

THE PREACHER'S GREEK COMPANION TO

# James

THE PREACHER'S GREEK COMPANION SERIES

## James

A Selective Commentary for  
Meditation and Sermon Preparation



Angus Courtney and Jeffrey D. Arthurs



**THE PREACHER'S  
HEBREW/GREEK COMPANION SERIES**

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**HENDRICKSON  
ACADEMIC**

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A Selective Commentary for Meditation and Sermon Preparation**

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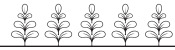
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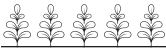


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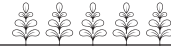
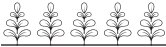


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## SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE




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### Overview

Like many preachers, you may wish you could use the biblical languages in your sermon preparation, but the task seems daunting. Perhaps you lack confidence in your language skills—especially if it's been a long time since you studied Greek or Hebrew—and when you turn to technical commentaries, you feel overwhelmed. Or perhaps you simply don't have the time to do the laborious work of digging into the original-language texts. To help you overcome these challenges, we designed this series, the Preacher's Greek Companion (as well as its Old Testament counterpart series, the Preacher's Hebrew Companion). In collaboration with the series authors, our goal as series editors is to gently guide you, the busy preacher, through the Greek text of select biblical passages in a way that will empower you to integrate original-language exegesis and homiletics. Our prayer is that you will find this book and the other volumes in this series spiritually and intellectually encouraging as well as pleasant to use. We hope your use of the series will make your sermon preparation a more profound and satisfying process and will invigorate your preaching.

### Structure


Each volume in this series includes the following three features for a given biblical book (or portion of a book):


-  **a curated selection of passages** we believe many preachers would likely choose to preach on from the biblical book (or portion of the book) in question; **or, for shorter biblical books, the entire book**, broken up into manageable passages
-  all the basic **lexical and grammatical tools** you need (whatever your Greek skill level may be) **to work through and meditate on the Greek text** of these passages in a way that strengthens your sermon preparation and empowers you to preach more effectively
-  **succinct, select comments** intended to help you responsibly and effectively bridge the gap between reading the Greek text and delivering a sermon on it

The Preacher's Greek Companion is not a traditional commentary series, as is reflected in its title and subtitle: "*Companion*" (not "Commentary") and "*Selected Passages for Meditation and Sermon Preparation.*" That is, we conceived this series as a *supplement* to the wealth of fine commentaries that already exist, not as a replacement for any of them. We recommend using this series alongside traditional commentaries, which by design include helpful information that is not covered in ours.


## The Selection of Passages

Each volume in the Preacher's Greek Companion series provides the Greek text of **approximately ten to twelve passages** from a particular biblical book (or portion thereof):

 In addition to having expertise in Greek and exegesis, our series authors typically have extensive preaching experience or are full-time preachers by vocation. Unless the biblical book in question is short enough to be included in full, they chose **passages** they think **preachers would most likely desire to preach**. In order to encourage preaching through the biblical book in an "expository" rather than a thematic manner, these passages are presented in canonical order. That said, for longer books (such as Isaiah or Matthew), we encouraged authors to choose passages that highlight or represent important themes found in the book; for such books, however, the chosen passages are still presented in canonical order. The curated, limited number of passages in each series volume allows you, if you wish, to use the passages as the basis for a "ready-made" sermon series of whatever length suits your schedule (e.g., for a series consisting of, say, four, seven, ten, or twelve sermons). Alternatively, you might choose to preach a series using some of the passages in a volume and then supplement these with passages from the biblical book in question that are not found in the volume.

 The aims of the series guided our decisions about passage length. On the one hand, we encouraged authors to choose **passages that are not too long**, so that the portions of text won't be daunting to you if your Greek skills are rudimentary; nor do we want you to be overwhelmed by wading through dozens of verses in Greek. For this reason, our ideal length for most passages has been approximately ten verses. On the other hand, in order to do justice to the natural boundaries of longer passages, we have taken care not to artificially truncate such texts. Consider, for example, the account of the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14–15) or the story of the raising of Lazarus (John 11). Although these texts are far too long to be



included in full in a volume in this series, each constituent part of these texts is vital to understanding their narrative development and message. For such passages, we asked authors to focus—as a preacher might typically do when delivering a sermon on a lengthy passage—on what they consider to be the most salient verses from the passage. Accordingly, we have provided the Greek text for only these verses, with the author summarizing the other verses (in English).

 Finally, when authors deemed it helpful (especially for longer biblical books), they have indicated, on the first page devoted to each passage, the **larger literary unit to which the passage belongs**,<sup>1</sup> thus helping you see the passage in question as part of a larger whole rather than as an isolated pericope. In cases where this larger literary context is indicated, we encourage you to pick up a Bible and read and dwell on this context while using this volume to work through the passage.

## The Presentation of Each Passage

This volume helps you work through each passage it contains by presenting the Greek text of the passage along with the lexical and grammatical information you need in order to dig into this original-language text. Designed to be highly accessible, this format is intended (1) to enable you to work through the text in manageable chunks and according to your abilities, regardless of your skill level in Greek; (2) to simultaneously facilitate both study and devotion; and (3) in conjunction with the author's commentary, to help you bridge the gap, as easily and seamlessly as possible, between the original-language text and preaching.

More specifically, this volume contains the following five sections for each passage:

-  A **brief introduction** to the passage—typically comprising only a few sentences—is included in order to set the stage for the passage and highlight its important themes.
-  For ease of reading and to encourage you to slow down and contemplate the text, the passage is typically divided into subunits. For each of these subunits, we provide the **Greek text** of each clause or phrase, along with **transliteration** (as a pronunciation help for those whose Greek is at a rudimentary level) and the author's **translation**.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Occasionally, such a literary unit is coterminous with the passage itself.

2. The Greek text used in this series is that of the 1885 Westcott-Hort edition of the New Testament, as printed in B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The Greek New Testament*,



Next, each clause or phrase from the subunit is presented in an inter-linear fashion, notably with a **contextual gloss (or multiple contextual glosses) and parsing for each word.**<sup>3</sup> For example:

3a Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου			
I give thanks to my God			
Εὐχαριστῶ εὐχαριστέω	I am giving thanks/ give thanks <i>Eu·cha·ri·stō</i>	PRES ACT IND 1ST SG	verb
τῷ ὁ	to the <i>tō</i>	DAT SG MASC	article
θεῷ θεός	(to) God <i>the·ō</i>	DAT SG MASC	noun
μου ἐγώ	of me/my <i>mou</i>	1ST GEN SG	personal pron

This formatting allows you to easily analyze each word in the clause or phrase (by helping you on the level of semantics and morphology) and to perceive how the words work together as a whole (by helping you on the level of syntax).



A key feature of each volume in this series is the inclusion of **concise comments** to accompany some clauses and phrases. These have two primary goals: (1) to enable you to understand and exegete the text more deeply than might be possible from reading it in English, and (2) to equip you with insights into the original-language text that will be of direct value for your preaching. To help you focus and not become overwhelmed with too much information, we encouraged our authors to comment only on those clauses and phrases for which they thought doing so would accomplish these two goals. In addition, because the volumes in this series are not only language aids but—ultimately and more importantly—preaching aids, we asked authors to highlight those features in the Greek text that bring out key themes, rhetorical and theological emphasis, narrative de-

*with Expanded Dictionary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). For interested readers, text-critical variants for the passages included in the present volume are presented at the end of the volume.

3. The parsings are derived from an unpublished database created by Mark House and Maurice Robinson for Hendrickson Publishers. The glosses are the author's own, though sometimes they are based on glosses from the aforementioned database. The glosses intentionally err on the "literal" end of the spectrum, in order to help you apprehend the basic meaning(s) of each word in context.

velopment, character development, connections with other biblical texts, and the like. Although noting various other features in the Greek text may have been intrinsically interesting from a grammatical perspective or helpful for strengthening your language skills, authors have generally refrained from commenting on such features when doing so would not be likely to aid you in moving from text to sermon in any substantial way.<sup>4</sup> In short, an author's brief, select comments are intended—in conjunction with the volume's language aids—to provide you both with *focus* and with *space* to slow down, meditate, wonder, and mature in your understanding and experience of the text, as you form your own judgments on it and prepare to proclaim the divine word to your hearers. The author's comments are not intended to circumscribe the possible interpretive options with one single answer (especially for texts whose interpretation is the particular subject of debate among Christian believers). Rather, they are meant to stimulate your thinking, to help you see features of the text (and connections with other texts) that you may not have perceived before, and to prompt you to ask questions that may not have previously occurred to you.



Each passage ends with a brief section titled “**From Text to Sermon,**” in which our authors, building on their comments, suggest ways you can move from working through the Greek text to the task of homiletics, highlighting potential points of emphasis or particular insights you may wish to share with your audience. In this way, the authors provide you with possible ways to bring the text to life for your audience (e.g., types of illustrations you might use). Because individual preachers (and each of our series authors) bring their own particular skills, perspectives, backgrounds, and oratorical approaches to bear on the homiletical task, and because every biblical text has its own unique features, we encouraged our authors to structure the “From Text to Sermon” section as a free-form series of short paragraphs whose content and emphases are guided by their own personal judgment about what is most helpful for a variety of preachers in different places, cultures, and times. The remarks in this section are always grouped according to rubrics (in the form of inline


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4. Another way we have kept the presentation streamlined and uncluttered, so that you can achieve maximum focus, is by intentionally keeping source citations to a minimum. Authors' comments on a given passage are the fruit of their scholarly research on the passage, their personal reflection on it, and their experience preaching and teaching it. They cite secondary sources only when they draw a specific insight from one particular source or wish to point you to a particularly helpful resource for further reading. As stated above, we naturally encourage you to also use traditional commentaries (which typically provide more documentation) in your study and sermon preparation.

headers); but rather than restrict authors with a “one-size-fits-all” set of rubrics, we allowed them to create their own rubrics and even, if helpful, to vary these rubrics across passages within their volume in light of the unique features and emphases of each passage.<sup>5</sup> We view the resulting diversity of approaches and emphases across this series (and even within a given volume) as a strength, and we hope this aspect of the series will encourage you to use your own judgment about how to preach each passage in a way that best suits you and your listeners, being sensitive to the promptings and guidance of the Spirit of God.

## Audience and Theological Perspective

Since our hope is that many different kinds of people will find the volumes in this series useful, we have designed the Preacher’s Greek Companion to be helpful to a broad spectrum of Christian preachers:

 Our intention is that the series will be **useful and accessible to a large and diverse group of preachers serving a variety of communities throughout the world**. For this reason, we encouraged authors to exercise sensitivity and broad-mindedness in their comments and particularly when writing the “From Text to Sermon” section, in which they could run the risk of being too culturally specific. In particular, we asked authors that any sermon illustrations they included in this section generally be as universal as possible or that, instead of providing specific illustrations, they point to themes from the passage you may wish to illustrate in one way or another. That said, because specificity is essential for good communication, we also allowed authors to suggest—when they deemed it particularly helpful—concrete, culturally specific examples as springboards to help you think about examples that will be relevant for your own context.

 We asked our authors to express any **theological perspectives** in a way that is **consistent with the beliefs stated in the Apostles’ Creed**. Because this series aims to meet the needs of Christian preachers of various theological viewpoints, we encouraged a diversity of theological perspectives within these bounds across the volumes in the series. In addition, because the series has a joint focus on exegesis (close attention to what a specific text says) and homiletics (how to preach said text), we advised




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5. That said, we suggested the following possible rubrics to authors as starting points to consider: theological themes, themes for application and illustration, integrating the broader historical and literary context, learning from the language, and (as deemed helpful and not reductionistic) “the big idea” of the passage.

authors when making any theological comments to let these flow naturally from the text at hand, rather than using the text as a springboard to discuss issues that would more properly fall under the rubric of systematic theology. Although we asked authors to avoid reading any given passage through the lens of a theological system grounded in other biblical texts, we also strongly encouraged them to discuss allusions to other biblical passages or other innerbiblical literary connections if they felt that doing so would help you understand the message of the text at hand and know how to preach it more effectively.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to offer our heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals, who have played a central role in the creation of this series:

-  Arley Kangas, Marco Resendes, and Tyler Comer, for their excellent work on various aspects of the making of these volumes, especially transliterating, proofreading, and generating the indexes.
-  Phil Frank, for his expert typesetting and for patiently working with us, in our capacity as series editors, to achieve the desired formatting and aesthetic for these volumes.
-  The series authors, for joining us in this unique project and for sharing our vision and lending their considerable skills to the task. These volumes are the result of a fruitful collaboration between the Hendrickson team and the series authors (with both parties contributing to the content). We are truly grateful for the opportunity to have worked on this project together.

All of us—the series editors, the series authors, and the team at Hendrickson—pray that the volume you now hold in your hands will empower and encourage you to work through the Greek text of the Bible in order to deepen your sermon preparation and strengthen your proclamation of the word of God. We nurture a deep respect and appreciation for the challenging work that you as a preacher do on the “front lines,” and we recognize the many challenges (logistical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and more) that you encounter on a weekly, indeed a daily, basis. We are honored to come alongside you and support you in your important labors, and we pray that your use of this book will bear much fruit for the kingdom of God.

JONATHAN G. KLINE  
SEAN M. McDONOUGH

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## AUTHORS' INTRODUCTION

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The letter of James leaps off the page as it is read or preached. With pastoral encouragements like “consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you fall into various trials” and bracing challenges such as “be doers of the word and not merely hearers,” this short New Testament letter gets under our skin. James’s practical focus on right behavior is one of the reasons the letter is so widely appreciated by Christians, but we ought also to recognize that this emphasis is undergirded by profound theological insight. Throughout the letter, James demonstrates that the one true God desires a people who will give themselves wholeheartedly to him. They are to be people of integrity, not those who are divided in what they say and what they do; they are to be a unified community, not a church divided between rich and poor; they are to be people who mirror God’s character in their lives. This theme of spiritual integrity is central to grasping what can sometimes feel like a haphazardly arranged epistle.

James is quite likely the earliest letter in the New Testament (written perhaps as early as the mid-40s CE). Its author was apparently well-enough known to be able to introduce himself simply as “James [Ἰάκωβος], a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1). The only James in the Bible who fits the bill is the half-brother of Jesus, who rose to prominence as leader of the Jerusalem church. The epistle is addressed to Jewish Christians living outside of Judea, and James the brother of Jesus would have been a logical candidate to write such an encyclical.

As guides through the book of James, moving from text to sermon, we certainly had great material to work with. Both the content and the form of the epistle lend themselves to preaching. Concerning form, the epistle employs many illustrations such as hypothetical dialogue (“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a city . . .’”), allusions to the Old Testament (Rahab, Abraham, Elijah), rhetorical questions (“What benefit is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works?”), and images such as a wave of the sea, grass withered by the sun, a mirror that shows us our true selves, bits in horses’ mouths, and springs pouring forth both salt and fresh water. Furthermore, the epistle has a look-me-in-the-eye tone. It uses direct address throughout, including one of the most trenchant passages in the whole Bible, as it warns the rich to “weep with howling over the miseries that are coming upon you . . .” Balancing that prophetic tone is the pastor’s gentle voice entreating “my beloved brothers and sisters.”

Concerning content, the epistle is also made for preaching, as it addresses topics of perennial relevance: the tongue, wisdom, community, justice, hypocrisy, trials, prayer, and more. True, the Greek is difficult in places, but that is why you have picked up this book! Angus, the exegetical author, will guide you with a sure hand; and then Jeffrey, the homiletical author, will suggest how to move from text to sermon. We have preached this book multiple times, and we are sure that you have chosen well. Your congregation will be nourished on the living and abiding Word.



Our thanks to Jonathan Kline at Hendrickson for using the gentle tone, not the prophetic, as he gave us feedback. He and Sean McDonough conceived of this series, and it is a joy to see it come to fruition. At numerous points, the discussions in this volume have benefited from insights Sean shared with us. Thank you, Sean, for serving as Angus's teacher and Jeffrey's colleague.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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1ST	first person	indef	indefinite
2ND	second person	INF	infinitive
3RD	third person	interr	interrogative
ACC	accusative	MASC	masculine
ACT	active	MID	middle
adj	adjective	NEUT	neuter
adv	adverb	NOM	nominative
AOR	aorist	num	numerical
comp	comparative	OPT	optative
cond	conditional	PASS	passive
conj	conjunction	PERF	perfect
DAT	dative	PL	plural
demonstr	demonstrative	prep	preposition
FEM	feminine	PRES	present
FUT	future	pron	pronoun
GEN	genitive	PTCP	participle
Heb	Hebrew	SG	singular
IMPF	imperfect	SUBJ	subjunctive
IMPV	imperative	translit	transliteration
IND	indicative	VOC	vocative

*NOTE: All Old Testament verse numbers in this volume refer to the Hebrew text. Where the English verse numbering differs, it is listed in brackets following the Hebrew numbering, without any special notation. When the Septuagint (i.e., Greek) version of an Old Testament text is cited and the verse numbering differs from that of the Hebrew text, the Greek reference is listed in brackets following the Hebrew reference, accompanied by the notation "LXX".*



# JOY IN TRIALS



The first chapter of James serves as a kind of “table of contents” for the letter, introducing topics developed more fully throughout. Here in vv. 1–8, we find instructions on enduring trials (cf. 5:7–11), on the need for divine wisdom (cf. 3:13–18), and on praying in faith (cf. 5:13–18). The diverse range of subject matter can make this section challenging to preach.

It’s helpful, then, to realize that the central theme in James begins to emerge in these verses: the one true and living God is perfectly good and wants us to mirror him by living lives of spiritual integrity. Because God is completely good, even the trials that come our way can be used for good—namely, for our maturity in faith.



1a Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δούλος  
*Iakōbos theou kai kyriou Iēsou Christou doulos*  
 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1b ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ  
*tais dōdeka phylais tais en tē diaspora*  
 To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion,

1c χαίρειν.  
*chairein.*  
 greetings.



1a Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δούλος

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ἰάκωβος	James/Jacob	NOM SG MASC	noun
Ἰάκωβος	<i>I·a·kō·bos</i>		
θεοῦ	of God	GEN SG MASC	noun
θεός	<i>the·ou</i>		
καὶ	and	---	conj
καί	<i>kai</i>		
κυρίου	of the Lord	GEN SG MASC	noun
κύριος	<i>ky·ri·ou</i>		
Ἰησοῦ	(of) Jesus	GEN SG MASC	noun
Ἰησοῦς	<i>I·ē·sou</i>		
Χριστοῦ	(of) Christ/Messiah	GEN SG MASC	noun
Χριστός	<i>Chri·stou</i>		
δούλος	servant/slave	NOM SG MASC	noun
δούλος	<i>dou·los</i>		

1b

## ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion,

ταῖς ὁ	to the <i>tais</i>	DAT PL FEM	article
δώδεκα δώδεκα	twelve <i>dō·de·ka</i>	---	num
φυλαῖς φυλή	tribes <i>phy·lais</i>	DAT PL FEM	noun
ταῖς ὁ	(the ones) who <i>tais</i>	DAT PL FEM	article
ἐν ἐν	in <i>en</i>	---	prep
τῇ ὁ	the <i>tē</i>	DAT SG FEM	article
διασπορᾷ διασπορά	dispersion/diaspora <i>di·a·spo·ra</i>	DAT SG FEM	noun

1c

## χαίρειν.

greetings.

χαίρειν χαίρω	greetings <i>chai·rein</i>	PRES ACT INF	verb
------------------	-------------------------------	--------------	------



2a

Πάσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου,  
*Pasan charan hēgēsasthe, adelphoi mou,*

**Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters,**

2b

ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις,  
*hotan peirasmois peripesēte poikilois,*

**whenever you fall into various trials,**

3

γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως  
*ginōskontes hoti to dokimion hymōn tēs pisteōs*  
κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν·  
*katergazetai hypomonēn;*

**because you know that the testing of your faith  
produces perseverance.**

4a

ἢ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω,  
*hē de hypomonē ergon teleion echetō*

**And let perseverance have its perfect work,**

4b

ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι,  
*hina ēte teleioi kai holoklēroi,*  
ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.  
*en mēdeni leipomenoi.*

**in order that you may be perfect and complete,  
lacking in nothing.**



2a

**Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου,**

Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters,

<b>Πᾶσαν</b> πᾶς	all <i>Pa·san</i>	ACC SG FEM	adj
<b>χαρὰν</b> χαρά	joy <i>cha·ran</i>	ACC SG FEM	noun
<b>ἠγήσασθε</b> ἠγέομαι	(you all) consider/ reckon <i>hē·gē·sa·sthe</i>	AOR MID IMPV 2ND PL	verb
<b>ἀδελφοί</b> ἀδελφός	brothers and sisters <i>a·del·phoi</i>	VOC PL MASC	noun
<b>μου</b> ἐγώ	of me/my <i>mou</i>	1ST GEN SG	personal pron

James launches straight into one of the key themes of his letter: patient endurance through trials. He invites his readers not just to endure trials but to count the experience of them as “all joy.” **Πᾶσαν χαρὰν** probably indicates the intensity of the joy (“exceeding joy”) rather than exclusivity (“entirely joy”): it’s not that other emotions are never allowed in trials.

**Ἠγήσασθε** is the first of many commands in this epistle. In fact, there is a greater frequency of imperative verbs in James than in any other New Testament book, highlighting from the very beginning the letter’s practical focus and urgent pastoral tone.

2b

**ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις,**

whenever you fall into various trials,

<b>ὅταν</b> ὅταν	when/whenever <i>ho·tan</i>	---	conj
<b>πειρασμοῖς</b> πειρασμός	trials/tests/temptations <i>pei·ra·smois</i>	DAT PL MASC	noun
<b>περιπέσητε</b> περιπίπτω	you fall into/among <i>pe·ri·pe·sē·te</i>	AOR ACT SUBJ 2ND PL	verb
<b>ποικίλοις</b> ποικίλος	various <i>poi·ki·lois</i>	DAT PL MASC	adj

The Greek word for “trials” (**πειρασμοῖς**) can indicate an external *test* of faith, involving any sort of suffering, but it can also be used of an internal *temptation* to sin. Here, the meaning is the former, which is clarified by the word **δοκίμιον** (“testing”) in v. 3. By including the adjective “various” (**ποικίλοις**), James tells us that the trials he has in mind are quite broad,

including both the ordinary ones common to all people and those that Christians particularly face as a result of their faith in Jesus.

3

**γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως  
κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν·**

because you know that the testing of your faith  
produces perseverance.

<b>γινώσκοντες</b> γινώσκω	knowing <i>gi·nō·skon·tes</i>	PRES ACT PTCP NOM PL MASC	verb
<b>ὅτι</b> ὅτι	that <i>ho·ti</i>	---	conj
<b>τὸ</b> ὁ	the <i>to</i>	NOM SG NEUT	article
<b>δοκίμιον</b> δοκίμιον	testing <i>do·ki·mi·on</i>	NOM SG NEUT	noun
<b>ὑμῶν</b> σύ	of you all/your <i>hy·mōn</i>	2ND GEN PL PERSONAL	pron
<b>τῆς</b> ὁ	of the <i>tēs</i>	GEN SG FEM	article
<b>πίστεως</b> πίστις	(of) faith <i>pi·ste·ōs</i>	GEN SG FEM	noun
<b>κατεργάζεται</b> κατεργάζομαι	(it) produces/works <i>kat·er·ga·ze·tai</i>	PRES MID IND 3RD SG	verb
<b>ὑπομονήν</b> ὑπομονή	perseverance/endurance <i>hy·po·mo·nēn</i>	ACC SG FEM	noun

Verses 3–4 explain why we can engage in the remarkable act of responding joyfully to trials: because God uses them to deepen and perfect our faith.

The word **δοκίμιον** refers to the process of refining metals like silver and gold. What is being refined is our faith (**πίστεως**). “Faith” can refer to a person’s belief: Abraham “believed God,” we’re told in 2:23. But **πίστις** can also describe someone’s “faithfulness,” and this notion of commitment is important for James, who wants to show what it means to have genuine faith.

The testing of faith produces (or “works”) perseverance. (The word for “works” here is **κατεργάζεται**: note the subtle link to the discussion of faith and works in 2:14–26.) The etymology of **ὑπομονή** comes from **ὑπο** + **μένω** (“to remain under”). Imagine a soldier or a laborer bearing a heavy load for a long time. James’s point is that despite their difficulty—in fact, *because* of their difficulty—trials can cultivate the necessary characteristic of endurance in the believer’s life.

4a

**ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἔχέτω,**

And let perseverance have its perfect work,

<b>ἡ</b> ὀ	the <i>hē</i>	NOM SG FEM	article
<b>δὲ</b> δέ	and <i>de</i>	---	conj
<b>ὑπομονή</b> ὑπομονή	perseverance <i>hy·po·mo·nē</i>	NOM SG FEM	noun
<b>ἔργον</b> ἔργον	work <i>er·gon</i>	ACC SG NEUT	noun
<b>τέλειον</b> τέλειος	perfect <i>te·lei·on</i>	ACC SG NEUT	adj
<b>ἔχέτω</b> ἔχω	let (it) have <i>e·che·tō</i>	PRES ACT IMPV 3RD SG	verb

4b

**ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι,  
ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.**

in order that you may be perfect and complete,  
lacking in nothing.

<b>ἵνα</b> ἵνα	in order that <i>hi·na</i>	---	conj
<b>ᾗτε</b> εἰμί	you all may be <i>ē·te</i>	PRES ACT SUBJ 2ND PL	verb
<b>τέλειοι</b> τέλειος	perfect/complete <i>te·lei·oi</i>	NOM PL MASC	adj
<b>καὶ</b> καί	and <i>kai</i>	---	conj
<b>ὁλόκληροι</b> ὁλόκληρος	complete/whole <i>ho·lo·klē·roi</i>	NOM PL MASC	adj
<b>ἐν</b> ἐν	in <i>en</i>	---	prep
<b>μηδενὶ</b> μηδεῖς	nothing <i>mē·de·ni</i>	DAT SG NEUT	adj
<b>λειπόμενοι</b> λείπω	being lacking <i>lei·po·me·noi</i>	PRES PASS PTCP NOM PL MASC	verb

The purpose (ἵνα) of perseverance is that believers might be perfect (τέλειος). This call to perfection is confronting: what does James mean? Remember the central theme: the one God wants people to mirror him by lives of spiritual integrity. In this sense, the idea of perfection is well suited

(cf. Matt 5:48). But our English word “perfect” suggests an unachievable goal, which James is not meaning to communicate. For this reason, when preaching, it may be more helpful to translate **τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι** as “complete and whole.” **Ὀλόκληροι** has the sense of being perfectly healthy (Acts 3:16), indicating that God uses trials and the perseverance they produce for good: to make believers spiritually whole and healthy.