



**A Spiritual Encouragement Message**  
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## Are We Being Persecuted or Perfected

by Derrick Victor

Sound the alarm! The world is ending! Or so it would seem by every social media post, news article, or personal opinion. In fact, if we could keep track of the apocalyptic calls of each individual, the world would have ended millions of times by now. And yet, here we are... Why? Because God has a purpose. A purpose that transcends politics, countries, race, family, socioeconomic class, and so much more! So, why do we feel the need to assume the worst? Why is it common among us to venture into extremes? As the writer of Ecclesiastes has said, **“there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecc. 1:9).**

We venture into extremes because they are attractive and easy. They lure us with interesting “facts” and tantalizing gossip. We all want to “be in the know”. We want to sound the alarm as the first to have our “eyes opened”. Unfortunately, the more extreme we get, the more closed our eyes and heart become. Which brings me to the point of today’s article. In a world full of extremism, what is our greatest gift and comfort?

**“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” (Jam. 1:16-18).**

James’ call to avoid deception is one of great clarity in this dark world. His desire is for us to know the truth and to understand that God has given us every good and perfect gift. Yet, he did not give us these gifts to squander. He did not give them to us to add to the confusion of this world. We are not like the Gentiles any longer **(Eph. 4:18)**, we have been changed!

He then calls his audience a “first-fruits” of His creatures. These “creatures” are the new creation that God had been promising for ages **(Ezek. 11:19; 2 Cor. 5:17)**. These creatures are to be different in every way.

Different from the way we hear

**“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” (Jam. 1:19-20)**

Our ears must be tuned to listen more than our mouths are tuned to speak. Not only does faith come by hearing (**Rom. 10:17**), but love and growth happens when we listen, not when we speak. I'm not showing people much about my care for them when my mouth is moving. When all others are sounding the alarm of extremism, I should be listening to those around who are scared, hurting, or worried. A calm spirit will listen and answer well (**Prov. 15:1-2**)

We should also be different in what we do...

**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.” (Jam. 1:22-23.**

**“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (Jam. 4:17)**

While everyone else sounds the alarm and seeks to rile up the community, we have a task in front of us. A task to do... Now, this doing is not simply limited to one thing. Many might say we should “preach the Word”. I won't argue, but we need to recognize that preaching is done in our lifestyle as well as our words. Indeed, many will trust your actions MORE than your words. Especially if the two do not align with one another. If I say I love people, but I show not desire to help them, I don't have love for them (**Jam. 2:14-17**). Our actions speak loudly! Which is why James put so much emphasis on what we do. So, while everyone sounds the alarm of panic and apocalypse, we should be serving the people around us. Serving our neighbor, our brother/sister, our families, etc. Jesus changed the world far more by what He did, than what He said. The sacrifice is empty without action.

Finally, we should be different in what we think...

**“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (Jam. 1:2-4)**

The pain you and I are enduring at this time is not a punishment. I know it certainly feels that way sometimes. I too am tired of not gathering as we once did. I get tired of sickness and disease. I am tired of death. I am tired of media manipulation. I am tired of political campaigns that divide us rather than help us. I am tired of fear. However, these thoughts are our choice. We can allow these outside influences to disturb our peace and our purpose, or we can take captive every thought for the name of Christ (**2 Cor. 10:5**).

James tells us that we are being perfected in trials and tribulations. What a difference! Perfected, not persecuted. A simple perspective shift. When I think of persecution, I become a victim. I am angry. I am vilified for unjust reasons. However, when I see God's hand molding me for perfection, I am redeemed! And that, my friends, is how we find ourselves lacking nothing.