

JAMES CHAPTER 1: On Trials (1/12/06)

Opening

1. Sometimes things happen to break the pattern of peace, comfort, joy and happiness in our lives. Do you feel this happens more often than not? What would life be like without these events? What is your attitude towards these events?

2. ON TRIALS: WISDOM, WEALTH AND TEMPTATIONS (James 1:2-4)

The book of James is distinctive for its emphasis on vital Christianity, characterized by a **faith that works**.

Q: Why is it that Christians ought to “consider it joy” to face trials? How can trials in your life lead you to being a more mature and complete Christian?

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

(a) ON WISDOM (James 1:5-8)

James discusses the period of testing before perseverance has completed its work.

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a **double-minded** man, unstable in all he does.

Q: Why do you think wisdom is important in trials?

Q: According to verses 5-8, how are we to ask for wisdom, and how are we not to ask for it?

❖ Commentators have noted that the “doubt” referred to in v. 6 refers more than a mental indecisiveness, but a divided loyalty thinking or loyalty, even distrust in God. This may be analogous to the conflicting loyalties between God and Mammon (**Matt. 6:24**), or God and the world. (**James 4:4**)

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (**Matt 6:24**)

⁴“You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” (**James 4: 4**)

(b) ON WEALTH (James 1:9-12)

⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love.

Q: What may poor believers take comfort in? Why should rich believers be humbled? (Note the above passage shows how both rich and poor are equally dependent on God. See also **James 2:5** and **Romans 8:17-18**, and **1 Peter 1:4**)

⁵Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" (**James 2:5**)

¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. ¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (**Romans 8:17-18**)

⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you. (**1 Peter 1:4**)

(c) **ON TEMPTATIONS (James 1:13-14)**

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Q: Where do temptations come from? Where do they NOT come from?

Q. Sin is not merely a spontaneous act, but the result of a process. According to verses 14-15, what is this process? [Examples: Adam & Eve (Gen. 3:1-7), David & Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2-17)]

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (**Genesis 3:1-7**)

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Q: What does James warn believers not to be deceived of in the above passage?

4. ON BEING DOERS OF THE WORD (James 1:19-27)

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Q: James exhorts believers to not be merely be believers of the word, but doers. What examples does he cite?

1. (v.19) _____
2. (v.21) _____
3. (v.22) _____
4. (v.26) _____
5. (v. 27) _____

Q: Why do people who only hear the word and not act on it only deceive themselves? [vv. 22 – 27]

❖ Christians who are content with only hearing the word are making a serious miscalculation. Like the fleeting memory of one's reflection, those who fail to act on the Word will soon forget what they have learned.

Q: Which of these qualities do you feel that you have the most to work on? What can you do this week to work on developing these qualities?

5. PRAYER REQUESTS