

The World According to Jim
"Don't Turn the Fan Off"
James 1:12

Introduction

- In his book *Tuesdays with Morrie* Mitch Albom recounts the fruit of his weekly visits to the bedside of his dying college professor Morrie Schwartz. Morrie suffers from ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease and ten Tuesdays into his visits the disease has noticeably taken its toll on Morrie. He's suffering greatly. On one visit the exchange between the two friends goes like this...
- Okay, question, I say to Morrie. His bony fingers hold his glasses across his chest, which rises and falls with each labored breath.
 - "What's the question?" he says.
- Remember the book of Job?
 - "From the Bible?"
- Right. Job is a good man, but God makes him suffer. To test his faith.
 - "I remember."
- Takes away everything he has, his house, his money, his family...
 - "His health." Morrie adds.
- Makes him sick.
 - "To test his faith."
- Right. To test his faith. So, I'm wondering...
 - "What are you wondering?"
- What do you think about that? Morrie coughs violently. His hands quiver as he drops them by his side.
 - "I think," he says, smiling, "God overdid it."¹
- You may have come to believe God is sufficient for your trial but now the question is this. Is he good? Or do you believe as Morrie says, that God overdid it? Is that where you're at right now? God overdid it? This trial, this test, this mess you're in, it's too much. God overdid it. How could he? Who does he think he is?
- What do you do when you've done all that James recommends, you've responded with joy, you've persevered, you've waited, you've prayed for wisdom, and now you're at your wits end. What if God has overdone it? What if the test is too much? What if you can't take it anymore? What do you do when you just don't want to, when you can't fight the fight anymore?

¹ Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Doubleday (New York), 1997, p. 150-1.

Transition

When the trial keeps going and you want to give up, give in, pack it up and check out James 1:12 says to hang in there because the end result of trials is reward. You'll be rewarded for persevering through the trial. James 1:12 says that you're blessed. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.* James 5:11 says the same thing. *As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.* You'll be rewarded for persevering through the trial. You're blessed. But here's the deal. [Slide #3]

Proposition

- **If you persevere through your trial without love for God you gain nothing**
- Last week James 1:9-11 reminded us of the absolute futility of relying on material possessions to see you through your trial or test. Jim says don't trust in wealth or money or possessions to see you through your trial. Those things are completely and utterly incapable of helping you in your hour of need. James reminds us that if we do put our trust in those things during the trial we will fade away. We will not last in the trial. We'll wither.
- When the you know what hits the fan keeps you from turning the fan off? James says the thing that will keep you going, keep you enduring, keep you persevering during the trial is the certainty of future reward from God. But more elemental than even that, the thing that keeps you persevering is love for God. That's what keeps us from turning the fan off.
- There are present rewards to trials especially as they relate to our character. If you'll remember from previous weeks, when we're faced with a trial we have a choice as to how we respond. If we fail to see the test for what it is, a spiritual opportunity, it will impoverish us spiritually. But if we turn to God and respond with joy God is free to begin working through our trial. James 1:3 says He'll produce perseverance in our character. That's a reward. And then, once perseverance has been put to work it produces spiritual maturity. That's another reward. The outcome of the trial, the test, is completeness, wholeness.² Again, another reward. James says through your trial you'll end up *not lacking anything* as a reward. For the Christian, the benefits of trials are incredible. In the world according to Jim, it's a good thing when the you know what hits the fan.

Transition

However, there are also future rewards. That's what James 1:12 talks about. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

- By the way biblical enduring is not the same as grin and bear it. As [Fritz Reinecker](#) puts it, perseverance "is not the patience which can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm is passed. It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope."³ God wants you to persevere and endure with great hope. And the hope is for something specific. A reward.
- The promised reward for the Christian who endures his or her trial is the crown of life. James most certainly has in mind here the victor's crown handed out to the winner of an

² Reinecker, p. 721.

³ Reinecker, p. 723.

athletic competition. In the ancient world the winner would receive, not a crown of jewels, but a wreath of laurel, oak, or even celery. That's right, celery.⁴ Some prize, huh?

- At any rate, the picture James 1:12 gives us is of a good God who waits at the finish line holding out the reward, the crown of life, the crown which is life, to those who have endured and run the race and finished. Endure and God will give you life. [The Message](#) paraphrase of [verse 12](#) says it like this. *For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.* The reward is life and more life. Eternal life. Unending life in the presence of a holy and just and gloriously good God. As [Peter Davids](#) says, “The actual reward is salvation itself, for (eternal) life is certainly the content of the crown.”⁵
- What is to come is meant to serve as a motivation to endure and persevere during the trial. 2 Corinthians 4:17, right? *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.* Eternal life. [Thomas Manton](#) says, “A man can lose nothing for God that is not abundantly recompensed; the crown of thorns is turned into a crown of glory.”⁶ Right now you might feel like you're wearing a crown of thorns but God says if you keep persevering and enduring, in exchange for your crown of thorns, one day he'll reward you with a crown of life.

Transition

I want you to notice one very important thing about this reward. For every person undergoing a trial or test, are you sure you'll receive this reward?

- You see, James 1:12 gets at motivations. Why are you enduring? Why are you persevering through your trial? We endure because we hope in a reward. Yes. But ultimately James' big brother wisdom for us here teaches us that we are rewarded not because we persevere and endure but because we love. Listen to [verse 12](#) again. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*
- The crown of life that God promises is for those who love Him. This is so important. Don't miss what James says here. “What attracts the reward is not the endurance but the love for God which prompted it.”⁷ James says perseverance is rewarded. Yes. And that is a huge consolation when in the middle of a trial.
- But this verse begs the question. Is it possible to endure and persevere through trials for the wrong reasons? And the answer is yes. Some of you are doing a fabulous job enduring the trials and tests in your path. I am in awe of you. As your pastor I am very proud of you. You are standing up under the trial. But it is completely possible that, right now, in the middle of your trial, your test, you're enduring for reasons other than your love for God. You're enduring because you have to. Because you want to be strong for the kids. Because that's what good Christians do. Because that's what you've been taught. But that's not enough nor is it even right.
- The idea that all Christians love God all the time is pure fiction. Doesn't Jesus warn in Matthew 24:12 *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,* 13

⁴ Burdick, *Expositors Commentary*.

⁵ Davids, p. 80.

⁶ Manton, p. 53.

⁷ Motyer, p. 49.

but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Yes, there is the trial. And you can respond with joy and you can develop perseverance and you can be matured spiritually through the trial and you can ask for wisdom but the money question is do you love God? Again as [Thomas Manton](#) says, “No enduring is acceptable to God that does not arise from love. The crown that God has promised, he does not say is for those who suffer but for those who love him. A man may suffer for Christ—that is, in his cause—without love for him, but it is worth nothing.”⁸ **If you persevere through your trial without love for God you gain nothing.**

- [Slide #5] The question for us this morning is, okay, so you’re enduring a trial. Good. But do you love God? 1 Corinthians 13:33. *If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.* And to that we could add if I endure the trial and persevere without love I gain nothing. **If you endure through your trial without love for God you gain nothing.**
- Ultimately the reward, the blessing comes not because of persevering but because of love. “What attracts the reward is not the endurance but the love for God which prompted it.”⁹ Listen to it again. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.* He is enough. Yes. He is all you need. Yes. But do you love him?

Conclusion

- If you are a Christian, like me you come from a long line of Peters who are tested and frequently fail the tests. Do you remember what Jesus asks Peter on resurrection morning following Peter’s three denials? After Peter failed the test three times Jesus asks, “*Simon son of John, do you truly love me?*”¹⁰ And that’s his question for you this morning. “Do you truly love me?”
- This morning, I want to invite you to join me in remembering the Lord Jesus' Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins, for all who have forsaken their first love. If you haven’t endured. If you’ve failed the test. If your love for God has gone cold then Jesus invites you to come. May this meal remind you how much you are loved. And through God’s outpouring of love for you right now may you be filled with the full measure of His love so that you can continue to persevere in your trial. The arms of our loving Savior are wide open. And he invites you to come.

⁸ Manton, p. 54.

⁹ Motyer, p. 49.

¹⁰ John 21:15-17