

## **Weekly Devotions: THE REFINING FIRE OF TRIALS 11**

### **How Resolute & Steadfast Is Your Faith?**

Affliction trains our spiritual muscles to be resilient and able to withstand greater hardships that may come in the future. Trials are also opportunities for us to cultivate an inner resolve not to waver in our faith but to wait patiently for God's deliverance.

Hugh Black, a preacher and professor in Homiletics, said that God wants to build in His people an iron resolution through trials. "It is the spirit which never knows defeat, which cannot be worn out, which has taken its stand and refuses to move. This is the 'patience' about which the Bible is full; the power to bear, to suffer, to sacrifice, to endure all things, to die, harder still sometimes to continue to live."

### **Read James 1: 2–4; 12**

James said that in life there would be all kinds of problems and difficulties. Trials test our faith for its genuineness and train us to be steadfast, 'perfect and complete, lacking in nothing' (3b-4). To be perfect is to be like Christ in the way we see, think, feel and respond to the problem. James believed that nothing we encounter is outside the plan of God and He is using trials to make us mature.

James went on to say in verse 12 that those who remain steadfast under trial are blessed. The word 'blessed' either means to be happy or fulfilled. In this context, James was saying that those whose faith does not waver will experience a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. He also said that the ultimate blessing is the gift of 'the crown of life', which is given to those who persevere under trials. They are rewarded not because of their endurance but because of their love for God which is the reason why they will not walk out on Him regardless of their sufferings.

### *Questions to Ponder*

1. What did James say are the 'benefits' of trials and was he being unrealistic when he said we should "count it pure joy" when we face trials (2-4)?
2. How has your faith been tested and what good has come out of the trial/s you endured? How would you encourage someone about to leave the church because of personal problems to remain steadfast?
3. What reward awaits the believer who perseveres under trial (12)? Why does God promise 'the crown of life' not simply to those who endure, but to those who love Him?