



Our Proving Grounds – Part 2

Taking Hold of the Good in God's Purpose

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You know, there are certain kinds of physical work I would happily pay people to do for me. Right? Pick up super-duper heavy things. Dig a deep trench. Carry furniture up three flights of stairs. You know, all kinds of things that I would say why in the world would I put myself through it? On the other hand, there are physical kinds of things that I pay to do. Picking heavy things up, setting them down, picking them up again, walking on something that doesn't go anywhere. Being tempted to hire a very muscular man to tell me to do one more. Come on, Mike, do one more.

Now the difference between those two is that one just seems like purposeless pain, right? All I see is the pain. The other one seems like there is a purpose to all the pain. That's the difference, right? One of them feels the same as the other. It's just that the first one, it just seems like it's exertion and all I can think about is how bad I'm going to feel when it's done. And the other one, I think, well, there's some profit on the other side of this. That's the difference. I see some benefit in it.

Now that's where James is going to get here in the third verse of this book. Now, we started last week and all we got through were two verses and sadly we stopped in the middle of the sentence in verse 2, and we stopped just after a most amazing statement that was made. The statement that was made it seems like unthinkable that he would tell us to count it all joy when we encountered trials of various kinds. Now, how in the world should we think it's a joyful thing when we are suffering? Because that's what a trial is. It makes us feel bad. And the answer is found in the next three words, "for you know." God's going to tell us something we're supposed to know and if we know this it's supposed to change our perspective about the pain that we're in.

So let's take a look at these next two verses. Because before we start spending all of our energy telling God we just want all this pain to go away, when we start working on trying to get all this trouble to leave our lives, we should start thinking about what it is that this trouble was brought into our lives to do. That's the whole point of what James is trying to say to change our perspective. So look at this with me. I'll read these two verses from James Chapter 1. We're only going to take time today to look at verses 3 and 4. But we have to start in verse 2 just to get the full sentence here and we covered this last week. So James Chapter 1 verses 2, 3 and 4. I'll read verse 2 just to cover where we were last week to get the sentence fully read. Verse 2, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." That seems impossible. But here's the trick, "For you know," what are we supposed to know? "That the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."

Now that's a word you didn't use probably in any sentences this week unless you were reading the Bible. It's kind of a Bible word, a grandpa word, "steadfastness." But that's a word that if you've been around the block here in the church a few times you've probably heard the Greek word. And the only time I would use a Greek word from the pulpit, generally speaking,



is when it's a compound word. And part of the compound is a Greek preposition because it provides such a great illustration and this is one of them. It starts with the Greek preposition. A preposition gives us a relative connection to something, and the relative connection in this case is the preposition "Hypo" which is "under," its relative to something under. Hypo and then the verb "to stay" or "to remain," "to remain under." And that's a great illustrative picture of this word, to stay under something. And it's translated here "steadfastness," hypomania to stay under something. And it's also translated in the New Testament, steadfastness is also translated "perseverance." Or sometimes we would say, cutesy at least, we would say "stick-to-it-iveness" or the ability to be tenacious in staying in place, to not give up, to stay there tenaciously and continue on and not quit. That's the picture. Steadfastness.

And then it says something interesting also an interesting Greek grammar. We'll get into this quickly when we get there, verse 4. "And let steadfastness," let hypomania, "have its full effect," it's an interesting way to put it, "that you may be," now here's some big words, "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Well, that sounds impossible. And yet that's the promise held out to us here. "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness," hypomania, "and let hypomania have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Well, let's start here in verse 3 and let's just get this firmly in our minds. And the word that we need to focus on here is that whatever these trials are, we can change our perspective about them if we understand that it's testing, it's testing, and that's where we need to start. If we know that what's going on in the pain that you have, because whatever the pain is, I want you to think about it. It's the kind of pain that you've encountered and you've probably said, like the Apostle Paul did in Second Corinthians Chapter 12, God, I want this to go away, but it's not going away. God hasn't relieved you of the pain. It's whatever struggle it is that you think about almost every day. God, I wish this weren't here. And God says, no, it's not going away. And you say, God, I hate this. I don't want this. And there it is. It's your trial. It's your current trial right now. And I just want you to know that this is the way you should look at it. Number one, put it down, "See Your Pain as a Test." That's what this text is telling you to do. God is telling you to see the current trial that you're in that hurts, the hurt is a test.

If there's a test in your life this text is going to remind you there is a test-giver. There's an instructor and the instructor, as we said last week, is sovereign. He's providential. It's not a mistake. It's not happenstance. It's God giving you this test. If you're a Christian, you just need to know there's a very specific and loving reason that God is giving you this test. Now, I know it's quoted to you perhaps at all the wrong times, maybe with the wrong tone, maybe flippantly, but Romans 8:28 is something that you need to believe no matter who quotes it to you, and whether it is kind of haphazardly given to you. It's a true statement, right? "For those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose." Right? Everything in your life that comes, even the hard things, the bad things, the difficult things, the painful things, the thorn in your flesh. Whatever it is if you are called according to God's purpose, it's going to work together for good. In other words, God's got a good reason for bringing you the test that you have, and the test is how you need to view your current trial. Whatever it is, it's a test.



Just like if you think about the pilot that you might see as you're boarding the plane the next time you take a flight, that pilot has to go for periodic tests. The pilot goes to a flight simulator and he gets tested. Now, you know what those flight simulator tests are all about. They don't get in the flight simulator and take a test and it's just a nice little cruise over Tahiti. And they look out the windows and it's all nice, and they're handed a little, you know, lemonade and they drink it and this is great. And they fly and they land and it's like, wasn't that fun? And they talked to the copilot and that was great. I just love the flight simulators. They're always so relaxing. Do you think that's how it goes? No. As soon as they're going down the runway something blows up, right? The engine falls off, or the panel goes blank, or the landing gears go down, or the hydraulic system goes out. Why? Because that's what the test is all about. The test is to get you ready so that if something actually happens down the road you will be ready for it. And it's all built into the test. The test is to get you ready for something later. Right now whatever you're struggling with, whatever it is that you've asked God to remove and he hasn't, whatever deprivation you're going through and you ask God to give you something and he's not giving it to you, something you desperately want that all your peers have that you don't have, and God's not providing it for you. Why aren't you giving this to me? Right?

God's not giving it to you. God's depriving you of it. Why? Because it's a test. All of this is a test. The pain is a test. And all of this is to prepare you. And the test is very clear. It's a testing of your faith. It's not just to see if you're a Christian. Right? I hope that's already settled in your life. You know you're a Christian, but it's to strengthen your faith. I hope your faith is already there. You know you're a Christian, but it's supposed to make you stronger. You're supposed to get you ready for what's coming next. It's supposed to prepare you so that you're ready for whatever's around the corner. Turn with me to Job Chapter 16. This is helpful I hope to readjust your thinking about this test. I want to turn you to the book of Job because no matter who you are, you could think about this as Elijah or Abraham or Job, blameless in his day. I mean, just reread at some point Job Chapter 1 verses 1 and 2. Job is a good and godly man. That's how we meet him and it's God's commentary on him. He's a good man relatively speaking. And yet look at how he speaks here in Job Chapter 16.

Job Chapter 16, let's drop down to verse 7. Now follow along. I'm going to skip through some of this. Look at verse 7. "Surely now God has worn ME out." Verse 8, "he has shriveled ME up." Verse 9, "He has torn ME in his wrath and hated ME; he has gnashed his teeth at ME." Verse 11, "God gives ME up to the ungodly and casts ME into the hands of the wicked." Verse 12, "I was at ease, and he broke ME apart; he seized ME by the neck and dashed ME to pieces; he set ME up as his target." Verse 13, "his archers surround ME. He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground." Verse 14, "he breaks ME with breach upon breach; he runs upon ME like a warrior." I could go on. What does Job think here? I mean, he couldn't be more specific than verse 9. "He's torn ME in his wrath and hated ME." Let me ask you this question Sunday school grads, is all this happening because God hates Job? Is that true? No. Stop it Job. All of this is not because he hates you. I know what happens when you're going through a trial. I don't care if you could be the most godly person in the room. You could be edging your way toward Job's, you know, commendation in Job Chapter 1 verses 1 and 2. You might be the godliest man in the room, the godliest



woman in the room. You might be. But here's the thing even if you are, you will be tempted to think this when the protraction of your trial keeps wearing you down and you will say, "surely now God has worn me out ... he's shriveled me up ... he's torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me."

He's not targeting you. Just know this. He's targeting your faith. He's going after your faith. He's working on the muscles of your faith. He's not after you. He's not targeting you. You're not the target. Your faith is the target. Do you see the difference there? You have to know he's trying to build up your muscles of faith. That's very, very different. Matter of fact if your muscles of faith get stronger he's trying to benefit you. That's the product. The product is your faith. He wants you to be so strong in your faith that you can be invincible in the next thing that comes your way.

God in his providence can put you through some things that can make you so strong that you can be like Joseph in Genesis Chapter 50 at the end of this whole thing. He can say in verse 20, which is a passage you've memorized, Genesis 50:20 when his brothers are there after such a terrible childhood with his brothers selling him into slavery, and then all the terrible things that happened to him in Egypt, Potiphar's wife and in prison and all the rest, he said, I know "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." And the bottom line is it was all really putting him into a position so that he could save this small family from the famine in Egypt, 75 people, bring them into Egypt. And then we have this gap between Genesis Chapter 50 and Exodus Chapter 1, where they would grow into millions of people and get them ready as a nation to fulfill Genesis Chapter 12, the Abrahamic Covenant, to have a huge number of people so that they then could get into the Promised Land.

Now, I know there was a circuitous path to get there, right? We have to get through the book of Numbers, but eventually we get to the book of Joshua and they get into the Promised Land. And all of that was because of one kid's terrible experience with his brothers and with Potiphar's wife and with the Pharaoh. This was a hard thing, and yet Joseph recognized all of this put him in a position to do the will of God and he had a resilient faith at the end of all this to say I see what God was doing. We need to see that before we look in the rearview mirror and see all the fruit of it. We have to see it in the middle of the test when we are pushing all of this and feeling the pain of it all and saying I know the target of this is my faith. There are no accidents in God's plan. The target is not you. You're not the victim. We need to stop thinking we're the victim, and we need to stop saying my goal is just to survive it. The goal is not for you to survive your trial. Stop saying that. The goal is not for you to survive. The goal is for you to come out with the product that God wants you to come out with, which is a stronger trust, a better Christian life, a stronger character. Do you see the difference? Don't say I just want to survive.

I want to be specific. The goal is hypomania. Hypomania. I tried to illustrate this a number of different ways. Let me illustrate it with this one. The freedivers. Do you know what the freedivers are? That sounds like such a happy word, freedivers. Doesn't that sound happy? It's not a happy word, freedivers, freedivers. Freedivers, I don't know-how we got to this. Probably because you're free from underwater breathing apparatus. But freedivers go



underwater without any breathing apparatus, you know, there are no scuba tanks, there's nothing. They go underwater for long periods of time holding their breath. Now this goes way back, the Greco-Roman times record it. They would go under for pearls and sea sponges and all the things that they would do. But this has been going on for a long, long time because human beings have been able to do this for a long, long time.

Now when I was a kid, maybe you were a kid and, you know, you're trying to see who the coolest kid was in the youth group. You would see who could hold their breath the longest under the water. Do you remember doing this? And how long would you last when you were in junior high or whatever, trying to see who could last the longest underwater, what 30 seconds, 40 seconds, I don't know. Not very long. And you would realize that you wouldn't do it very long because you would sit there and go and you'd have that terrible feeling of this is horrible. I need air. That's what you would say. Now, this is a great example of hypomania because hypomania is to remain under. I can't remain under this water any longer. Why? Because here's what happens in your body physiologically, all this carbon dioxide starts to build up inside of you. And when the carbon dioxide starts to build up, what your body says is ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, you need oxygen and your body does need oxygen. But here's the thing about your body, the alarms go off way earlier than really the crisis point hits, because your body can go a lot longer than when the alarms go off. The alarms go off but you don't really need oxygen at that point.

Now your body is saying you need oxygen and I'm going to listen to that, trust me. I've listened to that, right? I've messed around with my grandkids and tried to stay underwater. I listened to the alarms. But you don't have to because here's what I've learned even this week looking at the freediving records, these guys are staying underwater. Guess how long they can stay underwater without taking a breath. Over ten minutes. Ten minutes. That's a long, long time. Ten minutes. That's crazy. That means that you could, in essence, really, if you could train yourself to ignore the alarms going off, you could actually live on the oxygen in one breath for ten minutes! Do you know what you're going to have to do? Be really tone deaf to all the alarms and then you can stay under. But that's going to take a couple of things. The steadfastness is not just the ability to say I'm going to stay under. You're going to have to say no to all the panic. And that's the problem. All the panic. And you just think, I can't do it. I can't do it. I can't do it. You have to stop saying I can't do it.

Have you ever seen those videos of the watermelons that get wrapped around with the rubber bands? You put enough rubber bands around them and the watermelons explode? Come on. You've watched YouTube, right? Have you seen that? You've seen that? Nobody? Yes, some of you. Great. We have free Wi-Fi. You can watch it right now if you'd like to. (audience laughing) You put enough rubber bands around the watermelon and eventually the watermelon explodes. It's kind of crazy. You wouldn't think that would be true, but it happens. Well, the pressure finally gets to the watermelon and it blows up. Okay. That's how when you watch that you think I guess enough pressure that's what happens to a watermelon. But picture a cannonball. Let's just say one guy has a watermelon and one guy has a cannonball and puts the same number of rubber bands, right? I want to be the cannonball. I don't want to be the watermelon. And here's the thing about how you feel under the pressure. You feel like



I'm a watermelon, I'm going to explode. But in reality, what if you're the cannonball? You feel the same amount of pressure but you're made of something else. And here's the reality. God says I can sustain you in the midst of your trial. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." I will take you through this. I can build your faith to make you resilient, steadfast hypomania. You can remain under the pressure of this trial. You have to trust me and ignore the panic. You have to ignore the I have to get out of this. I have to get out from underneath this. No, stay under this. You can survive. You can do this. You have to stop thinking about what bad is going to happen to me. Why?

Verse 4. Let's look at verse 4 now, James Chapter 1 verse 4. This is a weird construction in English. We don't have a good translational construction in our English language, but this is all over the Greek texts in the New Testament. But take a look at this. It says this, "And let steadfastness have its full effect." Now if you were underlining imperatives or commands, the words "let ... have" would be underlined because it's a command. Well, it's weird in English to have that be a command, but it is. It's what we call a third-person imperative. It's a third person present imperative in Greek grammar. And sometimes we have third-person prohibitions, like in the text that says, I think it's Second Thessalonians Chapter 3 verse 10, it says, "if a man's not willing to work, let him not eat." Right? Well, don't let him. What does that mean? Well, you're not supposed to be aiding and abetting that. It's a command "not to let," it's a third person imperative.

Well, here's the same thing, a third person imperative. It sounds passive, right? Let it have its full effect. But it's a command, right? It's actively, it's not passive, it's actively, it's a command that you dare not impede. You dare not get in the way of this. You have to make sure that you're not aiding the impeding of it. You're not interrupting it. You're not getting in the way of it because you're going to be tempted to or it wouldn't be a command. You're going to be tempted. You're going to be lured into getting in the way of it. Why? Just like I said, you're going to be under the water of your trial and all the bells and whistles are going to go off and you're going to want to interrupt. But the text here is saying don't let that happen. You have to be commanded to not move. Don't get out from under it.

Number two, "Don't Interrupt the Process," because here's what steadfastness has to do. It has to stay under the pressure. It has to stay under the trial. When you have the thorn in the flesh and God says, no, I'm not taking the chronic illness away, or you're infertile and you can't have the child or you're waiting for the spouse and you don't have that spouse being provided, or you have an issue that you're supposed to do and you're afraid, well you have to do it. Whatever the issue is you have to bear up under the trial and not give in. Don't interrupt the process. Hypomania has to be borne out. You cannot interrupt it. Let it go to maturity. Let it go all the way. Okay, let me give you some examples. By the way, hypomania infers that it's going to take time, and it always takes time when it's a deprivation, it's always going to take time when it's a deprivation. And I gave some examples there of deprivation. Infertility is a deprivation. Now, it doesn't normally work like Genesis Chapter 16 but there's an example. Let's hope it doesn't work that way in your life. But you know, infertility is a good example when you think about Abram, Abram and Sarai, they weren't having a baby when they were promised a baby in Genesis Chapter 12. Abram, by the way, means "great father," and here



they were infertile. How ironic is that? Hey, Great Father, God says you're going to be a great father. Matter of fact, you're going to be a father of a great many people. Well, I don't have a kid. Well, you will, you will, you will.

So God promises he's going to have a kid and your wife's going to have this kid for you. Well, it was over a decade before they had the kid. That's not good. You're made to wait. That's like God, isn't it? To make you wait. Why? Because it's a test. Why? To build your faith. And then there's a bigger test coming in Genesis Chapter 22. More on that next week. But look at this here. Now he's making him wait. So how well did Abraham wait Sunday school grads? Not very well in Genesis Chapter 16. Do you know Genesis Chapter 16? What happened in Genesis Chapter 16? There's another lady who enters the story. What's her name? Hagar. Do you know the story? Are you new to church? Let's just call this a shortcut. That didn't work out very well. Ishmael, you can look all this up. This was Abraham saying, I know you promised and you said my wife would have this child of promise but it didn't happen. It didn't happen fast enough. So let me shortcut this. And let me just say this, your trial right now, if you look hard enough, there's a shortcut and it's sinful and you know it's wrong, but it looks so right because you're impatient. Just know this about hypomania. There's always a shortcut and it's always tempting. And Satan will always provide it. And there will always be a big giant sign with flashing LED lights that say take this exit right here. This is the shortcut to the will of God. Right here. Take it. Satan will always provide that shortcut and you just need to be ready for it. Hypomania says stay on the path, be faithful, don't take a shortcut.

Do you want another one? How about this one? First Samuel Chapter 13. First Samuel Chapter 13. Jot it down. First Samuel Chapter 13. A king named Saul, and Saul was told to be a king. Be a king Saul, don't be a priest, don't be a prophet. Wait for the prophet Samuel to show up and he's going to bless this battle and he's going to give this sacrifice and you just wait for him. Now he's supposed to come and there's a battle to be fought and there are enemies lining up. I can totally identify with Saul. I get it, I get it. He waited one day. He waited two days. He waited three days. He waited four days. He waited five days. He waited six days. It was the seventh day. You went to bed six nights in a row waiting for Samuel, I get it. I want the blessing of God on this. You said you'd bring the sacrifice. I mean, I ain't waiting anymore. We want God in this thing. I'm just going to do it. So Saul brings the sacrifice. And guess what? As soon as he sacrifices the animal that he was not supposed to sacrifice because he is not a prophet, he is not a priest, guess who walks up? Samuel. And Saul forfeits the blessing because he's shortcut God's will. What's the problem? God is always going to press you in your trial to think there's no possible way I can wait another minute, because all the alarm bells of carbon dioxide are going to be going off in your life. I can't wait, I can't wait, I can't wait. Whatever it is, there's something in your trial that's going to say shortcut, shortcut, shortcut, shortcut. And you're just going to have to say no. Hypomania means I can remain under this pressure and keep doing the right thing, doing it the right way, doing it biblically, doing it right. People shortcut God's will by they stop going to church, they stop reading the Bible, they stop praying, they stop giving, they stop serving. There are a ton of ways people shortcut the will of God.



And again, flip it over. It's not just stopping. It's not just shortcutting and doing something unbiblical. Sometimes it's not doing the biblical thing. Let's invert it. Jot this one down. Numbers Chapter 14. Numbers Chapter 14. Numbers Chapter 14 is a critical chapter in the Old Testament when it was a vote of 10 to 2. If you're in a boardroom and the vote is 10 to 2, you might want to go with the ten. Am I right? Yeah. Majority rules. That's not how it works. You'd better go with the two if the two are doing something biblical. Am I right? That's the godly thing. The problem is the crowd said man, I think I'll go with the ten. The ten were witnesses to how hard this thing is. The two, they have their nose in the book. They have their nose in the promise. They have their nose in the sky. These are two pious men. Yeah, pie in the sky. They think God's going to just come through all the time. I just think those two are too idealistic. We're not going to go with those guys. Joshua and Caleb were those two guys. I'm going to go with the other ten guys. You don't even know their names. Those ten guys all died in the wilderness by the way. Joshua and Caleb, they entered the Promised Land. And in Numbers Chapter 14, they said we're going to go with those ten guys.

And here's, by the way, the thing that characterized their disobedience. Do you know what it was in Numbers Chapter 14? Complaining. Complaining. If you want to see how you're failing your trial, look for this: complaining. Complaining is one of the signs that you're probably failing your trial. Your mouth is full of complaining. Grumbling and complaining are great signs that you're probably failing your trial and you don't have faith, your faith is weak. So if you want stronger faith just start looking at your mouth and see how often you're complaining or your mind. Maybe you're not saying it to anybody but you're saying it all the time in your own head. You need to stop complaining. Complaining shows you don't have the faith to count it joy that you're in the middle of a workout and God's trying to work your faith. Don't interrupt the process. Israel's grumbling and lack of faith and willingness to stop doing what God said to do even if it was hard. What's the hard thing God's asking you to do? That can be a trial in and of itself. What's the hard thing God is asking you to do right now that you're afraid to do? Fear is a trial. Fear is a trial. What is it? Getting baptized. Doing Partners. Sharing your faith? What is it? Serve? Give? What is it? What is the hard thing? That's a trial in and of itself. And you can get ten people to tell you not to do it. And then two people who you think are crazy tell you should do it. Quitting. Giving in to sin. Despair. Complaining. Taking off ramps. Impatience is the enemy. The easy way out is the enemy. Don't interrupt the process. Third-person imperative. Let hypomania get you to the goal.

What's the goal? Three words. Well, three phrases. Two words and a phrase. "Perfect" and "complete" and then this phrase "lacking in nothing." Perfect. Complete. Lacking in nothing. "Perfect," I know that word scares us all because it looks like you never make a mistake. That's not what the word means. "Teleios" you've heard me say the word before. Teleios is just a good word because it doesn't mean you never make a mistake. Teleios means, as I've often said, if I were to make a lexicon, the entry would be like, just right. It's just you do the right thing. It's just the right thing. It's like I often say the right tool for the right job. It just fits. It's just right. You're just appropriate for the right thing. You do the right thing. So it's not about a track record. It's about you doing the right stuff. Teleios, perfect. And then "complete" is a word that Philo and Josephus used and even the Septuagint used for describing an animal that was worthy for sacrifice. Those animals weren't perfect-perfect, but they were complete.



They were whole. They were without blemish. They weren't sick. They weren't crippled. They weren't spotted. They were blemishless. In other words they were acceptable.

So teleios and whole. And then it says lacking nothing. This is nicely connected to that phrase we often quote after the God-breathed text in Second Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16 about the Word of God. Word of God, right? Breathed out by God. It's good for all these things in our life "teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God might be complete, equipped for every good work." That idea of being equipped, we're ready to do whatever it is that God would want us to do. Whereas Paul said to Timothy about being the kind of vessel in God's hand that is useful, useful to the master. That's the idea that God says you're completely equipped to do whatever is right. This is the picture of spiritual maturity. And so let's put it that way. That should motivate us, that if you are willing to get through the current trial that you're in with a faith that's strong, let's put it this way, number three, you should "Get Motivated by the Promise of Maturity." Get through this well and you will be increasingly mature. And mature is good. And I just want you to picture that. Is there someone you know? Is there someone you've read about in church history who you admire? Someone that you say that guy has it together. That gal is godly. That person knows how to live life. That person when they face trials, man, they're good at it. They're not fazed by financial problems. They're not troubled by loss. They know how to navigate the problems of this life. I want to be like that. Is there anybody like that you know, anybody you've read about? Anybody you've seen? That should motivate you.

Your current troubles right now, you should be motivated to get through your trials, exercising increasing faith, not trying to just get the troubles to go away, but to get through it with the product on the other side so that you can say I want to be more like that, which is ultimately more like Christ. That's the goal. And that should motivate you to be fully mature, spiritually whole. When I say whole, just to unpack that a little bit, there are a lot of people in this room who have one side of their Christian life going really well, but they've neglected some other side of their Christian life. They have a lopsided sanctification. Do you know what I'm talking about? They have a lopsided sanctification. They have part of their sanctification intact. They might be a great evangelist. They're sharing their faith all the time but they have a terrible temper. Do you know what I'm saying? Okay, their faith is great, but their temper is not great. They have great theological knowledge. Fantastic. They can answer the deep questions about theology but they're terribly anxious, you know, about this area of their life, or they're worried and troubled about these things. They have great spiritual disciplines, they're in the Word but they're super irritable, irritable about this and irritable about that. They're generous but they have all these problems over here with their habits. I mean, just on and on and on.

You need a balanced Christian life. God wants you to be balanced. God wants you to have full maturity all the way around. It's why the tire shop isn't going to sell you three tires if you have four bald tires, it doesn't work. It's not even legal I don't think. Right? You need to have your Christian life running on all good tires and firing on all cylinders, so to speak. You have to have it all working, and God wants you not to be lopsided. He'd like you to be spiritually whole and to be completely equipped. This is a great line. Lacking in nothing, lacking in nothing. There are parts of life that get this way by accident, at least illustratively so. I think of this now



after buying a condo a long time ago and then eventually buying a house, and then being a homeowner for many years, and recognizing that Genesis Chapter 3 applies to the homes that we all buy and having problems endlessly. And as I often say I take one day off a week and half of that day at least, is usually fixing all the problems or the issues of my decaying home, my 45-year-old home. So I'm fixing things constantly and as I told you last week, God providentially put me half a mile from Home Depot. I keep them in business. I not only buy parts to fix my house and all the things that go wrong, but as I was taught as a kid, you have to have the right tool for the right job, which is a great illustration of teleios. But I often say, well, that does make life easier. So I'm always trying to buy the right tools for the right job. Well, eventually I have so many tools I need more toolboxes. So I have a lot of toolboxes and tool chests, which I try to slip in without my wife noticing I'm buying more tool chests. I tucked them under this tool bench and whatever. So I have a lot of tools in my house.

Well, I realize after a while, especially when the younger pastors say do you have this tool? I realize I have it. If you need a tool I've have it. And why do I have those tools as I go and look for the tool that someone needs to borrow from me? I have those tools and sometimes I start to shake and quiver when I go to those tools because I remember how terrible it was when I bought the tool because I was trying to fix that broken pipe or that terrible faucet or whatever it was that broke in the middle of the night. And I think to myself, yes, I remember buying these tools because I had to fix some terrible thing in my own house. But I have the tools because I had to fix a problem. And now the tools sit there and I can help other people with the tools that I bought. And there they are. They're ready to go. And sometimes even the knowledge I have to help people with the things that I have and the tools that I have because I've had the problems and the experience.

Now had I had some butler with a tool belt all my life, which is not a good illustration because I would buy that, I'd have that right now if I could have that. I'd keep him forever, keep him healthy and employ his son and that would be awesome. But what's the point? Had I had that and then been stuck in my old age having to fix my own house that wouldn't have worked. I wouldn't know what to do. But you have to be able to go through the hard times and to be able to have the equipment, the knowledge, the know how to fix what you have to fix. And God wants to give you the equipment and the tools and the know how to deal with whatever you have to deal with. Now, here's the problem with that illustration. This is not how it works in real life. You are not just taking care of your own house. Galatians 6:2 says those who are strong are supposed to bear the failings of the weak. None of us lives to ourselves or dies to ourselves to quote the book of Romans. God is calling every one of you the more you mature, to go back to the quotation that Paul gave to Timothy, to take on more and more of what other people are dealing with around you. We're called to community. We're called to relationships. You're called to the kinds of networking that God wants you to be strong, not just for yourself.

Think about the fact that God is putting you through things right now so that you can be a blessing and a help to other people. Think back to Second Corinthians Chapter 1, right? The comforts and the help and the equipment and all that you've been through is so that you can be that for others. The more that God trains you the greater benefit and blessing you're going to be to other people. It's no problem for us to go on some hike with no backpack and a nice



flat, wide pathway and beautiful weather. It's great, but put on a big heavy pack with terrible weather and, you know, steep inclines, high mountains, terrible winds. That makes it really hard. Then we want to quit. But here's the thing the more we can be trained to get through the tough, tough rigors of that kind of situation, work through all the pain of it all, the more God can use us to do in this life what we couldn't do if we didn't go through all that. We need to stop asking God just to end our pain. Say God, take this pack off my back. James is trying to present us with a whole different kind of prayer life. One that says God, if I have this pack on my back and this difficult, thorny trail that you put me on make me stronger, make me more resilient, make me steady, make me mature, make me whole, make me the kind of Christian that when this is over, I'm a better Christian than when I started. James wants us to see the testing of our faith as something that produces a hypomania steadfastness, a maturity that makes us better, better for the church, better for the Kingdom. Don't measure your trial merely by how quickly it's over. Measure it by what kind of Christian God is turning you into. The pain? It's a test. Tests bring endurance, the endurance brings maturity, and the maturity results in usefulness. That's what God wants to do in our lives.

Let's pray. God, there's so much for us to learn, so much for us to do, so much for us to rejoice in what you've done for us. You have shown us the way to come and to not expect to be served, but to serve, to give our lives, to lay down our lives for one another. To see our trials as tests, to want to build our faith to trust you no matter what. To be stronger through our troubles and trials. To be less entitled, thinking that we deserve this or that. Easy and clear sailing all the time. We'd like to even as Paul said if we were to remain on in the flesh to see it as fruitful labor, even just to have a mindset like that. That we'd like to please you by the way we go about our work because we care about people, love one another, serve one another. God, our trials are hard. We know that. You know that. Give us the wherewithal, the perseverance to honor you without complaining, without grumbling. I pray you get us through them with the kind of resilience that honors you.

I pray that in Jesus' name, Amen.