can you imagine how Abraham's heart was breaking? He was being tested and tried by God. He said to his son, "God will provide Himself a sacrifice." Isaac lay on the altar, and Abraham lifts his hand to plunge the knife into his son, and God stops Abraham and said, "Now I know that you love Me and that you will obey Me." Then Abraham looked over in the bushes and saw a ram caught. He took the ram and substituted it for Isaac. That's a picture of how Jesus died in our place. But it was the testing of Abraham's faith to prove that he loved God, more than even his own son. He knew that if God had to, God would raise his own son from the dead, even as Jesus died and rose again for us.

But notice, secondly, that my trials will make me strong. So number one, trials test the reality and value of my faith, and number two, they are given to make me strong. Verse 3, they "produce patience" or steadfast endurance. Trials are for our good and for God's glory; to prove our faith and to produce patient endurance.

So number one, we need to "count it all joy" and number two, we need to know that God's producing steadfast endurance in my life. Then here's number three, in verse 4: We need to have a surrendered will to God. But if we don't do this, it can circumvent God's purpose and plan for the trial in our life. This is so important. "But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect..."—or "mature"—"...and entire..."—or "equipped"—"...wanting nothing."

The key word here in verse 4 is the word "let." So you have "count," verse 2, "knowing," verse 3 and then "let," verse 4. You have to surrender your will. The great danger when we face trials is that we resist God, and we don't allow Him to work in our life. So let God have His way.

The Bible, metaphorically, pictures God as a potter, and we are clay on the wheel.

"Have Thine own way, Lord.

Have Thine own way.

Thou art the potter.

I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after Thy will,

While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord.

Have Thine own way.

Hold over my being absolute sway.

Filled with Thy Spirit till all can see

Christ only, always living in me.”

I love that song. He is the potter and we are the clay.

When I was in high school, I had an arts and crafts class. I’m a bit of an artist, but I’ve never been able to throw a pot on a wheel. The minute I get the clay set on the wheel and the wheel starts to turn, it’s fine until I touch it. The minute I touch it, it flies off. I can never get it right. So I’ve always kind of hit it on the wall, put two grooves in it and made an ashtray every time. Mom got more ashtrays that year, and she didn’t even smoke. “Here, Mom. Here’s another ashtray.” Aren’t you glad that I’m not the potter? You’d all be ashtrays right now.

But God is the master potter, and as you look closer at His hands, you see they are scarred, because He loves the clay. He gave His life for that clay. In the circumstances of the wheels of our lives as they are turning, God knows how to speed things up or slow things down. He knows the pressure He has to apply. He knows just how to develop that pottery. Many times there is pain and difficulty, but we need to stay pliable and yielded, living by faith and trust in God.

Now what happens if we surrender to God? Two things. Verse 4 says we will grow up. That’s what it means when it says “that you may be perfect.” You will grow up. You’ll be mature. There is no shortcut to maturity. You have to be tried and tested. It’s like ripe fruit; you’ll grow to maturity.

Then, secondly, you will be equipped to help others. This is so important to understand. If you want to be used by God—if you want your life to be a blessing to others—verse 4 says that you be “equipped” or “entire, lacking nothing.” It says that not only will you grow up, but you will be used by God to be a blessing and encouragement and a help to other people.

I believe with all my heart two things—because the Bible tells me so, and life has proven it to me—that God equips us for service through suffering. If you want to be used by God, you can’t find it all in a textbook. You’re not going to get it all in a classroom or a Bible college or a seminary. You’re going to get it in the school of hard knocks. To be able to have a sympathetic heart, to be able to understand people’s sorrows and identify with them, to be able to encourage people in hardship and in difficult times, you must also know what it is to suffer. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of years past, says, “God gets His best soldiers from the highlands of affliction.”

We have a son who just got out of Army boot camp. He just started at a military school for learning languages. I’ve never before experienced being an Army dad or having a son in the military. Now I understand when I see the military; my heart goes out to them. It’s like, that’s your son, daughter or child. I have a lot of compassion for them. He’s classified as a soldier now, but he hasn’t been in any warfare. You don’t know what kind of a soldier you are until you are in a war. Then it’s proven what kind of character you have. So God equips us so we might serve others and be a blessing to others.

Jesus said to Peter, "Satan desires to have you, so that he can sift you like wheat. But Peter, I've prayed for you." Can you imagine Jesus turning to you and saying, "Hey, Satan called me last night. He asked for you by name."

"Wow! What did you tell him, Lord? Did you tell him to 'bug off, Beelzebub'?"

Satan calls God. "You know that John Miller dude? I want him." Jesus said, "I prayed for you. And when you've been tested and tried and have been converted, strengthen your brothers." So Peter wrote 1 and 2 Peter after he fell on his face and denied the Lord and wept tears bitterly. But God brought him back and restored him. Peter wrote those epistles to encourage us. In 2 Corinthians 1 there is a whole section that talks about God allowing us to go through suffering so we can encourage other people who are suffering.

I've been a pastor for many, many years now, and I remember when I was a young pastor and did marriage counseling, or I would counsel people with children. I didn't have any children then. I did funerals but nobody I loved had died. It took all these years for God to "ripen" me and to mature me to be able to experience all these things in life, so I can minister not only out of theory but from a heart of experience.

So God is making you. He hasn't made you; He's making you. God has a ministry for you to do. Maybe it's that you're still in school; you haven't even graduated yet. God was going to open that door. Moses was 80 years old when God called him into full-time ministry. You never know what God's plans and purposes are. So God uses us by suffering.

Let me give you the fourth thing you need when you face trials, in verses 5-8. We need a prayerful heart. So you need to have a joyful attitude; you need to have a knowing, understanding mind; you need to have a surrendered will; and you need to have a prayerful heart. Nothing's more important than learning how to pray when you pass through trials.

Notice verse 5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God..."—or "pray to God"—"...who gives to all liberally and without reproach..."—or "upbraideth not"—"...and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

What is one of the things we need most when we're going through a trial? Wisdom. When things go wrong we ask, "Why? Why, God? What are You doing? What are You trying to teach me? Why did this happen to me? Lord, what do You want me to learn?" So we need wisdom from God.

Paul was going through a time of testing and trial. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul had a thorn in his flesh, "a messenger of Satan to buffet" him. Three times in prayer Paul asked God to take it away. "Take it away. Take it away. Take it away. God, I want to escape my sorrows." Isn't that what we do? "Lord, heal me. Take away the pain. Lord, provide for me. Take away the difficulty. Lord, work this problem out." We pray to escape our sorrows. But God told Paul, "No;

I won't take it away, but I'll give you My grace, and My grace will be sufficient for you. My grace will make you strong; it will be your strength in your weakness." So we need to pray for wisdom. "God help me to enlist and not escape my sorrows."

Let me give you some ideas of things you can pray for. Pray that God would teach you what He wants you to learn. Don't pray to escape. Pray that God would give you wisdom.

Secondly, pray that God would make you humble. That's a good thing. Humility is a good thing. The proud, God knows afar off. The humble, God knows close. He is near to those who have a broken heart. Ask God to humble you as well as teach you.

Thirdly, ask God to wean you from the world. As Christians, we sometimes get too tied to the world. We get too drawn to the world. What will wean you from the world is having the world taken away from you: loss of a job, loss of a loved one, loss of your health. Nothing will wean you from the world faster than to have it taken away. But it is a blessing in disguise; God is trying to teach you the value of spiritual things.

James gives us four encouragements to pray. I want you to see them in verse 5. The first encouragement is that God gives to all. Verse 5 says, He "gives to all." The second encouragement is that God gives liberally. He "gives...liberally" and generously. So God is good and God is generous. Thirdly, don't be afraid to pray, because God will not upbraid or "reproach" you. Have you ever asked somebody for something and they say, "I've already helped you before. What did you do with what I gave you before? I'm sick and tired of helping you out."

"Okay, I won't ask you anymore." Aren't you glad God doesn't do that? "Lord, I need help."

"I'm sick of you! Didn't you ask for help last week?"

"Yes, Lord, but I'm short this month. I need some money to pay the mortgage."

"I already helped you pay the mortgage. What's your problem?!" Aren't you glad God doesn't deal with us like that? It's like, "Okay, God. I'm sorry. I won't bug You anymore." God doesn't only give to everyone and give liberally, He doesn't chide us or upbraid us.

Fourthly, God will answer when you ask. It says in verse 5, "And it will be given to him." That's a promise that God will answer your prayers. Jesus said it like this: "Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

John Newton, the man who wrote the famous song Amazing Grace, wrote the words,

"Thou art coming to a King.

Large petitions with thee bring.

For His grace and power are such,

None can ever ask too much.”

I love that. So when you come to God, bring large petitions, because you can’t ask too much. God is liberal and generous, and He answers prayer.

James tells us that when we pray, verses 6-8, we need to pray with a believing heart, not in unbelief but in faith. We don’t want to be like the waves of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. It is so important that we are committed to believing “that God is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

There is a fifth, and last thing we need when we face the trials of life, verse 9-12. We need to count it all joy, we need to know God is working it for my good, we need to let God have His perfect way in me in order to mature me and we need to ask God, through prayer, for wisdom to use it wisely. Then fifthly, we need to keep our eyes on the prize.

“Let the brother of low degree” is a reference to the poor person. Some of you say, “Amen. That’s me in the Bible. I claim that. I’m the poor guy.” Then you need to rejoice, because God exalts you. In other words, you may be financially or monetarily poor, but if you’re a Christian, you’re a child of the King, and you have treasures untold and you’re going to heaven.

There’s an old hymn that says,

“I’m a child of the King,

A child of the King;

With Jesus my Savior,

I’m a child of the King.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care?

They’re building a palace for me over there.

Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,

His coffers are full, He has riches untold.

I’m a child of the King.”

It doesn’t matter what is happening around you right now. We’re rich in God through Jesus Christ. Jesus takes the low man and lifts him up. But the rich man, verse 10, he is made low. So you rejoice, because if you’re poor, God exalts you. But if you’re rich, God makes you low. It is actually saying that if you’ve got money and wealth and are well taken care of, thank God if

he does something to humble you and bring you down. It will make you more dependent on Him, and you will understand the value of spiritual things.

Why? Because as the flower falls and the grass withers, “he will fade away.” All your money can’t save you from the hand of the grave. “It is appointed unto every man once to die, and after this, the judgment.” I don’t care how rich you are, you get sick like the poor man. You die like the poor man. Death is the great equalizer. Rich and poor die alike.

The question is: Where do you go when you die? Where will you spend eternity? That is answered in verse 12. Of the Christian it is said, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation...”—or “trials” or “testings”—“...for when he is tried, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

There’s the last key word: love. Count, know, let, ask, love. Do you love God? Do you love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength? What trials often do—and this is a good thing—is show us what we really love the most. If you’re whining and complaining about something that’s happened to you and you’re all upset, maybe it’s because you love that more than God. The Bible says that we’re to love God “with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength, and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. On those two things hang all the Law and the prophets.”

If you love God supremely, nothing much can go wrong with you; God will take care of you. That’s the most important thing. In every area of your life, if you make God supreme, if you are obedient to God, if you have faith and trust and hope in God and longing for God, then God becomes your all-in-all, and you’re in good shape. God will take care of you.

The thing that James is clearly saying in verse 12—and I love it—is that you’re going to heaven. You’re going to have the crown of life. You say, “Well, isn’t that ‘pie in the sky’ in ‘the sweet by-and-by’?” Yes; and praise God for that. I plan on eating that pie. I plan on enjoying my pie in heaven. It’s a crown of glory. It’s a crown of life. It’s a crown of rejoicing. I plan on hearing those words one day: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.”

At that moment, all the sorrow and suffering and hardship and difficulties and pain and heartache is going to be gone and wiped away. There will be no more tears; He’ll wipe away the tears from our eyes. There will be no more crying, sin, sadness or sickness. It’s the land of “no more.” Satan will be bound and banished. We’ll be in the presence of the Lord. Heaven is a wonderful place. We’re going to go there someday. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to go to heaven, but until that day, we need to live here on earth. There is nothing wrong with hoping for heaven and longing for heaven and anticipating heaven.

But the sad thing is that if you’re not a Christian, you don’t have that hope. All you have is this life. All you can do is cross your fingers and hang onto your rabbit’s foot and bless your lucky stars and hope that everything goes smoothly, because this is all you have—the here and now.

If you're a Christian, you have heaven in your soul right now. You have joy, even in the midst of sorrow and suffering. You have hope beyond the grave. It's because Jesus Christ came from heaven, He died upon the Cross for our sins, He rose again from the dead and He has gone back to heaven. One day He's going to take us there. He said, "I've gone to prepare you a place. And if I go to prepare you a place, I will come again to receive you to Myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." Every year that passes means we are a year closer to going to heaven and being with the Lord.

My question to you is: Do you have that hope of heaven? Are you a Christian? Have you been born again? Have you trusted Jesus Christ? Do you know that if you died right now you would go to heaven? The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." It says, "There is no one righteous; no, not one." Our sins have separated us from God. That's the reason Jesus came from heaven and died on the Cross: to pay for our sins. And then He rose again from the dead.

If you trust Him, He will save you, give you heaven in your heart and take you to heaven someday when you die. If you are reading these words and don't know beyond any doubt that when you die, you'd go to heaven, I want to give you an opportunity—right now, right here—to trust Jesus Christ and invite Him into your heart and let Him forgive you of your sins. Today you can have the hope of heaven in your heart by saying, "Jesus, I am sorry for my sins. Jesus, I believe You died for me. I ask You to come into my heart, forgive me and make me Your child."