

Text: James 1:12-18

Theme: Steadfast Trials

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, as well as those watching online, the text for our meditation today is the Epistle lesson of James chapter one, verses twelve through eighteen.

Boys and girls, how are you doing this morning? Good! Do you know, which object is harder, this piece of paper or the floor? If I were to pound on it, which one do you think would break first? I am sure that the paper would right, or my foot against the floor, why? Because even though it undergoes a hard task, it is strong enough to stand firm. In our Epistle lesson for today, Saint James writes similar in regards to us as Christians, that when we encounter trials, we stand firm, how? Let me know how you stand firm at the end of service.

What trials come upon you and your lives? We undergo many trials through our lives. We face the temptations of our sinful flesh, the world around us, and from our own selves. We face trials on a daily basis. Trials such as how do we live out our lives? Do we go five (5) to ten (10) miles over the speed limit or the speed limit itself? Do we honor mom and dad, as well as those in authority over us, or do we complain, grumble, and disagree with them constantly? Do we make the best use of our time or do we get sidetracked by YouTube rabbit holes, and personal pet projects and lose sight of our goal? Do we honor our spouses or do we look at movies and websites that glorify our own sinful desires? Do we put God first and foremost above all or do we place our possessions or other people above God? And I could go on listing many more trials. Where do all of these trials come from? How can we respond in the midst of our trials?

Some people make the claim that all trials must come from God. They reason that since God is the Creator of everything, since He has all power and might, therefore He must send trials upon us. Therefore, if we fail this or that trial, then we can blame God rather than ourselves since He is the source. Our sinful nature always seeks to place the blame upon someone else other than ourselves. Adam blamed both God and Eve, Eve blamed the snake. And we do likewise. "The Devil made me do it. It is his fault. God did not stop me. It's His fault." Yet, can we blame God or the Devil? No, as James says, "God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one." We cannot blame God. We cannot blame the Devil as He has been utterly defeated by Jesus Christ, he has no power or control. We have no one to blame but ourselves and our own sinful desires. James writes that "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings for death." We cannot cast the blame on anyone except for ourselves. What do we do? We cannot fight against these impulses on our own, by nature we will fight a losing battle time and time again.

How can we be blessed and remain steadfast under trial? How can we stand the test? Because of the One who is the Most Blessed One. The One who stood fast and endured all trials on our behalf, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we heard in our Holy Gospel lesson, Jesus was tempted as we are, yet did He sin? Did He give in? No. He stood fast, holding to the Word of God and fought against Satan. For our sake, Jesus went to the cross, bearing our sins, bleeding, suffering, and dying. There, Jesus

satisfies the full wrath of God and wholly defeats Satan on our behalf. Connected with Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead in the waters of Holy Baptism, we are no longer our own but, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ Himself lives in us. We have been "brought forth by the word of truth." By the power of the Father of lights, of His own will, mercy, and grace we have been saved. We can stand firm in the midst of any temptation that may come upon us with joy. Joy, not because we love to be in the midst of trial and temptation, but because of the faith that Jesus gives to us that we know that what Jesus did, He did for me and you.

Thanks be to God that In the midst of our trials, we can stand firm because of what He has done for us. That through His Holy Spirit, He gives us the strength that we do not given in, we do not fail. Rather, in faith we resist our sinful flesh, the temptations of the devil, and the temptations of the world. God empowers us that we can do His good and gracious will as a first fruits of His creation. We can put Him first and foremost above all things. We can obey those in authority over us without complaint, recognizing that by doing so, we are giving God the glory. We can make the best use of our time, by fulfilling the many and various vocations that He has laid upon us. We can honor our spouses by resisting the temptation to sin against them and instead support and encourage them as we go through life together.

Thanks to be God that He has granted to us His strength in His grace and mercy to us!