

**Review:** *<sup>1</sup>James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings*

Last week we learned that James, a bond-servant [doulos] of God, was the half-brother of Jesus who wrote this first book for the first churches after Jesus' ascension. The recipients were primarily Jewish. James was the leader of the Jerusalem Church. And that God through the beginning of the Roman persecution began to disperse outward and abroad the close communities in order to spread the gospel message.

We learned that he became a believer after Jesus had a personal post-resurrection meeting with him – and then James was born-again spiritually. We saw his great humility as he calls himself a bond-servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We learned of his prayer life, and even his prayer for his murderers as they were killing him – just like his Brother, just like Jesus.

Now we are going to see what James said to those believers that God dispersed, to those God kept in Jerusalem, and to us – His Church – almost two thousand years later. This is a study that will sometimes hit us hard by its truth, but it will get us to think, it will mature us, and then spur us to do something about it.

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## Temptations & Trials

### The Basic Facts – James 1:2-12 Attitude / Conquer

*<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*<sup>5</sup> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup> being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

*<sup>9</sup> But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; <sup>10</sup> and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.*

*<sup>12</sup> Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

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## The essential attitude is Joy 1:2-4

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

**Consider** [g2233 hēgeomai] – count, suppose, think, judge James begins with ‘consider’ and wants us to respond in a way opposite to what the world wants. To make a conscious determination and commitment going forward.

**Joy** [g5479 chara] - cheerfulness, calm delight, gladness, rejoicing Notice that it is not defined by ‘happy’ which, as we learned in the Fruit of the Spirit class, is derived from ‘happenstance’. Joy is an inward character which is provided by the Spirit to produce that calmness in the face of the storm.

**Brethren** [g0080 adelpho] those who are fellow believers, united by bonds of affection whether by blood or by the blood of Jesus – Christian Jews.

**Encounter** [g4045 periptō] to fall into something unexpectedly, to be encompassed, meet

**Various** [h4164 poikilos] motley, various in character, diverse, manifold, colorful, variegated

**Trials** [h3986 peirasmos] a putting to proof (by experiment, experience, solicitation, discipline or provocation)

We are going to be faced with challenges, we must make choices, and then we will face the consequences of our choices; remembering that we are among the dispersed/scattered people that James is talking to.

Warren Wiersbe says that “Outlook determines outcome, and attitude determines action. God tells us to expect trials. It is not “if you fall into various testings” but “**when** you fall into various testings.” The believer who expects his Christian life to be easy is in for a shock. Jesus warned His disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Paul told his converts that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Because we are God’s “**scattered people**” and not God’s “**sheltered people**,” we must experience trials. We cannot always expect everything to go our way. Some trials come simply because we are human – sickness, accidents, disappointments, even seeming tragedies. Other trials come because we are Christians.”

(BE Series Commentary by Wiersbe)

**Matthew 5:12** <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be **glad**, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you

**1 Peter 1:6, 8-9** <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly **rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by **various trials** ... <sup>8</sup> and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly **rejoice with joy inexpressible** and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

<sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

**Testing** [g1383 dokimion] trying, proving, trial, proof

**Faith** [g4102 pistis, putis] persuasion, credence, moral conviction of the truth

**Endurance** [g5281 hypomonē] patient continuance (waiting) NT: The characteristic of one who is not swerved from their deliberate purpose and their loyalty to faith and purity, even going through great trials and suffering.

**Perfect** [g5046 *teleios*] brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing to completeness  
**Complete** [g3648 *holoklēros*] complete in all parts, free from sinfulness, faultless

Here we do not have a reference to sinless perfection in our lives but rather to spiritual maturity. The testing of faith that drives believers into a deeper communion and greater trust in Christ. A quality that produces a stable, godly and righteous character and life – mature and complete.

What exactly does Faith mean beyond the surface meaning?

For James' readers, faith rested first on the foundation that the OT Scriptures was reliable truth from God, that a Messiah would come, that the witnesses of Jesus life, death and resurrection were true, such that Jesus had proven Himself to be the Messiah.

For our generation, the NT meaning of faith is used as a conviction of God's truth. Believing strongly in that truth especially respecting man's relationship to God and divine things. We see faith includes the idea of trust and holy zeal which came from that faith and is joined with it by the Holy Spirit. Faith also has a secondary meaning of 'an assurance or guarantee' which is given by God.

- a. As faith relates to God – the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ
- b. As faith relates to Christ – the strong belief that Jesus is the Messiah, our Savior, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God
- c. As faith relates to the Holy Spirit – knowing that He is part of the Trinity and will be our comforter, and that the Spirit uses the Word to convict the sinner and then to reveal the Savior.

Verse 1:3 "The testing of your faith."

Charles Spurgeon says that we are to "Note the essential point that is assailed by temptation. Your **faith** is the target that all the arrows are shot at. Faith is as vital to salvation as the heart is to the body. Therefore, the javelins of the enemy are mainly aimed at this essential grace. Your faith is peculiarly obnoxious to Satan and to the world. If you had no faith, they would not be your enemies. Faith is that blessed grace that is most pleasing to God and, therefore, most displeasing to the devil. By faith God is greatly glorified, and by faith Satan is greatly annoyed. He rages at faith because he sees in it his own defeat and the victory of grace."

(Spurgeon Study Bible Notes)

**1 Peter 1:7** <sup>7</sup> so that the **proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ

So, we see that Faith is like gold, it stands in the test of fire. Without this standard of faith, trials would not yield the desired perseverance... there would be only ashes. True faith, like pure gold endures – no matter how hot the fire.

**Hebrews 6:11-12** <sup>11</sup> And we desire that each one of you show the same **diligence** so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, <sup>12</sup> so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who **through faith** and patience inherit the promises.

**Luke 21:19** <sup>19</sup> By your **endurance** you will gain your lives.

We would do well to remember:

- Faith is a gift from God
- Faith is always tested, tried by fire
- Trials work for the believer not against him/her
- Trials can be faced with joy because when they are infused with faith, perseverance results, and perseverance when fully developed, makes us mature Christians who lack nothing.
- Mature Christians are faithful, patient and persistent – they endure with the help of God – *lacking in nothing*.

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## The way to conquer – assistance for the trials

1:5-8

It is quite a goal to be 'lacking in nothing' and might cause confusion and frustration in trying to achieve it. So, James continues on with the following....

***<sup>5</sup> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.***

*But If any of you lacks* – that's quite a statement... is James only talking to the ignorant – the lacking? Was the remnant lacking wisdom, are we lacking wisdom? Is that why he is writing because we are ignorant? If we consider ourselves not lacking - why should we even continue reading?

Has James offended you yet? Now, we must remember when James was writing and see that he is pleading to the remnant not to be like the Pharisees or Sadducees of his time – who thought that they in their high position and learning were extremely wise.

I think that applies to us as well, two thousand years later... as we rely on science and government to give us 'wisdom'.

Let's clearly understand what wisdom is and is not; what is God saying through James.

### Wisdom [g4678 sophia] broad and full of intelligence

It denotes the capacity to not only understand something (*Acts 7:22* <sup>22</sup> *Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds*) but to act accordingly (*Colossians 1:9-10* <sup>9</sup> *For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,* <sup>10</sup> *so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord*).

It is by acting accordingly that separates wisdom from knowledge. There is the natural wisdom which comes from the world but there is also a special wisdom that can come only from God, especially through the Holy Spirit. The world's wisdom is ultimately doomed to destruction. (*Corinthians 1:18-19 (NASB)* <sup>18</sup> *For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* <sup>19</sup> *For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."*)

James goes on to explain that *'if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God'*. When you know what wisdom truly is, you know that you are lacking in the wisdom area – no matter how much education or knowledge you possess, you know that you are lacking. Once you admit in your heart that your knowledge is not enough – you know that you must have God's wisdom for your journey.

James goes on and says that assistance is readily available from God. And this God gives generously and without reproach (rebuke, or reprimand). Wisdom from God is available for the asking. When you know that you must have it for your journey – don't just think about it. Ask, even beg, for this gift of wisdom from our Heavenly Father.

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***<sup>6</sup> But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup> being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***

**Ask [g0154 aiteō]** inquire, call for, beg, crave, desire

We desire this wisdom from God, we ask or even plead with Him. And we see that He will give generously, He will not reproach us or scold us for asking.

***Matthew 7:7-8** <sup>7</sup> "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*

However, James says **But** again. It is a consecutive particle – meaning to give stress to the word or words to which it is attached. First we are interrupted to show us that we indeed need wisdom and now we are to see that there is more to the asking than was apparent just a sentence ago.

Now there is a stipulation to the asking – we **must** ask in **faith** without any **doubting** or **doubts**.

**Doubt g125 [diakrinō]** hesitate, stagger, waver. The reader is told that he must not vacillate or waiver that his plea is to God and that his faith is in the one true God.

This is illustrated by the picture of the waves and surf of the sea which are **driven** & blown horizontally and **tossed** vertically by the wind. An interesting picture of a one who is on one side then another, one minute up and then down the next.

There is a place for honest doubt, the Apostle Thomas had a doubt, and the Lord answered him, showing him His nail scarred hands. His doubt was turned to true belief. But wind-swept doubt is not honest, and James says that he will not receive anything from the Lord. Doubting doubters receive nothing because they lack faith and are fruitless.

***Matthew 21:21-22** <sup>21</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and **do not doubt**, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. <sup>22</sup> And all things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive."*

The doubter is labeled a **double-minded man [g1374 dipsychos]**, literally one who is "two-souled" or who is unstable – like an unsteady, staggering drunk.

We have an amazing God who is ready and willing to help us in all that we need – including wisdom on how to handle that next 'crisis'. Knowing that the answer from God depends on assurance in God.

**Ephesians 4:14-15** <sup>14</sup> ... we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up** in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.

If we have a believing and united heart, we can ask in faith and God will give us the wisdom that we need to endure the trials of this life with joy, becoming mature believers.

Warren Wiersbe says that "... God cannot work in us without our consent. There must be a surrendered will. The mature person does not argue with God's will; instead, he accepts it willingly and obeys it joyfully. "Doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). If we try to go through trials without surrendered wills, we will end up more like immature children than mature adults." (BE Series Commentary by Wiersbe)

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### The way to conquer – Review one's status 1:9-12

<sup>9</sup> But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; <sup>10</sup> and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

One who asks for wisdom needs to also reflect on where they are in life and realize and remember that there are eternal advantages which wait for us. Understanding that where we are today may be different tomorrow, but eternity is promised for everyone... where we spend that eternity depends on our relationship with The Lord.

The brother of humble circumstances, whatever they may be, is exalted **in** the Lord **in his high position** and can be glad (joyful) in their high standing spiritually – as a born-again believer who is called to the true riches and to be an heir of God.

The rich believer is humbled **by** the Lord **in his humiliation** by the trials revealing his human frailty, knowing that true riches are found in the grace of God, and knowing that he has eternal glory in Christ. But always to remember that one day all human pursuits will fade away as we die in and to this earth, and it is only what we do for Christ will matter.

Hope in God's eternal destiny for us is evidence of believing faith.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** <sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

James sites Isaiah 40.7, and Peter repeats it in his epistle **1 Peter 1:24-25** <sup>24</sup> For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, <sup>25</sup> BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you

So, whether of humble circumstance or wealthy, all their and our pursuits will fade away and only what is done for The Lord will remain.



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***12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.***

**Blessed [g3107 makarios]** fortunate, happy because of his circumstance

James said that one is blessed who **perseveres under trial**. He doesn't say that we are saved by enduring trials but that the believer is rewarded by enduring, persevering through trials. And how do we do that – with joy. **James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials**

James had heard Jesus preach on this, when He said **Luke 6:22-23** <sup>22</sup> *Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.* When you have been approved, your blessings are in heaven – and they can never be taken away from you there.

Peter later in his letters says: **1 Peter 3:14** <sup>14</sup> *But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are **blessed**.* **1 Peter 4:14** <sup>14</sup> *If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are **blessed**, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

We also see that rewards come by growth in our Christian walk as we are approved in His service, as we bring glory to God by our testimony. One of the rewards we will receive is **the crown of life**. This is the **first time** the remnant church has heard this term in this manner.

Yes, the OT Scriptures talk about crowns, but they are the [g1238 diadēma] diadems – the crowns of the kings. James is talking about the [g4735 stephanos] a wreath or garland which was given as a prize to victors in public games, **but** using this as a symbol of eternal blessedness given to the genuine servants of God and Christ. The crown of life is given to one who is faithful under trials, yes even unto death. This term Crown of Life is also used by Jesus in **Revelation 2:10-11** <sup>10</sup> *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the **crown of life**.* <sup>11</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'*

We will receive **the crown of life** when Jesus returns. As Jesus first suffered at the cross, then His glory; we will also first see suffering through trials, then the glory which was promised **to those who love Him**. .....

Notice that it says, 'to those who love Him' and not those who worked the hardest, or trusted the most, who gave the most money, or who obeyed continually. It says love Him because love is and should be the spiritual motivation behind everything done in our walk.

God's purpose in trials is maturity – our maturity in Him, so that we too will be fully developed and perfectly equipped for His purposes in love.

**1 Corinthians 2:9** <sup>9</sup> *but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, **ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.**"*