

Paul H. Dixon  
Study in James, Part 2: God's Provision for Trials  
January 14, 1980

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

Take your Bibles and turn to the first chapter of the book of James. Thank you, Doug and Dave. Back right before Christmas, Doug and Dave joined me in services at the Calvary Baptist in Ypsilanti, Michigan. They did a tremendous job, had a great testimony for Christ in their music and the way they carried themselves and their spirit, and also for Cedarville College. And I'm so thankful for the ministry of our young people out in these churches. Yesterday, Dave and Darlene Murdoch joined me for ministry at the Deer Park Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, and God greatly used them. We saw people come to Christ. We saw decisions for baptism. We had one lady who went home after the morning service and got her neighbor and brought her back to the service last night and her neighbor came forward to be saved and she came forward to make the decision for baptism. And so we're thankful for the way God is working today through His word. And again, the way he uses our young people and their ministry and music.

Paul H. Dixon:

I want to say how much I appreciate what God did for us during the missionary conference. Many commented to me, it was just an exceptional conference and how God used it in their lives. I want to thank all of those who had so much to do with it, those officers in FWM. And I want to encourage you to support them in their meetings. You'll go out and join them for prayer. And I think about the offering that came from you, I still am not sure that you realize what you did. Of course, with missing the meal on Wednesday and then the offering that you took for your own project, you gave the check to them for \$2,400 for medical supplies for the Chad.

Paul H. Dixon:

But then we were taking the offerings through the evening to cover the expenses and the love offering, and you gave \$1,800 for the expenses and the love gift and you gave \$4,200 to missions last week. And I thank God for that. I've always said that there's just something about it when God's blessing and moving, you can tell when people give and that's a great indicator of where we are spiritually, is how free we are with the money God entrusts to us. And as I said last week, I was put to shame by the testimonies of some of these missionaries, of Mrs. Laird and Brother Wymar out there on the field and their lifestyle and way they just give of themselves and seemingly not conscious at all of material possessions, opening up their homes, giving themselves to God and to people. What a challenge for all of us.

Paul H. Dixon:

I was interested in a phone call that I received last week. I think it was on Thursday and we were preparing for the trustee meetings. A pastor on the other end of the line told me who he was and where he was from. He says, "I pastor an independent Baptist church." He said, "We don't have a single student at your school." But he said, "I want to start sending students to Cedarville College." And he said, "I would like to put your school in our budget." He said, "Up to this point, we've primarily supported one school." And he said, "I think we need a balance." And he said, "I'm interested in Cedarville." He said, "I'd like to know if you could perhaps work it out for Dr. Gromacki to come over and speak for us." And I said, "We'd be glad to work on that and check with him."

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He said, "I want to ask you some questions." And he said, "Before I ask the questions, I'd like to make some comments." He said, "I visited your campus for the Sword Bearers' Conference." Said, "The first time I'd ever been on the campus." And he said, "Several things impressed me." He said, "I started asking some questions and getting your catalog and your view book and all." And he said, "Number one, I was impressed with the exceptional academic program you have." But he said, "There was something else that I saw that I had not seen in other Christian schools." And he said, "It was the way you treat your students." He said, "I find so many Christian schools do not treat their students as maturing adults." He said, "I found that you treated your students with respect." I said, "Well, I trust that comes through because that is the way we feel about that."

Paul H. Dixon:

And he said, "I just want you to know that I noticed it as a visitor." Now he said some questions. "Number one, where do you stand on neo evangelicalism?" And I told him, and I said, "Now, I think you have to understand exactly where we stand." I said, "I try to be very honest with people. If you are talking about some kind of a stance with neo evangelicalism, where we would not have friends like Warren Wiersbe here, then we don't stand where you want us to stand." Because I said, Warren Wiersbe is coming for our Bible conference next year." He said, "I don't have any problem." He said, "That's great." He said, "Number two, where do you stand on the charismatic movement?" Well, I said, "Have you read Dr. Gromacki's book, The Modern Day Tongues Movement?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well I'll guarantee if we didn't stand right there when he wrote the book, he wouldn't be here." I said, "We take a strong stand on the charismatic movement."

Paul H. Dixon:

He said, "Number three, I want to know where you stand on standards and on rules." He said, "I have your rule book and everything like that. I've looked it over." I said, "Well." He said, "Do you teach your standards as biblical mandates?" Now I will be honest with you. I found this man to be very intelligent and he asked a lot of right questions, but I have never had anyone put it to me quite like that. And when they ask, you never know where they are or what they want. But I'll be honest with you, I don't care, because I'm going to tell it where we are. I don't want to change to try to please anyone. I said, "Sir, we have some of our rules that we believe are Biblical mandates. They're taught in the word of God. But we have a lot of other rules that we just believe are personal preferences and they are not biblical mandates at all. And I feel that for Christian college to teach some things as biblical mandate is a violation of scripture."

Paul H. Dixon:

He said, "Sir, I just want you to know that I am so pleased to hear you say that because," he said, "I have come to the conviction that in this day where we are standing for inerrancy, we also must get back to the sole authority of scripture. And I am weary of fundamentalists who teach some of their personal preferences as biblical mandates. And in essence, all we have done is created a fundamentalist traditionalism, and I wholeheartedly agree." And so it was interesting to interact with him on that. And we do feel very strongly about our rules and where we stand. But there's a difference in saying this is what the Bible teaches, or this is something that we believe should be a rule of discipline and a rule of personal preference. So we're grateful for the interest and folk are looking our way and for what God is doing. He's been so good to us here at Cedarville.

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Paul H. Dixon:

And I want us just to review James and what we've considered to this point for a few moments. You'll recall that we have entitled the entire book, Show Your Faith. We believe that this is a very early book in the New Testament. No doubt, the earliest written. That it is a very warm book, but I'm of the persuasion that in reality, all of the Epistles, though many times written with strength and pointedness, always have warmth. This is not just a psychological principle. This is a biblical principle. We may have something that we believe very strongly and we may have to deal with something firmly as Paul did, as James did, as Peter did, as John did, as Jude. But there must be a compassion and a warmth that goes along with this. And we see it obviously in the book of James, a book that has major doctrine, but is coupled with a very strong, practical emphasis. We gave the title to the first chapter, Show Your Faith in The Warfare. And as we started our study, the first session, we noticed God's purpose for trials.

Paul H. Dixon:

Why does God allow trials, pressure to come into our lives? And we noted that in the second verse, he gives it to us to bring joy to our lives. My brethren counted all joy when you fall into divers trials, many colored trials, when you encountered the very colored difficulties and pressures. We also notice that one of his purposes would be not only joy, but to produce patience, verse three. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. And again, this is not some kind of passive patience, but this is a patience that has to do with fortitude, stick-to-it-iveness, steadfastness. Then we noted, as well, that in verse four, God gives trials to produce perfection, but let patience have her perfect work that ye may be mature, that ye may be grown up spiritually, perfect, and entire, wanting nothing. Now, today we're going to move into God's provision for trials.

Paul H. Dixon:

If God allows trials to come into our lives, what does He give us to help us experience them? To go through them? There are four things that He gives us in this passage. I would like to begin reading with verse five through verse 18. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he has made low, because as the flower of the grass, he shall pay as away, for the sun is no sooner rise with the burning heat, but it withereth the grass and the flower thereof falleth and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth, so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Paul H. Dixon:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation or trials, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of Lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will, begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

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Paul H. Dixon:

I would begin by saying the first provision God gives us for trial is His own will. Verse 18. Of His own will He begat us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. One of the great assurances in the Christian life is that God is God. Now you will pardon me that may seem trite, but somehow I feel all Christians have not grasped that. Their view of God is too small. God is God. God is king. God is sovereign. God is on the throne. God is in control. God has taken the initiative from the beginning to the end. And the scripture says He begat us of His own will. A verse I'm sure that's familiar to you is John 1:12. But when you memorize John 1:12, you must also memorize John 1:13. And in case you've not done so, a finger in James one and quickly back to John one.

Paul H. Dixon:

Verse 12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power authority to become the sons of God. Even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. That's the balance of scripture. Verse 12. The responsibility of man, but as many as received, to them God gave the authority to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. But verse 13, of His own will, not the will of the flesh, not the will of the man. Man's part, God's part working in salvation, working in the Christian life. You must have the balance to be biblical. Oh, as we look at this verse, it's interesting that when James one, verse 18, you take your finger. You go back, of His own, will he begat us. Begat us in the [inaudible 00:14:45]

Paul H. Dixon:

Therefore it is complete. It is permanent. When God saved us, He saved us forever. And we take this great truth of the security of the believer and we look at it and we say, "Isn't it wonderful? I'm saved. And therefore, I'm not going to lose my salvation. And I am going to heaven, no doubt about it." But there's more to that truth than just that application. If God started it and God saved us and this salvation is complete, then everything that happens in the course of our lives, in the way of difficulty, in the way of pressure, in the way of trial, God is involved in that too.

Paul H. Dixon:

And it's not that God saves us and then He just kind of removes himself and He keeps that thing all settled in the records of heaven, and then when it's all finished, we go to heaven. But He's involved in the entire life span. And I don't know what that does for you, but that helps me when I face the trials, and perhaps those that I've not even thought about facing. God's will is one of His provisions for me in the midst of the difficulties. Being confident of this very thing, He, what hath begun a good work in you will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6. There's much there for our meditation. I would just hurriedly note the great truth of the last part of that verse in order that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Paul H. Dixon:

In other words, God is saying a first fruit, and of course, to these Jewish minds, the first fruit being the top, the best of the offering, the sacrifice. God is saying, out of all of His creation, we are His first fruits. We are higher than the cattle and the dogs and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. We are the first fruits, and the way we know that, because of God's will and what He has done on our behalf. What a great truth. There's something else in the way of God's provision, not only His will, but also His

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wisdom. Verse five. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. It's an interesting word for wisdom.

Paul H. Dixon:

It has to do not with some kind of philosophical wisdom, but again, a practical wisdom. A special kind. The kind that the writer of Proverbs has in mind. And may I suggest that the companion volume to James of the New Testament is Proverbs of the Old Testament. And it's good almost to study them right together. James speaks of wisdom. Proverb speaks of wisdom. I like what Warren Wiersbe said about wisdom. In comparing it to knowledge, he said, "Knowledge is the ability to take things apart. Wisdom is the ability to put them back together again." Don't you like that? You know, there are a lot of people who have a great deal of knowledge and tremendous intellects, but they really aren't much use to the human race because they walk around in the clouds and they somehow never get down to the nitty gritty part of living. They somehow can't take all the facts and make them work.

Paul H. Dixon:

That's why many times, it's your average intellect who makes a tremendous impact upon the world, because he has coupled with what knowledge he has some good old fashioned common sense, and he's able to take this and he's able to live, and he's able to get along with people, and he's able to understand what's going on. And this is very important when it comes to the trials of life. I am convinced that if some people would avail themselves of the wisdom God has given for trials, they would not ruin their lives like they do. I am told that Arnold Palmer went to Wake Forest Southern Baptist College, South Carolina, to prepare for the ministry. While he was there, again, I understand early in his training, probably a freshman, one night, his best friend left the dormitory and went out on the town and wrecked the car and was killed.

Paul H. Dixon:

Arnold Palmer heard the news, and in a short time packed his bags, went back to Pennsylvania and said, "If that's the kind of God I'm supposed to serve, then you can forget it." And gave his life to the golf ball. I wish that somehow he could have understood who God is in the midst of the trial, instead of rejecting God. There are many who are agnostics today, skeptics today, because of trials. I can remember speaking at the Garfield Baptist church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and some of you students were there when I was back there some years ago. We were experiencing the blessing of God in an unusual way. The people got excited, and the people got busy, and that week it was nothing for me to speak to 25, 30, 40 unsaved people almost every night. Those folk were bringing them in.

Paul H. Dixon:

And one night I gave the invitation and people responded when the service was over. A sharp college student came down and he was bent to make a point. And he said, "I don't believe what you said, nor do I believe in God, nor will I accept your Christ." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because of my brother. My brother is dying with cancer. People have prayed and God does not answer prayer. My brother is going through intense suffering. And if this is the kind of a God we have, then I shall not accept Him." Could not cope with pressure, could cope with trial and suffering and difficulty, for he did not have the wisdom that God gives.

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You say those are just unsaved people. No. Someone told me just in recent days about a woman, a professing Christian woman whose first husband died. It shook her, greatly confused her mind. And she went out and she married someone else. And this time, an unsaved man. And now that unsaved individual is at the point of death. And in reality, this woman is very bitter. Why did God do this to me twice? And I can't tell you the people who've said that to me. "Why would God allowed us to come into my life?" And then do not endeavor to get ahold of the wisdom of God that would help them to put it together.

Paul H. Dixon:

Someone tells the story of the woman who went up to her pastor, and her pastor said, "In the midst of your trials, I'm praying for you." And she looked at him and said, "How are you praying?" And he said, "Well, I'm praying that you'll be able to endure it." She said, "That's good, but please also pray that I will have the wisdom not to waste the opportunity." You see the difference? Every once in a while, I counsel with our college young people, and they're scared and they're confused. And I think sometimes they think that I'm going to be shocked that they have come to the place where they're not sure that the Bible is the word of God, that they've actually come to the place in their life that they wonder if there is a God. They're going through some intellectual trials or they're through some personal trials.

Paul H. Dixon:

Hey, I understand that. And there's nothing wrong with that. And you ought to feel free to come to any of us. And there's not a member of this faculty or staff who will be shocked when you come with that. And they want you to unload and share your burden. And we hope that by the grace of God, we'll be able to work with you and that God will impart His wisdom in the midst of the trial and the solution to the problem. Give that some more consideration. The latter part of the verse has much to say. This same God, this is the kind of a God we have. It's one of His chief characteristics. He gives liberally and He gives, the scripture says, without any strings attached. Upbraideth not. Not only does He give us His will and give us His wisdom. He also gives us His word.

Paul H. Dixon:

What did verse 18 say? Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth. James makes a lot out of the word. He uses word four times in his book. He uses scripture three times. The law, interesting enough with the Old Testament background, eight times. So at least 15 times, there's a direct reference to the Bible in the book of James. The importance of the word, the importance of scripture, the importance of the law. And you can't understand, you cannot handle trials apart from the word. How are we saved? Of His own will he be began with the word of truth. God doesn't implement His will apart from the book. How do we get wisdom?

Paul H. Dixon:

Does God have some kind of a purse up there in the sky, and it's a big puffy white cloud and it has a zipper on it, and when I need a dose wisdom or you need a dose, He just unzips it and pours it down into us? No. Here it is. God will give us this wisdom, I believe, in direct relationship to how we're in this book. The will of God for our lives all comes back to the book, not experiences. The book. When I was in college, I met a lot of remarkable young people. And I have said this many times, and I say, without apology, I had great respect for the administrators of the college, great respect for my faculty. They all had an impact on my life, but those who had the greatest impact were my peers.

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Paul H. Dixon:

And that's always the case. Students. And I'm glad that God brought some exceptional young men into my life. Most of them associated with the navigators. Most of them very strong on scripture memory and daily devotions and their prayer lives and evangelism and just real solid guys. And one of those guys was Don Dennis. Don had been in the Navy. He had some maturity. I went to college. I was 17 years old. I turned 18 while I was there, very immature. And he was about a few years older, and it was good to be around him. Always had a smile on his face, just a delightful human being. Very committed Christian.

Paul H. Dixon:

One day, one of the faculty members who pastored a church said, "Don, I want you to work with me. I want you to be my assistant." And it was a small church out in the country, out in the mountains. And I suppose they had 50 people. And after two months, instead of the people coming to Brother McCormick for counsel, they went to Don Dennis. And after a while, Brother McCormick, the professor, got a little bit uptight. You know, here's one of your students and he's having more of an impact on your congregation perhaps than you are. And he went to Don and he said, "Don, I have to be honest with you. I see what's happening." And Don apologized. He said, "I'm really sorry. I haven't asked for this." But Brother McCormick said, "You do have a gift. You have such insight into life and into life's problems. Could you please explain it?" And Don was a very humble fellow and hesitantly said, "I think I can." He said, "I've spent a lot of time in the book of Proverbs."

Paul H. Dixon:

He said, "I study Proverbs probably every day." He said, "I've done much memorizing in the of Proverbs. And I have found that many of the solutions to life's problems come right out the book of Proverbs." Again, the provision for our difficulties and our pressure and our trials, the word. May I recommend something for your reading? If you have not done any reading in Spurgeon's Treasury of David, give yourself the luxury of an hour someday and go over to the library and just read in Spurgeon's Treasury of David. It's his work on the Psalms.

Paul H. Dixon:

Most everything you read by Spurgeon he preached. And if you want his sermons, the best set of sermons is his Treasury of the Bible. 3000 Old Testament and New Testament sermons as he preached them. Now, many sets of his sermons are not as he preached them. People edit them and they take out some of the doctrines they don't like, or they take out some other things, or they think they're too long. And so they edit them. I think it's a disgrace, but if you want Spurgeon as he really was, you must read his Treasury of the Bible, or maybe his New Metropolitan Tabernacle Series. But if you want to see Spurgeon as he wrote, one of the few things that Spurgeon ever sat down and wrote was the Treasury of David that he did not preach, that he wrote it.

Paul H. Dixon:

Read Psalm 119. You read what Spurgeon had to say about the word in Psalm 119, and it will thrill you down to your toenails. You will get a shouting fit in the library. And I want to be there when that happens. I want to see Brother Brock and see his reflection. But it's a blessing. Spurgeon Psalm 119 in the Treasury of David. God gives us His will. He has a purpose. God gives us His wisdom. He gives us His word. And then He gives us His reward. Notice if you will, verse 12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he has tried, he shall receive the carnival life, which the Lord hath promised to

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them that love Him. God says that after you have showed yourself of sterling worth, when he has tried, he shall receive the crown of life. In other words, you can't receive God's reward unless you go through trials.

Paul H. Dixon:

God's not going to give this crown for those who haven't endured the trials, and you can't endure the trials if you don't experience the trials. And so one of God's provisions is that when we are going through the trial, He helps us to grow up spiritually and He builds Christian character into our lives. And then when this life is all over, we're going to get a crown. All right, class. Think now. I don't give many exams in chapel, but I'm going to give one now. In Revelation, chapter four, don't look. What are we going to do with the crown?

Paul H. Dixon:

Yeah, I ran together a little bit, but you're right. We're going to take that crown and throw it at the feet of Jesus. Notice the circle. How did it start? With God's will, Who gives us His wisdom, Who gives us His word, Who gives us His reward, and when we get the reward, we go back and we say, "God, I was only able to do this because the provisions that You gave me for my life. It was Your will. It was Your enablement, Your wisdom, Your word, You deserve the glory." And we throw the crown right back at the feet of Jesus. Isn't that something? Oh, what a great God Who has a plan for our lives. Young man, young lady, you're going through some times of difficulty and pressure. How I pray that you'll avail yourself of God's provision. All of us, faculty members, staff, administrators, God will meet us where we are.

Paul H. Dixon:

A man had a son who was born with a maimed foot. And because of the maimed foot, it caused a lot of difficulties. He could not walk. And the father took the boy to the surgeons and the specialist, and they all said, "We can't do a thing." But he wouldn't quit. So he started reading and he studied the tendons and the muscles and the bone structure and the nerves and everything in the foot. And one day he constructed a box. And then he took his son and he put his foot in the box. It had washers, located certain places and then it had screws, and he tightened the screws and the boy started to cry and he was in pain. And the father started to cry, but he said, "Son, you must keep your foot in the box." And then he would leave it there several days. And the father would come home from work. And he'd say, "I'm sorry, son." And he'd tighten the screws.

Paul H. Dixon:

And the boy would cry again in tremendous pain. And the father would weep, but he'd say, "I'm sorry, son, you must keep your foot in the box." Weeks, passed, months passed. Then one day, the father came home and he said, "It's time to take the foot out of the box." And he took the foot out of the box, and he said, "Now I want you to stand up." And the boy was able to stand on that foot. And it wasn't long before the boy was able to be erect, and the boy was able to walk, and the boy went through life without a maimed foot. And when he stood over the father's grave and the tears were coming down his cheek, he said, "Thank your dad for applying the screws." And an Earthly father may get the screws too tight, but our Heavenly Father never will. And may God help us to learn from all the trials of life's experience. I want you to go out of chapel thinking about it today. God bless you, and have a good day.