

The Books in the New Testament (III): Hebrews to Revelation

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trials test our faith.2. Know the progression of temptation.3. Understand the purpose of fiery trials.4. Understand the final hour of trial.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God uses trials to test our faith.2. When going through trials, “the Spirit of glory and of God” rests upon us.3. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Run with endurance by looking unto Jesus.2. Press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.3. Lay aside every weight so that we can endure the race of faith.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Trials of Life
- B. James: Trials to Test Our Faith
- C. 1 Peter: Fiery Trials to Purify
- D. Revelation: The Final Trial

Life Application: Running the Race to the Finish

Activity: Lay Aside Every Weight

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Although temptations and trials come with suffering and hardships that are often life-changing, we need to remember not only that these trials have a purpose, but also that there is a reward set for those who endure.

Introduction

- What makes you feel stressed, exhausted, or pressured on a daily or weekly basis?
- What are some big or small problems your parents face?
- What conflicts or issues have you witnessed your friends or brethren face?

We all face different problems, and they make us experience pain, roadblocks, hardship, disappointment, or misfortune. All of these issues that we face, whether simple or complex, are what the Bible calls trials of our lives. Sometimes, we suffer as a result of our own poor choices or because we have sinned against God. Other times, the trials are not a result of anything we have done but a result of circumstances far beyond our control, things in life that we cannot change.

Some people still hold the misconception that Christians should live carefree lives under God’s protection. But Peter tells us, “[Do] not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Pet 4:12). In truth, bad things happen to Christians, too, including death, which no one is exempt from. What makes us different from others, however, is how we face and handle the trials that come our way.

A. Trials of Life

Today, we’ll be focusing on the last portion of the New Testament, which consists of books like Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. Although we can’t cover all of them, several of the books contain a common theme of facing trials in our lives and offer teachings on how to face them. Let’s look at their themes.

Book	Hebrews	James	1 Peter	Revelation
Theme:	A great hope	A living faith	Joy in suffering	The revelation of Jesus Christ
Date Written:	Between A.D. 60–95	Between A.D. 45–50	Likely A.D. 62–64	From A.D. 64–68

1. Hebrews

It appears that these Christians had undergone great sufferings in the early days of their conversion (Heb 10:32–34). This letter is the only book in the New Testament that discusses at length doctrine regarding Jesus Christ as our High Priest. The book expands upon the supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ in His priestly role, as well as His suffering and submission. It emphasizes the need to hold fast to the Lord and to be strong in faith.

2. James

Christians were facing various trials, possibly including persecution. The central theme of James is that faith needs to be put into action (Jas 2:17–20). Only faith that is accompanied by works can justify a person and save them (2:14, 21–26). Faith is seen through patience, prayer, impartiality, love, humility, refraining from indulgence, and doing good deeds.

3. 1 Peter

Peter was writing to the “pilgrims” (1 Pet 1:1), Christians who were going through sufferings as strangers scattered in various places. Peter exhorts them to endure sufferings through the grace of God and to lead blameless lives in the midst of unbelievers. Even though we may not be

suffering, we are still all spiritual pilgrims, strangers on this earth. We often face different pressures when we try to maintain our faith in Christ, but Peter exhorts us to rejoice in our trials when we suffer for our faith. We need to conduct ourselves with a clear conscience so that God's name may be glorified among unbelievers.

4. Revelation

The church was facing severe persecution and threats to her faith. This book is a book of warning, and a call to repentance in an adulterous generation. This book is very different from other New Testament writings. It is a book of prophecy (Rev 1:2; 22:7, 10, 18–19), rich in symbols and imagery. John describes four key visions in the book:

- a. The Son of Man among the seven churches (Rev 1–3)
- b. The seven-sealed scroll, seven trumpets, seven signs, and seven bowls (Rev 4:1–19:10)
- c. The vision of the return of Christ and the consummation of this age (Rev 19:11–20:15)
- d. The vision of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21–22)

Peirasmos

The Greek word *peirasmos* translates into “temptation” or “test,” and can also be defined as “a trial.”¹ Our temptations are also trials that test if our faith is genuine and enduring. The Bible warns us that as God's children, we will face trials, and teaches us to be ready for them (Mt 16:24; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess 3:3; 1 Pet 5:9). They are God's way of developing us so that we can learn and grow into maturity in our faith. When we respond to them in the way that God has taught us, we are able to experience His amazing guidance. But what kind of trials are we likely to face?

- **Infirmities:** Physical illnesses (2 Cor 12:10)
- **Distresses:** Sadness, despair, suffering, agony (2 Cor 12:10)
- **Temptations:** Inner desires that appeal to our sinful nature and contradict God's teachings (Mk 7:20–23; Mt 26:41)
- **Reproach, persecution:** Ridicule or oppression due to convictions about God (2 Cor 12:10)
- **Fiery trials:** Loss of health, material, wealth (Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 4:12)
- **Calamities** (Rev 2:10; 3:10)

Ultimately, God wants us to be molded into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). Facing and overcoming these trials will guide us towards that goal, but this can only occur if we rely on God's help. So, it is important to ask ourselves, when such trials come, will I...

- Respond with faith or collapse under such pressure?
- Still pray to God with unwavering faith?
- Continue serving God wholeheartedly, without being distracted?

To answer these correctly, it is important for us to understand the meaning behind our trials, and learn how God wants us to face them. The Book of James teaches us both of these.

B. James: Trials to Test Our Faith

Earlier we learned that the word *peirasmos* can be translated into either “temptation” or “test.” James used the same word to refer to trials that challenge our faith. Let's read James 1:12. “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the

¹ *Blue Letter Bible*, s.v. “πειρασμός”, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3986&t=KJV>
Biblehub, s.v, “peirasmos”, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3986.htm>

Lord has promised to those who love Him.” For this reason, James urged his readers to “count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jas 1:2).

Notice that James didn’t use the word “if,” but “when.” Trials are an inevitable part of our lives, and challenges and problems *will* occur. It is simply a matter of when, not if. We can also expect them to take “various” forms. Short or long, they will show up at our door when we least expect them, and at times they will change our lives.

This may feel disheartening, but trials have purposes. James encouraged his readers by reminding them that “the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas 1:3), and when patience reaches perfection, we mature spiritually (v. 4). So instead of giving up or feeling disheartened by the trials that we face, we should instead come to grips with them, knowing that God is using them to build the quality of our patience and test our faith. We may feel fragile, and storms in life are often difficult to face. But when we cooperate with our heavenly Father, He will always help us through our times of trouble.

C. 1 Peter: Fiery Trials to Purify

Peter wrote 1 Peter to Christians who faced severe suffering and persecution, to the point that they were losing hope. He exhorts them to endure sufferings, referring to them as a “fiery trial.” He compares trials to a fire that refines and purifies gold. Just as gold must go through an incredibly hot fire to burn away any impurities, we are purified spiritually by trials that are especially difficult to endure. Peter encourages suffering Christians with two important teachings.

1. “Do not think it strange.” (1 Pet 4:12)

As followers of Christ, we must expect fiery trials. These are a test of our faith, and a natural part of our lives as God’s children. Just as Christ was persecuted, the world will also persecute those who follow Him.

2. “But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings.” (1 Pet 4:13)

It may seem disheartening to know that we must expect fiery trials, but Peter further encourages us by adding that when we partake of fiery trials, we are partakers of the suffering of Christ (Jn 15:18; Acts 9:1–4). Suffering for His name is an honor (Acts 5:41), and we can also take hope in the fact that when Christ returns, He will reward those who suffered for His name’s sake.

As further encouragement, Peter added that even if we have to endure suffering, “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon [us]” (1 Pet 4:14). We have God’s divine power when faced with excruciating trials! In His omnipotence, He can easily sustain us even in the midst of the fire. Moreover, we also know that if we endure, blessings and rewards will come because God is our “faithful Creator” (v. 19). He cares for us deeply, and because He is a faithful God, He will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13:5). All we need to do is learn to rely upon His power and place ourselves fully into His care.

D. Revelation: The Final Trial

We know that Jesus Christ will return, and when He does, a trial will come. Revelation 3:10 says, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” Jesus refers to this “hour of trial” as a time of “great tribulation” at the end of the age (Mt 24:21, 29). Revelation 3:10 refers to the wrath that God will pour out on unbelievers, whom apostle John calls “inhabitants of the earth” (Rev 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14). During this trial, Christ will judge lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7–8).

However, in this hour of tribulation, God has also promised that He will keep us. He will not allow us to be harmed by the calamities to come, but will guard and protect us. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17).

To remain in God’s protection during the final trial of the future, we need to remain true to Christ today. Let’s read Jude 20–21. “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” As long as we grow strong in our faith in the face of any trials that we face, we can look forward to seeing the appearing of the Lord (1 Jn 3:1–3).

Check for Understanding

- 1. What is the meaning of the Greek word, *peirasmos*? How is this related to our faith?** It translates into “temptation” or “test,” and can also be defined as “a trial.” Our temptations are also trials that test if our faith is genuine and enduring.
- 2. What does the testing of our faith produce?** The testing of our faith produces patience (Jas 1:3), and when patience reaches perfection, we mature spiritually (v. 4).
- 3. Why did Peter refer to suffering and persecution as “fiery trials”?** He was comparing trials to a fire that refines and purifies gold. Just as gold must go through an incredibly hot fire to burn away any impurities, we are purified spiritually by trials that are especially difficult to endure.
- 4. What will happen when Jesus Christ returns? How does Jesus refer to this time?** We will experience the “hour of trial,” which He calls a time of “great tribulation” at the end of the age (Rev 3:10; Mt 24:21, 29).
- 5. How do we remain under God’s protection during this final trial of the future?** We need to remain true to Christ today (Jude 20–21).

Life Application

Running the Race to the Finish

1. The Crown of Life

In order to stand firm during trials, we need to arm ourselves and be ready. Revelation 2:10 teaches us that if we are “faithful until death,” God will give us the “crown of life.” When we reach the finish line, we will be rewarded with an imperishable crown when we enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor 9:25; cf. Jas 1:12). With this in mind, we must be careful not to disqualify ourselves from the race while living on this earth.

2. Run with Endurance

The author of Hebrews encourages us to run the race that is set before us “with endurance.” Why did they use the term “endurance?”

First, it is important to remember that even if we are “saved,” we are not saved for certain until Jesus Christ comes again. Distractions of the world can ensnare us and thwart us from completing the race. Satan is very cunning and may use snares such as immorality or idolatry to make us fall short of God’s grace (Heb 12:15–17). And if we continue to live in sin, we will not be able to inherit the kingdom of God (Eph 5:5).

Esau, for example, should have received the birthright of the firstborn, but he sold it for a bowl of stew to satisfy his physical hunger. Anything can prevent us from completing the race, so we must

be very careful that we don't break any rules. How we live our lives will determine the eternal consequences that we will face. Therefore, we must run in order to "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim 6:12).

3. Look Unto Jesus

When we receive the correct mode of water baptism, our original sins are forgiven, and we are like a "new man" when we emerge from the water. From that point onward, our "race" has begun. But how do we win it? Hebrews teaches us to "[look] unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:1-2). There will be times when we feel physically, emotionally, or spiritually exhausted, and we will be tempted to give up during such moments. The only way to overcome these times is by redirecting our focus to Jesus Christ so that we do not lose hope, and instead gain strength.

4. Press Toward the Goal

The easiest way to fall behind in a race is by looking backwards. In much the same way, winning the crown of life requires us to stay focused on the goal. This is the attitude Paul encourages us to follow (Phil 3:12-14). He had already finished three missionary journeys, written many epistles, and helped to establish a multitude of churches. Yet he still urges us to forget what is behind, and "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Despite his accomplishments, Paul ran the race until the end. In his last letter he wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). He never looked back, but endured to the end in order to secure his crown of righteousness.

Activity: Lay Aside Every Weight

To win a race, we need to unburden ourselves of any weight. The lighter we are, the swifter we can run, but there are many things that can slow us down. What hindrances do I need to lay aside (Heb 12:1)? What do I need to work at to strengthen my faith to endure the race of faith? Let's take a look at the chart. As you do, consider the following:

- What will allow us to give a "maximum performance" in our race? The goal is to "finish strong"!
- Take a look at the physical training we undergo, and then consider what we might do to train ourselves spiritually. Think of hindrances that we need to lay aside, habits that can help us run faster without distraction, or perhaps any impulses we need to fight off.
- Once you have finished filling in your chart, share what you have written with the class.

To prepare for physical races, we need to...	To prepare for a spiritual race, we need to...
1. Train and build up our endurance! We may lift weights, do stretches, push ourselves through any physical pain, and complete various workouts.	
2. Practice good sleeping habits. When our body lacks sleep, we behave poorly, react more slowly, and suffer physically, mentally, and emotionally.	
3. Practice healthy eating. To run a race, it is important that we are properly nourished by avoiding excessive desserts, and balancing our protein intake with fruits and vegetables.	

4. Prepare ourselves mentally. It doesn't make any sense to hold a late-night sleepover the night before, or place ourselves in a stressful situation just before we run. We perform better when we focus on the race.	
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Paul said he disciplined his body to keep it under control (1 Cor 9:27). In the same way, we need to adjust our lifestyle and habits so that we are able to run the race with zeal and fervency. With God's help and power, we can run with all our might, and focus on the crown of life that awaits us.

Memory Verse

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

Meaning

No one is exempt from temptation. But those who endure will be blessed in this life. This is a promise that has great value! Moreover, if we rely on God's Spirit to endure, we will be rewarded with the crown of life, which our Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Our lifelong goal should be to focus on this crown, and not only on the reward itself. The more we love God, the more we are filled with His presence—and the more we are filled, the greater strength He grants us to endure temptation. So, while running this race set before you, you must ask yourself, "Do I love my Lord Jesus Christ?" If the answer is "yes," you will endure every temptation for His sake. And when He returns again, He will give you the "crown of life."

Conclusion

Although temptations and trials come with suffering and hardships that are often life-changing, we need to remember not only that these trials have a purpose, but also that there is a reward set for those who endure. As long as we rely on God throughout these tribulations, He will help us to overcome them and to endure the race until the very end – then, as He has promised, we will receive the crown of life and experience eternity in heaven.

Lesson 10 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about temptation and the result of enduring temptation?
No one is exempt from temptation. But those who endure will be blessed in this life. Moreover, if we rely on God's Spirit to endure, we will be rewarded with the crown of life, which our Lord has promised to those who love Him.
2. What is another meaning of *peirasmos*, and how is this related to the purpose of temptations?
It can be defined as "a trial." Our temptations are also trials that test if our faith is genuine and enduring.
3. According to the Book of James, what do trials produce in us?
The testing of faith produces patience, and when patience reaches perfection, we mature spiritually. God uses trials to build the quality of our patience and test our faith.
4. What is the final trial described in Revelation? How do we survive this trial?
When Jesus Christ returns, a trial will come. Jesus refers to it as a time of "great tribulation" at the end of the age. During this trial, Christ will judge lawlessness. To remain in God's protection during the final trial of the future, we need to remain true to Christ today.
5. Why did the author of Hebrews encourage us to run the race with "endurance"?
Even if we are "saved," we are not saved for certain until Jesus Christ comes again. Distractions of the world can ensnare us and thwart us from completing the race.
6. What hindrances prevent you from enduring the race of faith? How will you set them aside?
Personal answers.