

# **James 1 - Joy in Trials; Asking God For Wisdom; The Process From Temptation to Sin; Be Doers of the Word, Not Hearers; Man in the Mirror; "True Religion"**

## **I. Faith (James 1:1—3:12)**

### **(1) Salutation (1:1)**

(A) Writer: James (1:1a)

(B) Recipients: Believing Jews in the Diaspora (1:1b)

(C) Greeting (1:1c)

### **(2) Faith is developed through trials (1:2-12)**

(A) What trials produce (1:2-4)

(a) Joy (1:2)

(b) Patience (1:3)

(c) Maturity (1:4)

(B) Prayer of wisdom (1:5-8)

(a) Necessity of asking (1:5)

(b) Necessity of faith (1:6-8)

(C) What trials produce (1:9-12)

(a) Humility (1:9-11)

(b) Expectancy (1:12)

### **(3) Faith does not attribute evil to God (1:13-18)**

(A) Command stated (1:13a)

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(a) Sin is contrary to God's nature (1:13b)

(b) Sin emanates from man's nature (1:14-15)

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(i) Command not to be deceived (1:16)

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## James 1

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- (1) Salutation (1:1)
  - (A) Writer: James (1:1a)
  - (B) Recipients: Believing Jews in the Diaspora (1:1b)
  - (C) Greeting (1:1c)

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

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

**1** From: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. To: The twelve tribes in the Dispersion. Greetings.

**1** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

- "James" - *lakōbos*, literally Jacob, same as the Jacob the patriarch; James is the anglicized form

- "...bond-servant" - *doulos*, although he was Jesus' half-brother, James considered himself a slave to his "Brother"

— He knew Christ after the flesh no more: he honors Him as Lord and Messiah and links His name with that of God the Father. Whatever doubts he may have once had, they are gone now.

— It's interesting that Biblical authors did not put their credentials front and center...half-brother of the Messiah, pastor of Jerusalem church, etc, etc. The humility of the biblical authors is refreshing.

- "...twelve tribes" - he is a Jew writing to Jews. It is also a message for us, just as Paul's letters written to Gentile Christians are also generally for all believers.

— The recipients of this letter came from all 12 tribes of Israel, which indicates that they knew of their tribal identity; the tribes are not lost (see [Myth of the "10 Lost Tribes"](#))

- "...dispersed abroad" - *diaspora*, a technical term referring to Jews living outside the Land

— Used 3x in the NT: John 7:35; 1 Peter 1:1 (see notes there); here. In James' case, these scattered Jews likely resided in Babylon since Peter addresses the scattered Jews in north central Turkey (1 Peter 1:1). These folks were "dispersed" by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1-4; 11:19).

(2) Faith is developed through trials (1:2-12)

(A) What trials produce (1:2-4)

(a) Joy (1:2)

**2 Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials,**

**2** Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

**2** Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials,

**2** My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

- "Consider it" - *hēgeomai*, to "reckon it to be so" or to believe something to be true. It's not a *feelings* word but a *thinking* word.

— The verb is in the aorist imperative, meaning it must be a definitive act: we are to adopt this attitude toward every trial we encounter in life.

— It's an accounting term; trials we face should be put into the credit (asset) column of the ledger, rather than the debit (liability) column

- "...all joy" - the Greek means "supreme joy," "full joy" or "pure joy"; it's in the emphatic position

— Joy is not the same as "happiness," which comes from our circumstances. The world says that you can experience peace and happiness if things are going well. Joy is the ability to experience the peace of God, a deep down abiding that God is in control, when circumstances become difficult.

— Every believer must have this attitude while in the midst of an outward trial. Jesus made the same point in Matt 5:11-12:

**11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.**

**12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

— It doesn't mean we must enjoy trials: it's not joy *for* trials, but rather joy *in* trials. He's talking to a group of Christians who are under persecution, to count their persecution as "joy."

— James' point is that in order to achieve a practical righteousness that is pleasing to God (progress in our sanctification), we need to develop a mindset to rejoice in the midst of trials or adversity. Why are believers to rejoice in trials? Because God is working something out in us to make us better, to be more Christlike. Trials are God's only means to produce

traits in us that cannot be produced in us in any other way. Trials are designed by God to bring believers closer to God, not push us away from Him.

— Trials are never desirable, but they lead to desirable outcomes (if we allow them to)

— Consider a trial you're going through right now...if you don't take joy in the trial, what are your other options? Pity ourselves...depression, dead life; complain, whine, be mad at God...anger, resentment...or allow Christ to work out His will through the trial and glorify Him, leading us to patience and maturity.

- "...my brothers *and sisters*" - only the believer has this ability in adverse circumstances; the unbeliever is completely powerless to experience joy during trials

- "...when" - not "if"; if you're not being tested now, you can be certain you will be soon

- "...encounter" - *peripiptō*, a circumstance which surrounds a person unexpectedly and unavoidably. Same word used to describe "fall into hands of robbers"—unexpected, caught off-guard (Cf. Luke 10:30; Acts 27:41).

- "...various" - *poikilos*, same word used in the LXX to describe Joseph's coat of many colors. Just like Joseph's coat was technicolor, the trials that we'll experience during our lives are technicolor.

— Trials come in many flavors—people-related problems and problem-related people: emotional, anxiety, depression, relational, financial, spiritual.

— God puts us through all kinds of trials in terms of size, scope, degree: financial, physical, emotional, relational. The idea is that God is using these multi-colored, various trials to mold and shape our character in a particular way.

— This language from James is broad enough to include all believers, in every age, not just his original readers

— I may have a particular blot in my character that requires God to provide a specific trial (piece of sandpaper) to round off the edge. And He knows how to use that trial at the exact time in our life to round off that deficiency.

— This word is also used in 1 Peter 4:10 to describe the various forms of God's grace in the area of spiritual gifts

— Without the "various" trials that we encounter in our lives, we can't develop faith, endurance, or maturity in our lives

- "...trials" - *peirasmos*, this word has two definitions/usages throughout Scripture. To determine the proper definition, you have to look at the context:

1. An explicit attempt to entice or seduce someone to evil. In these contexts (Cf. v13), it is usually translated "temptation."
2. The broader sense of the word means something that "tests what we are made of." It is something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy, and happiness in your life. This is the sense of the word in which James uses it here in v2.

## Types of Trials

1. Common to man
  - Job 5:7: "Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward"
    - We live in a sinful, fallen world, and bad things aren't reserved solely for the wicked...they happen to everyone.
    - It's not necessary to read great meaning into every hardship or trial
2. Corrective
  - Ps 119:67: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word."
    - God will sometimes use trials to get us back on the path of true discipleship...to re-orient our priorities, to get us thinking straight again
3. Constructive
  - James 1:2-4: "**Consider it all joy**, my brothers *and sisters*, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."
  - Rom 5:3-4: "...we also **celebrate in our tribulations**, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;"
    - God brings some trials into our lives to mold us into the kind of people he wants us to be
4. Cosmic
  - Some suffering is given in order to bring God glory (John 9:3)
    - This is the whole point of the book of Job

## 10 Reasons/Purposes of our Trials

1. To glorify God (Dan 3:16-18,24-25; John 9:1-3)
2. Discipline for known sin (Heb 12:5-11; James 4:17; Rom 14:23; 1 John 1:9)
3. To prevent us from falling into sin (1 Peter 4:1-2)
4. To keep us from pride—Paul kept from pride by his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10)
5. To build faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)
6. To cause growth (Rom 5:3-5)
7. To teach obedience and discipline (Acts 9:15-16; Phil 4:11-13)
8. To equip us to comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4)
9. To prove the reality of Christ in us (2 Cor 4:7-11)
10. For testimony to the angels (Job 1:8; Eph 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:12)

(b) Patience (1:3)

3 **knowing** that the **testing** of your **faith** produces **endurance**.

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

- "knowing" - *ginōskō*, to learn to know or come to know; to know by experience. The Greek expresses the deepest knowledge possible of someone or something (Cf. Gen 4:1).

- "...testing" - *dokimion*, proving; demonstrating the existence of something, in this case our faith. This is the purpose of trials: to test (prove) our (serving) faith. Trials are productive if we allow them to be. They are also a preparation for ministry.

— Our faith is *tested* through trials, not *produced* by trials. Trials reveal what faith we do have, not because God doesn't know how much faith we have, but so that our faith will be evident to ourselves and to those around us.

— If trials do not produce faith, what does? Rom 10:17 says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Supernaturally, our faith is built in us as we hear, understand, and trust in God's Word.

— James did not want anyone to think that God sends trials to break down or destroy our faith, therefore he will come back to this point in v13-18.

— If one professes to have faith in the Lord, he can be assured that his profession of faith will be tested sooner or later. You can't test something that doesn't exist; this is clear evidence that James is writing to believers, describing the second tense of their salvation.

— In the Christian life, faith is like a muscle: when it's not exercised, it atrophies. A muscle only gains strength when it's used regularly. The same is true with faith. Our faith can't grow/strengthen until we're put into a position where we have to trust God.

— It's not until God puts something into our life so big that we need God to get through it that our faith muscle is exercised. This is what James is talking about when he refers to the "testing" of our faith.

— The "testing" that James' original readers were presently going through included being driven from their homeland because of persecution and threat of martyrdom, to a foreign land, losing everything they had.

- "...faith" - James is not referring to *saving* faith, but *serving* faith or *sanctifying* faith. This is not evangelism; James is not saying that our endurance through trials proves whether or not we are saved. The "testing" of our faith James refers to here is not a test of the existence of faith for justification, it's a test of our faith for sanctification. The emphasis is on the faith that believers must have to trust God through the trials and tribulations of life.

— This sanctifying or sustaining faith utilizes/manifests the power of God in our daily life. It is living my life in dependence upon God (rather than myself) in every area of my life.

— It takes faith to be saved, but it also takes faith to serve. It also takes faith to live for the Lord. To be saved, I must trust in Christ by faith. And to serve Christ, I must trust in Christ

by faith. If I don't trust Christ in serving and living for Him, I cannot achieve a practical righteousness that pleases God (Heb 11:6).

- Take the Exodus generation. They were delivered out of Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. At that point, the nation of Israel "believed in the LORD" (Ex 14:30-31). They had the faith necessary to be justified (they are also in the Hall of Faith, Heb 11:28-29). But track their progress from there...

After they were given the Law at Mount Sinai, it was an 11-day journey to the Promised Land (Deut 1:2). All they had to do was trust God for 11 days and they would enter the Promised Land. These are the same people who saw God perform incredible miracles to release them from 400 years of slavery in Egypt, then appear to Moses on Mount Sinai. No big deal, right?

Wrong. The same people who put the blood on the doorposts in Egypt to avoid the 10th plague, saw the Red Sea parted so they could traverse safely, then saw God drown their enemies—the same people who are listed in the Hall of Faith (Heb 11:28-29)—the same people who had *saving* faith in the LORD, when it came down to it, didn't have *serving* or *sanctifying* faith.

When they arrived in Kadesh-Barnea they sent spies into the Land, and what happened to their faith? Num 14:11 says: The LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they **not believe in Me**, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?

How could God say that Israel *didn't* believe in Him then when earlier He said that they *did* believe in Him after they passed through the Red Sea (Ex 14:30-31)? Because Num 14:11 is referring to a different type of faith, not the faith for their justification (*saving* faith), but instead the faith for their sanctification (their *serving* or *sanctifying* faith). In the same sense, James is not talking about testing our *saving* faith (he never questions the salvation of his readers)...he's talking about testing our *serving* or *sanctifying* faith. Someone may say...well, I don't think the Israelites in the wilderness, who under the judgment of God and constantly complained and disobeyed Him, were really saved. And, they never made it to the Promised Land. If that's what you believe, how do you deal with Moses? Moses died in the wilderness, under the judgment of God, due to his disobedience. He never entered the Promised Land. Was Moses saved? Of course he was.

— James is saying that you have to continue trusting God through those circumstances, trusting that He'll guide and help us through them, in order to achieve a practical righteousness that pleases Him.

- "...endurance" - *hypomonē*, patience, steadfastness, constancy; describes a person who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and loyalty despite even the greatest trial or suffering (see note on v4).

- Trials don't produce faith, but when trials are received with faith, it produces patience. But this is not automatic: if trials are received in unbelief and grumbling, trials can produce bitterness and discouragement. This is why James commands us to "count it all joy" because this is faith's response to a time of trial.
- It's the ability to endure, as a Christian, in whatever God has called us to do in the midst of adverse and unfair treatment. It's a synonym for *makrothymia* (patience), which is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Cf. Gal 5:22).
- There is a lack of steadfastness (*hypomonē*) or endurance under trial in many Christians today. Someone joins a church, finds out it isn't perfect, has a relational or some other type of issue, then leaves for another church (where they have a similar issue). This is what God is trying to grow us out of!
- God grows endurance in believers by bringing various (multi-colored) trials into our lives, which force us to depend on Him to get through it
- Show me a Christian who doesn't go through trials and I'll show you a Christian who has no patience or endurance in daily life, and I'll also show you someone who is lacking in maturity (1 Peter 4:12)

#### (c) Maturity (1:4)

- 4 And **let** endurance **have** its perfect result, so that you may be **perfect and complete, lacking in nothing**.
- 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- 4 But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.
- 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.
- "...let" - allow; implies that the believer has a choice either to obey or disobey a command
- This implies that we, as NT believers, have the ability to shut down the process. If the command is for believers to "let" (allow) a result to occur, it means that I have the power to *not allow* that result to occur. It wouldn't be a command unless we had the power to not do it. A command implies that we have the ability to disobey.
- 1 Thess 5:19 commands us to not quench the Spirit. How do we quench the Spirit? We do not cooperate with the Lord in the midst of trials. We allow the trial to make us *bitter* instead of allowing it to make us *better*.
- We can't control the adversity that comes into our lives, but we can control our reaction to it. Our response to it determines whether we've chosen to grow in our faith or become stagnant in our walk.



— Today, believers will try anything to “numb the pain” of adversity. As we are numbing the pain, what is happening is that maturity is being forfeited because God uses the pain of those trials to bring us to maturity. If we are numb to the pain, to the point where the pain doesn’t exist, then the process of maturity is forfeited. This is what is called “wasting a trial.”

— Wasting a trial that God puts us through is the worst possible outcome: not only do I have the pain and suffering, the discomfort, of going through the trial, but in the end I receive no spiritual benefit. I haven't grown in my faith. I've remained neutral spiritually, which is exactly where Satan wants believers to be.

- "...endurance" - *hypomonē*, *hupo* = under; *meno* = to stay, abide, remain. At its root, it means to "remain under." It pictures someone under a heavy load who chooses to stay there instead of trying to escape.

— This word does not describe a passive patience (sitting quietly in a doctor's waiting room), it describes an active patience (the quality that helps you finish a marathon).

- "...have" - *echō*, imperative mood (a command); James is telling us that when we're under stress, "let" (allow) God do what He wants to do

- "...perfect" - *teleios*, "fully developed"; it doesn't mean we become sinless, it means we sin less. It refers to our maturity and growth in our Christian walk.

— This is why James tell us to rejoice when we have trials...because this is what God is going to do through it: He's going to "perfect" us through the trial(s) by growing us spiritually and bringing us to maturity (Christlikeness).

— A physical example of how *teleios* is used here could be: an oak tree is a "perfected" acorn; an adult is a "perfected" child.

- "...complete" - *holoklēros*, perfectly equipped; in no part wanting. Being "complete" means that you can begin to take care of others; you can do what God created you to do.

— We are, by nature, fretful and impatient. We rebel against the ways of God and want our own way. But the person who learns to be submissive to whatever God permits glorifies Him who orders all things according to His own will.

- "...lacking in nothing" - we will lack nothing in the two areas outlined above: we will lack nothing we need to grow and mature spiritually, and we will have everything we need to be perfectly equipped to serve Him.

### **Why We Are To Rejoice During Trials?**

Because God uses trials in our lives to produce traits within us (v4) that cannot be produced in any other way. So when I encounter adversity/trials, I should rejoice in the midst of it because I have a promise from God that He is using that circumstance to produce patience and maturity in my life.

Trials produce intimacy and dependence upon God (v9-11). Isn't it interesting that our prayer life picks up considerably when we begin to encounter adversity in our life. When things are going well, we have a tendency to only check-in with God periodically, not regularly. But when you go through a trial, we have a different mindset.

Trials tend to push believers into the arms of God, dependent upon Him, if we do not become embittered in the midst of them. Believers will be rewarded in the next life for our endurance during trials in this life (v12).

### **Don't Waste a Trial**

How do we know what God is doing when we are actually going through suffering? The short answer is—we don't always know. As far as we know, Job never really understood what happened to him. But here's what we're commanded to do...ask for wisdom: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." Wisdom is the practical use of knowledge. Unfortunately, we usually ask for deliverance instead of wisdom. We need wisdom during trials to understand what God has planned for us for that particular trial; instead of praying "get me out of this," we should be praying "what can I get from this."

(B) Prayer of wisdom (1:5-8)

(a) Necessity of asking (1:5)

**5** 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.

**5** 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.

**5** Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to everyone generously without a rebuke, and it will be given to him.

**5** If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

- "...if" - first class condition; considered to be true for the sake of argument. James is not doubting that his readers lack wisdom in trials, he is assuming they all do.

- "...wisdom" - biblically speaking, knowledge is raw information and wisdom is how to use (apply) that knowledge. Knowledge is the ability to take things apart, wisdom in the ability to put things together.

— Trials are times in our lives when we especially need to seek wisdom. We often don't know (or think) we need wisdom until we go through a trial.

— Heb 4:16 emphasizes the importance of appropriating grace. The "grace" needed when we endure trials is wisdom.

- "...ask" - present tense imperative; we are commanded to ask and keep on asking (Cf. Matt 7:7)
- "...God" - not your counselor, your therapist, self-help books. Not your pastor, your friend, your spouse. Not your priest, your parents, not anyone else. Ask God!
  - People going through trials will go literally everywhere and to everyone, except God. Yet He is the only One who can give us the right perspective on our trials.
  - If we lack a divine perspective with regard to a particular trial we're encountering, we should ask God, in faith, and He will give us His point of view on our trial
- "...generously" - *haplōs*, He who has all good, gives all necessary good to everyone who asks. This is the only use of this word in the NT—it implies that God gives with "a single eye" or singular motive: the welfare of the believer.
  - Literally, the "Giving God" will give His wisdom, which surpasses all understanding, generously—because that is a characteristic of God's nature
  - There are numerous Scriptural examples of God giving people wisdom, over and above what they asked for or needed, most notably Solomon (Cf. 1 Kings 3:5-14)
- "...without reproach" - without finding fault; not scolding us; without despising our request. This is added so that no one would fear to come to God too often because God is always ready to add new blessings to old without any limitation or end.
  - God will not remind the requester of wisdom about His past answers to previous prayers. He will not ask what we've done with what He's already given us. He will not comply only to humiliate the requester. He will simply provide.
  - We don't have to "butter God up" to get something that we ask for; that's not how God works. God is so interested in giving us wisdom, so excited to bestow it upon us, that if we just ask, no preconditions required, He'll give it to us, and even more than what we ask for or need.
  - This wisdom gives us the divine perspective on trials, which in turn allows us to rejoice because with His wisdom, we see the "why" of our trials, the purpose behind them, and do not waste them. If we're not rejoicing in the midst of trials, God has a remedy for that: ask for His wisdom on the purpose of the trial and He'll gladly give it to you.
  - If we're getting angry or frustrated during a trial, it's because we don't have His mind on it

(b) Necessity of faith (1:6-8)

- 6 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.
- 6 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.

6 But he must ask in faith, without any doubts, for the one who has doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

- Verses 6-8 describe the attitude of the believer when we ask Him for wisdom in the midst of trials...

- "...ask" – believing that God has all the wisdom we need; again in the present imperative: keep on asking, persevere in prayer

— We often think that God hears us if we follow a particular formula. We're very "formula oriented" in our approach to God...if I do A, B, then C, God is obligated to hear me. Jesus debunks to "formula" method to prayer in Matt 6:7 as the way the pagans (Gentiles) pray, by following some type of formula so that God will hear and react.

— James states here that God is not so much interested in a formula when we ask for something, He's more interested in our attitude. Our prayers for wisdom are not heard by following some formula, but rather by a right attitude (faith, not doubting).

— We are to ask for wisdom with confidence and trust in God, as if we understand that He really wants to answer us. We are to ask as if God is in heaven eagerly waiting to answer our request, because He is. This is the type of prayer that God honors.

— Sometimes we go before God and ask for things that He desperately wants to give us, but we ask doubting that He'll give it to us. We're asking without full confidence in God that He is both willing and able to answer our prayers.

- "...in faith" - the assurance that He is both willing and able to answer

- "...without any doubting" – having no doubt about God's ability and willingness to give us His wisdom; wavering or doubting God's ability or willingness is the opposite of faith.

— "Without doubting" means never supposing that He will allow us to ask in vain. If we make a request without the implicit confidence in His readiness to answer, we dishonor Him.

- "...like the surf of the sea" – inherently unstable; this describes us when we ask for something God wants to give us, like wisdom, but we don't ask with confidence

- "...driven...tossed" - "driven" is lateral/horizontal; "tossed" is vertical, to rise and fall. This implies two-dimensional instability; a constant unrest and agitation in the doubter.

— A person who is not thoroughly convinced that if he asks God he shall receive is like a wave...in a continual state of agitation, driven by the wind (circumstances) and tossed (indecisive).

— The waves of the sea respond to external forces because they have no inner stability to withstand outer forces. This is a description of the doubter: he has no inner stability from his own will, which is the reason for his constant unrest, agitation and indecision.

7 For **that person** ought not to expect that he will receive **anything** from the Lord,  
7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,  
7 Such a person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.  
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.  
- So God wants to answer our prayer request, which is clear because He wants to give us wisdom in the midst of trials; but if we're too fearful or unconfident that He will answer my request...I'm like a wave tossed by the wind  
- "...that person" - the person who asks God without faith, doubting that God has the ability, willingness, and goodness to answer our prayer and give us what we ask for  
- Such a doubter must be confronted with the fact that they will not receive wisdom, pure and simple  
— Can you imagine the lack of faith it takes to pray to God asking for wisdom, but then believing for some reason that He either does not have the ability or the willingness to answer my prayer?  
- "...anything" - what is it that we're praying for? Wisdom in a trial. We are to pray for God's perspective and viewpoint of the trial. God will help us take His view of a trial if we ask Him.

8 *being* a **double-minded** man, **unstable** in all his ways.  
8 *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.  
8 He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he undertakes.  
8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.  
- "...double minded" - *dipsychos*, literally, "double-souled" (or two souled). it is the middle ground between faith and unbelief. A double-minded person is a walking civil war where trust and distrust of God wage a continual battle against once another in his mind.  
— I trusted the Lord for salvation, but I won't trust Him to give me wisdom during a trial? That is the very definition of being double-minded.  
— If I can trust the Lord to save my soul from eternity in hell, I can certainly trust Him to give me wisdom through adversity. If I'm unwilling to trust Him for that wisdom, because I think He is either unable or unwilling, I'm double-minded.  
- "...unstable" - *akatastatos*, restless (Cf. 3:8), inconstant. Luke 16:10 says that he who is faithful in the little things is also faithful in the larger things, and he who is unrighteous in the little things is also unrighteous in the bigger things.  
— We have a mindset where we don't think the little things matter, but to God the little things are actually big things. If you can trust God and be faithful in the small things (like wisdom during trials), then you can also trust Him in the larger things (like our salvation).  
— If I'm not willing to trust God to give me wisdom in the midst of adversity so that I can rejoice in the midst of trials, so that I can manifest a practical righteousness that is pleasing

to Him...then I really can't trust Him for anything and I'm double-minded, unstable in everything that I do.

— Paul describes this instability in Eph 4:14...speaking of our spiritual maturity, he says that we are no longer to be children, tossed around by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, or by the craftiness of deceitful scheming.

— We can easily devolve into people who are thrown around like waves, tossed around. This is the danger of what we can become if we don't trust God with something so simple as asking for His wisdom during trials.

*We should couple our prayers for wisdom with advanced thanksgiving for God delivering what He promises.*

Faith receives more than was asked for, but doubt loses more than it disbelieved (Matt 13:12).

### **Trials Produce Intimacy and Dependence upon God (if we let them)**

Christians should rejoice in trials because they humble us, giving us greater intimacy and dependence upon God. Trials give us intimacy with God in ways that prosperity never could. It is much easier to trust God in the valleys than it is on the mountaintop because when everything is going great, we're deceived into thinking that we don't need God. On the mountaintop, we tell God, I'll check in with You when I need You; in the valley, we need God every step of the way. Trials put us in a position of need, thus when we encounter a trial we should rejoice because it's an opportunity for us to grow closer to the Lord.

(C) What trials produce (1:9-12)

(a) Humility (1:9-11)

**9** Now the brother *or sister* of **humble circumstances** is to **glory in his high position**;

**9** But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

**9** A brother of humble means should rejoice in his having been exalted,

**9** Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

- "...of humble *circumstances*" - materially unfortunate; poor

- "...high position" - materially poor ("humble") believers should derive joy from focusing their thinking on their spiritual riches ("high position")

— They are in a "high position" because they can't buy themselves out of their trials, which allows God to build their faith and mature them spiritually through trials

**10** but the **rich person** is to **glory in his humiliation**, because like **flowering grass** he will pass away.

10 and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

10 and a rich person in his having been humbled, because he will fade away like a wild flower.

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

- "...rich person" - the rich are at a disadvantage because they are used to buying their way out of problems. If you can buy your way out of problems, you don't need God.

- In the sense of not needing to depend on God due to your wealth, you're in a low position; the poor man who must depend on God often is considered in a high position.

- "...*glory* in his humiliation" - the rich man who thinks he's exalted should glory in his low position, just as the poor man should glory in his high position...because the poor man needs God, the rich man doesn't.

- If you can buy your way out of problems, you really don't need God. Thus if you're rich, you're in a lowly position ("his humiliation").

- This perspective is completely different from the way the world looks at things: the rich are to be envied and the poor are to be pitied. James is saying that with the Lord, it's the exact opposite.

- It's interesting to see how often Scripture talks about the rich and poor...Jesus talked about it over and over again about how difficult, if not impossible, it is for the rich to enter heaven. Jesus said that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, etc. (Amos 6:1; Luke 12:15-21; Rev 3:17-19).

- This is why Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10). We don't know what the thorn was, but it was painful. It was bad enough that Paul pleaded with God 3x for it to be removed, but God loved Paul too much to take it away.

- The reason for the thorn (v7-10) was that Paul was caught up to heaven and received direct divine revelation 14 years earlier. At that time, he heard things that a man was not fit to hear, things that no one else knew. This no doubt would've created arrogance and pride within Paul, making him unusable for God.

- The term God used to describe the thorn was a "gift"

- "...flowering grass" - describes the rich without trials

11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so also the rich person, in the midst of his pursuits, will die out.

11 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.

11 For the sun comes up with its scorching heat and dries up the grass. The flower in it drops off, and its beauty is gone. That is how the rich person will fade away in his pursuits.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

- We should feel sorry for the rich man because he is caught up in the world system, but what we should pity him for is that the world system is passing away. The rich man has tied his cart to something that will fade away, won't last. If he only had a trial come his way, he would be tied to the perspective of God, which is eternal.

— The problem with being a Christian with no problems is that you have nothing to drive you to God, so you're taking your primary queues from the world system, which operates completely separately from God, and you're yoked to something that is disappearing.

— James likely has Ps 103:15-16 in his mind when he used this analogy from nature:

**15** As for man, his days are like grass; Like a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

**16** When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place no longer knows about it.

[Ps 103:15-16; James 4:14; 1 John 2:15-17]

#### (b) Expectancy (1:12)

**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.

**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.

**12** How blessed is the man who endures temptation! When he has passed the test, he will receive the victor's crown of life that God has promised to those who keep on loving him.

**12** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

- Trials should be endured with joy because those who experience trials in this life will be rewarded in the next life. Every suffering a believer experiences now is accruing for them a reward in the next life.

- "...perseveres under trial" - interpreted best when considering the context of v12-18... basically it means to endure a trial without making inaccurate or inflammatory statements about God as the cause of the trial. We persevere under trial when we don't make reckless, foolish accusations about God and believe that you're in this circumstance because He's only out to destroy you.

— If I am going to "persevere under trial" it means that I do not yield to the temptation in the midst of the trial to blame God for trying to destroy me through the trial.



— I persevere through the trial if I understand the purpose of the trial and look at it from a heavenly perspective rather than an earthly viewpoint. It's viewing the trial with all joy, understanding that God has a sovereign purpose in it, and praying for wisdom to understand that purpose.

— The Exodus Generation is a good example of how to *not* persevere in a trial: God killed off all the firstborn in Egypt, freed them from 400 years of slavery and oppression, parted the Red Sea, and destroyed the pursuing Egyptians. In Ex 15, they have a huge worship service to praise God for what He had done. Then they run into the smallest problem and what do they do? They begin to charge God foolishly (Ex 16:2-3; 17:2-3).

- "...approved" – *dokimos*, an aorist participle meaning "after the test is over"; after the believer has come through the trial successfully (Cf. Rom 16:10; 2 Cor 10:18; 2 Tim 2:15). The word holds the idea of being tested, proven faithful, then rewarded.

- Two rewards:

- The Present Reward: an inner blessedness ("Blessed"); refers to a state that reflects an inner happiness, an inner quality of life. Joy does not depend on our circumstances, but upon trusting God. Joy is never affected by our outward circumstances. We are not blessed by being free from trials, but by being blessed for enduring trials (Cf. Matt 5:1-12).
- The Future Reward ("crown of life"): those who suffer outward trials and get through them by asking for wisdom from God and exercising patient endurance will also qualify for this *stephanos* (victory) crown at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

— Paul was scared to death that somehow he would not remain faithful, but instead be "disqualified" from receiving a reward (Cf. 1 Cor 9:27)

- "...crown of life" - not salvation; this is a reward that is coming to believers in the next life because we're walking faithfully through trials in this life

— The Crown of Life is the only crown mentioned in two passages: James 1:12 and Rev 2:10. When you compare both passages, it's clear that all suffering/trials we endure in this life will be rewarded in the next life, at the Bema Seat judgment.

— Some Christians "don't care about rewards, as long as I get into heaven." Why should we care about rewards? Because God tells us about them in the NT, and because according to Rev 4:10 we will take our crowns received at the Bema Seat judgment and cast them at Jesus' feet.

— Can we lose our crowns? Rev 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

[Ps 56:8; Matt 5:11-12; Rev 2:10]

## Scripture's Five Crowns

(Rev 4:10: 3:11; 2 John 8)

SCRIPTURE	CROWN	PURPOSE
1 Cor. 9:24-27	Incorruptible	Gaining mastery over the flesh
1 Thess. 2:19-20	Rejoicing	Soul winning
Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10	Life	Enduring trials
1 Pet. 5:2-4	Glory	Shepherding God's people
2 Tim. 4:8	Righteousness	Longing for His appearing

(3) Faith does not attribute evil to God (1:13-18)

(A) Command stated (1:13a)

(B) Reasons stated (1:13b-18)

(a) Sin is contrary to God's nature (1:13b)

13 **No one is to say** when he is **tempted**, "I am being tempted by God"; for God **cannot be tempted** by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

13 When someone is tempted, he should not say, "I am being tempted by God," because God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

- After completing the thought of rejoicing during and persevering through trials, James takes up the idea of not charging God foolishly in the midst of trials

— When we encounter suffering, I'm very prone to think that God is trying to destroy my life. That God doesn't have my best interest at heart. He's trying to cause me to fail

miserably. James explains why we should not think this way in the midst of trials.

- "No one is to say" - an imperative (command) to, as we encounter a trial, not raise a reckless charge against God or attack His goodness or character. This is a command to properly interpret *peirasmos* (trial or temptation) in this chapter, based on the context in which it is used.

— The reason why we should follow this command is in the second half of the verse: because God can't be tempted, nor does He tempt anyone. So when we charge God with tempting us, our anger and accusation is misdirected because God cannot do that. It's against God's very nature to tempt us or attempt to destroy us.

— It's easy to develop a mindset when we encounter trials that God is out to get us...this is it, God finally is giving me something that is going to destroy me...I knew it couldn't last forever, I'm done.

- "...tempted" - *peirasmos*, solicited to sin; temptation is designed to destroy you, to prove you are a failure

— It is important to properly interpret *peirasmos* to understand the difference between a trial and a temptation:

— Verses 2-4 deal with trials, which come from God. However, when you get to v13, James' readers had taken the knowledge of a test and charged God with bringing a temptation.

— A trial is designed for our benefit, to bring us to the next level of spiritual growth; a temptation is designed to destroy you, to get you to fail, to solicit you to sin and hurt you.

— James is stating that God is in the *testing* business, but He's not in the *temptation* business. Satan is the one soliciting us to sin, not God. Satan is called "the tempter" in Scripture. We get this distinction confused really quickly, then we charge God falsely.

— What God does is test us, which is not designed to make us *bitter*, but make us *better*

— We often get our thinking backward on this...we get a test and immediately believe that God gave us this to attempt to destroy us. It's contrary to God's nature to do this, and James gives three reasons why blaming God is wrong:

1. Temptation cannot come from God (v13b)
2. Temptation comes from ourselves, not God (our fallen nature, Cf. v14-15)
3. The only thing that God can ever give you is a good gift (v16-18). It's impossible to give you anything other than a good gift. And by the way, the good gift he just gave you is a trial (Cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10).

- "...cannot be tempted" - *apeirastos*, "untemptable"; when we accuse God of tempting us, our anger and accusation is misdirected; we are charging God with something that He didn't (and can't) do

— God is not versed in evil, nor does He have any experience with evil; He is entirely free of evil

— James' argument about God not tempting us is based upon God's character. There is something about His nature that simply does not allow Him to tempt anyone in the sense of enticement to evil.

— God *does* send *peirasmos* in the sense of testing our faith, He *does not* send *peirasmos* to entice us to evil

(b) Sin emanates from man's nature (1:14-15)

14 But **eachone** is tempted when he is **carriedaway** and **enticed** by **his ownlust**.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

14 Instead, each person is tempted by his own desire, being lured and trapped by it.

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

- While God Himself never tempts someone to commit evil, He does allow others to do so, as He allowed Satan to tempt Job. But these kinds of inward temptations have their origins in man, not God.

- "...each one" - individually; if you fall into this trap, blame yourself, not your parents, the education system, abuse, or anything else. We each are tempted individually, and we individually choose to sin. If we fall into sin, it's no one's fault but our own.

— Even during the millennial kingdom, there will be rampant sin in the world. Think about the environmental and health changes from today to the kingdom age, then consider the amount of sin that will be wrought on earth when Jesus Christ Himself is ruling the world (Zech 14:16-18; Rev 20:1-3,7-9).

- "...carried away" - contains the metaphor of dragging a fish out of the water who bit a hook concealed by bait. It is a hunting term, as dragged away by a predator or to be lured by bait.

— Sin is not a spontaneous act, but the result of a process

— There is real danger in a temptation. The real effect of the temptation is a sin leading to death. We need to reckon ourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God (Rom 6:11-13).

- "...enticed" - to be ensnared by the hook; it emphasizes the deceptiveness of lust

- "...his own" - Satan may be at work at times, but much more often than not it's our own flesh that is enticed and leads us into temptation. Satan may tempt us, but the only reason his temptations work on us is because of our own fallen nature, which corrupts our God-given desires.

— We often give Satan too much credit for his tempting powers and fail to recognize that we are drawn away by our own desires.

- "...lust" - *epithymia*, the strong desire to enjoy or acquire something to fulfill our flesh/sin nature. James uses the present tense participle to teach the luring into sin is a continual problem.

— Lust does not always have a negative meaning (Cf. Luke 22:15; Phil 1:23), but here, as in most of the NT, it refers to fleshly, selfish, illicit desire. It usually describes passions of a sexual nature, but the singular form here suggests a broader scope.

— The fact that victory is gained at one point does not indicate victory will be gained at another. Fleeing from lust one day does not automatically result in the ability to quickly escape it another day. That is why believers must be continually on guard. It is a continuous problem.

15 Then when lust **hasconceived**, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth **death**.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

15 When that desire becomes pregnant, it gives birth to sin; and when that sin grows up, it gives birth to death.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

- "...has conceived" - the illustration of the childbearing process here describes the cause and effect relationship between lust, sin, and death. So the sequence of temptation becoming sin consists of five steps:

1. Desire (temptation)
2. Conception (lust - when our desire decides to give in to temptation)
3. Birth (an act of sin)
4. Growth (that act of sin continually being committed)
5. Death (the continuous act of sin will ultimately result in one or another forms of death)
  - a. Death is the inevitable consequence of sin that Satan hides from us during the first four steps of the process. He doesn't want us to think about or consider the ultimate consequence. But we should never be deceived (v16) about the reality that sin leads to death. The old saying goes: *You can pick your sin, but you can't pick your consequences.*

— Both believers and non-believers can be infected by this chain of events, but only the believer has the power to stop the process at any point of time. It is better to stop it earlier in the sequence than later.

— This verse advocates for abortion...of lust, not of babies. When our will consents to the temptation, the lustful urges become impregnated with sin.

- Once sin is born, having its own life and development, it continues to grow unless it is terminated (by repentance and confession). It eventually becomes full grown and reaches complete maturity. This, in turn, brings forth death.

— Even a believer can fall into a state of sin that will lead to the divine discipline of physical death

- "...death" - can not refer to hell since the context is speaking to believers; for believers, it could refer to premature physical death (maximum divine discipline, v21; 5:19-20; Cf. Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

— There are all types of "death" we can experience as believers because of sin...if I go commit adultery, I may remain married, but my marriage is going to experience "death" for a period of time. My body may get a disease because of it, by which it partially dies. The intimacy I had with my wife will experience "death" because of my sin.

— If I go out and gamble away my retirement, I don't go to hell, but my financial future "dies." There are always temporal consequences for sin, and sometimes those consequences involve the "death" of something that we had before, but do not have after we commit sin, due to sin's consequences.

James describes a progression that begins with a man's desire, ultimately leading to active sin and death. It originates within a man's own desire; when that desire gives in to temptation, lust begins. The desire can lead to an impulse of sin. James adds the imagery of prostitution, which is the same type of imagery used in Prov 7:6-23. In other words, when those desires become responsive to temptation, they lead to lust. When lust is enticed, it will lead to actions of sin. Lust is the mother of the act of sin. When a person surrenders his will to lust, conception takes place; lust is conceived. The final result is death.

The use of the definite article, *the* sin, refers to some specific sin. There is no mention of a particular sin since, with different individuals, the sin may be different things. However, there is a certain sin these believers had a hard time overcoming. If that specific sin is not cut short by repentance, that sin will reach its full maturity, resulting in death. When it is fully grown, this sin will have its own life and development. It will become a fixed habit and it will determine the character of the individual, until it leads to death. For the believer, it might be physical death (1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16), for the unbeliever, eternal death.

(c) God can only give good gifts (1:16-18)

(i) Command not to be deceived (1:16)

16 **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brothers *and sisters*.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

16 Do not be deceived, my dear brothers.

**16** Do not err, my beloved brethren.

- "Do not be deceived" - it is important that believers are not led astray concerning the true source of temptation and their responsibility to it. Satan's strategy in temptation is to

convince us that the pursuit of our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us.

— If a believer falls into sin, they cannot blame God for it. While God tests the faith of believers, He never solicits them for evil.

— Likewise, believers should not blame Satan, demons, people, environment, culture, or childhood experience; each believer must take full responsibility for the decisions that led to his fall.

(ii) God gives good gifts (1:17a)

(iii) God's character demands He give good gifts (1:17b)

**17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.**

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

17 Every generous act of giving and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father who made the heavenly lights, in whom there is no inconsistency or shifting shadow.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

- "Every" - not just some or most. The grateful heart receives all as from God.

- "...good thing" - a gift is "good" in the sense of being useful and beneficial. God is the source of all good; whatever can be called good or pure or excellent of any kind must necessarily have come from Him

- "...given" - *dosis*, emphasizes the act of giving, not the gift itself; it describes the goodness of receiving something from God.

- "...gift" - *dōrēma*, emphasizes the gift itself. Preceded by "perfect" (*teleios*), it describes the perfect quality of whatever God gives

— Both the gift itself (*dosis*) and the act of giving (*dōrēma*) are "perfect" (complete, lacking nothing). This includes trials and circumstances in our lives; God gives us these to perfect and grow us, not to destroy us.

— This is the foolishness of charging God recklessly in the midst of suffering...why would I charge God recklessly when whatever is happening to me in my present trial will end up being a blessing to me in the end?

— The only thing that God can ever introduce into our life is a good gift, even if we don't recognize it as such

- "...from above" - *anothen*, present tense, indicating a continuous truth: the "perfect gift" is always "coming down." The point is that these "gifts" are constantly descending from heaven in an unending stream of blessing.

- This is the same Greek word Jesus used with Nicodemus (John 3:7) when He told Nicodemus that he must be born "again" (*anōthen*, "from above")
- Everything good, useful, beneficial, profitable, and everything perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, comes from Him. Earlier James stated that this was true for wisdom; now he teaches that it is not only true of wisdom, but of all other things that come from God.
- "...Father of [the] lights" - Jewish name for God as Creator (Gen 1:14-19); nowhere else in the NT, but is found in Jewish literature such as Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Notice the definite article "the" (untranslated in English). The specific lights are the celestial bodies that light up the sky: then sun, moon, and stars.
- "...no variation or shifting shadow" - describes God's character; this is why the only thing that God can give me is a good gift, even if it's a trial. It is impossible for Him to give me anything else (Cf. 1 Tim 6:16; 1 John 1:4).
- These "lights" never stop shining their light, even when we can't see them. When night comes, the darkness is not because the sun stopped shining, it's because the earth turned away from it. So we see variation of light because of the turning of the earth. However with God, there is no variation or "turning" in God's dealings with us (Cf. 1 John 1:5).
- Charging God foolishly during a trial is reckless because we're accusing Him of doing something that His very nature prohibits Him from doing
- God is immutable, unchanging (Mal 3:6); this is different than Allah, who always changes. What a beautiful and comforting attribute of God, that He does not change!

(iv) Believers' regeneration as an example of God's good gifts (1:18)

**18 In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.**

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

18 In accordance with his will he made us his children by the word of truth, so that we might become the most important of his creatures.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

- "In the exercise of His will" - God's deliberate initiative provided this gift (our salvation/justification)

— Calvinists have a field day with this phrase: they say that God only wants some people to be saved (their doctrine of Limited Atonement).

— The exercise of His will doesn't mean that God only wants (or "elected") some to be saved. God wants everyone, all people, to be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). However,



some respond to the message of grace and some do not. However, the fact that only some respond to God's grace does not prove that God only selected some to be saved.

— "will" - in the emphatic position; whereas sin brings forth death, God willed to produce spiritual life. He did this without incentive or prompting, moved by only Himself and His love toward mankind, because it's His character to delight in mercy.

- "...He gave us birth" - James understood that the gift of salvation was given by God, not earned by the works of man

- "...by the word of truth" - how He gave us the gift of salvation. His special revelation (Scripture) communicated salvation to us. Salvation happens through the word of truth (Rom 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23). The gospel, the preaching of the Word, is all that is needed for salvation.

- "...first fruits among His creatures" - we are a special crop within God's created universe

— There are God's *creations* and God's *creatures*, then there is a select group that are God's *children*. We are all God's creatures, but only a select group who of their own volition accept the gift of grace who are God's children.

The point of v17-18 seems to be that God's intention for all people, and believers in particular, is invariably their blessing. Rather than viewing temptations to depart from the will of God as heaven-sent, we must see them as the potential enemies of spiritual growth. Instead of caving in under their weight, we must brace ourselves against them. We can do this knowing that the effort will make us better this side of the grave, and it will yield a wonderful reward the other side of the grave. Satan tempts us in order to bring out the worst in us, but God allows us to be tempted in order to bring out the best in us (Cf. Job).

From v17-18 it is crystal clear that James believed that eternal life was a gift of God's grace. We need to keep this in mind when we read James' discussion of faith and works in 2:14-26. It's clear there is absolutely no "tension" between James' idea of salvation/justification and Paul's idea. James clearly agrees with Paul that our salvation/justification springs from the sovereign volition of God (Cf. Rom 4:21-22; 2 Cor 4:6), initiated by the exercise of His will.

(4) Faith obeys God (1:19-27)

(A) The need for slowness in speaking and anger (1:19-20)

**19 You know *this*, my beloved brothers *and* sisters.** Now everyone must be **quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger;**

**19 *This* you know, my beloved brethren.** But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger;

**19** You must understand this, my dear brothers. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

**19** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

- After explaining the value of trials and our options for response, James exhorted his readers to respond properly to their trials. In this section James stressed the Word of God because it is the key to resisting temptations and responding to trials correctly. The context of this verse is our response during a trial, although the instruction given here is useful in every area of our life.

- "You know *this*" - the readers already know what James reminded them of in the preceding verses (v17-18); probably from James' pastoral ministry to this audience or from their study of the OT, mainly Proverbs. Proverbs is filled with God's wisdom when it comes to not being emotionally driven, rash, or a person of many words.

- We may respond to trials with complaints or anger, so James advised his readers to be silent, calm, and to listen submissively to the Word of God (Cf. v23)

- "...beloved brothers *and sisters*" - another clue that James is writing to believers; nowhere in Scripture is this term used of unbelievers

- God would never give the commands given by James in his epistle to unbelievers...they have no will, power, or capability to even begin to achieve them

- "...quick to hear" - having a readiness and eagerness to hear and assimilate the Word of God

- In James' time, every believer did not have a copy of the Scriptures, so they were memorized or verbally read publicly. James was likely the first NT book written.

- When believers gathered to hear the reading of the Scriptures, they needed to be ready to hear, eager to hear, because listening to the Word is the first step in discipleship.

- "...slow to speak" - pay reverential attention and not respond too soon to what they hear. Hearers need to thoughtfully evaluate what is being heard.

- Receivers don't work well when the transmitter is on: your ears don't work when your mouth is moving. The righteous speak little and do much; the wicked speak much and do little. How we listen and speak is a measure of our spiritual maturity.

- "...slow to anger" - Scripture has a lot to say about anger or acting out in a moment of frustration (Cf. Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:31)

- Moses is a good example: he *struck* the rock (twice), after God told him to *speak* to the rock (Num 20:8-13). God still honored the people's need for water, even through Moses' disobedience, but Moses lost a privilege that he could've enjoyed (not entering the Promised Land).

- You can spend a lifetime building a reputation, but destroy it in a matter of seconds through an outburst of anger

— Anger is temporary insanity...we will say things that we would otherwise never say, or do things we would never otherwise do

— All three commands (hearing, speaking, anger) have OT background:

- Quick to hear
  - Prov 12:15: The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a person who listens to advice is wise.
  - Prov 13:13: One who despises the word will do badly, But one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.
  - Prov 18:13: One who gives an answer before he hears, It is foolishness and shame to him.
- Slow to speak
  - Prov 10:19: When there are many words, wrongdoing is unavoidable, But one who restrains his lips is wise.
  - Eccl 5:1-2: Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and approach to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil. Do not be quick with your mouth or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.
- Slow to become angry
  - Prov 14:29: One who is slow to anger has great understanding; But one who is quick-tempered exalts foolishness.
  - Prov 29:11: 11 A fool always loses his temper, But a wise person holds it back.
  - Eccl 7:9: Do not be eager in your spirit to be angry, For anger resides in the heart of fools.

20 for a **man's anger** does not bring about the righteousness of God.

20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

20 For human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

- We cannot fulfill God's purpose for our life if we live off the energy of bitterness or anger

— Anger can be powerful if it motivates you for a season, but that sort of walk in life in no way resembles the walk of the Spirit; it's a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)

- "...man's anger" - as opposed to the anger of God. An angry response to trials does not advance "the righteousness" that God is seeking to produce in us. An angry response that blames God for what I'm going through does not allow God to fulfill His purposes in giving me the trial in the first place. Trials are given to us by God to make us better, not bitter.

— There is an anger that man can experience that is not sinful (Eph 4:26). The difference between anger that is sinful and anger that is not sinful is...anger when God's character is

violated is righteous anger. Sinful anger is when we're trying to vindicate ourselves. It's easy to confuse the two. If you're not sure your anger is "righteous anger" it likely isn't. — Everyone has been mistreated by someone, which is why it is important to forgive (Eph 4:32). If you don't forgive, eventually that bitterness is going to bottle up and eventually explode in anger.

If we are to allow our practice to catch up with our position, we first need to understand God's Word, then take what we learn and put it into practice. We need to receive and understand God's Word first before we can become doers of the Word because we can't do what we don't know. Receiving God's Word is the first step, and it's important, but it's not the final step: receiving God's Word needs to be translated into doing God's Word (obedience).

(B) The need for obedience to the Word (1:21-25)

21 Therefore, **rid** yourselves of all **filthiness** and *all* that **remains of wickedness**, in **humility receive** the word implanted, which is able to **save your souls**.

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

21 Therefore, rid yourselves of everything impure and every expression of wickedness, and with a gentle spirit welcome the word planted in you that can save your souls.

**21** Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

- Referring to v20, their duty is to "receive...the Word" (Cf. Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 2:13)

- "...rid" - to strip off, like an article of clothing (Cf. Acts 7:58); to put away. Before I receive God's Word and it has the effect on me that it's intended to have, I must first remove sin from my life.

- "...filthiness" - literally, dirt and filth; figuratively it refers to lusts and evil passions, moral uncleanness, and impurity; anything that is morally defiling

- "...remains of wickedness" - the "wickedness" or sin that we carry over from our lives pre-Christ and the unredeemed world

— The entire lot of wickedness must be removed, every instance of it; if wickedness is harbored, the Word and its obligation of daily living cannot be received

— "filthiness" and "wickedness" are appetite suppressants...they are like going to McDonald's and eating just before dinner...when you get home, you're no longer hungry (Cf. 1 Peter 2:1-2).

— The same is true with our appetite for God's Word...filthiness and wickedness, sin in general, stymie our appetite for God's Word. When we don't have an appetite for God's

Word, it's because we've inhaled a bunch of things that are not nutritious for us and our appetite is gone.

— If you're not happy with your church or small group, maybe it's not the pastor or the worship style...maybe there's something in your life that is suppressing your appetite for truth

- "...in humility" - in order to receive the Word, we have to be in a state of humility

— When we read the Bible ourselves, attend Bible study, or listen to teaching, you are humbling yourself because you are recognizing that you don't have all the answers

— Many church-goers are more interested in sharing their opinions or gaining a platform before others than they are interested in receiving the Word. How badly we need to sometimes just sit and listen to God speak through His Word rather than share a story or give our opinion.

- "...receive" - an aorist imperative; believers must welcome the message of the Word with a sense of urgency. Same term used of the Bereans in Acts 17:11.

- "...save your souls" - *psychas*, better translated as "save your *lives*" or "save your *selves*" (Cf. Matt 16:24-27; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 9:56; James 5:20; 1 Peter 1:9). There are at least 40x in the NT where *psyche* is translated "life" rather than "soul". "Save your souls" is not found anywhere in the NT to describe the conversion experience.

— What James is referring to is second tense salvation, "saving" (or preserving) his readers from the consequences of sin. This is not hell.

— James' readers are saved people, so the ultimate consequences of sin for a rebellious believer may be premature physical death (maximum divine discipline, v15; 5:19-20; Cf. Acts 5:1-11; Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16; Prov 11:19; 12:28; 13:14; 19:16). In that sense, putting away filthiness and wickedness and receiving the implanted word would actually "saving your life".

1 Peter 2:1-2:

**1** Therefore, putting aside all **malice** and all **deceit** and **hypocrisy** and **envy** and all **slander**,

• "...malice...deceit...hypocrisy...envy...slander" - appetite suppressants for the Word  
2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

• Believers are to be fixated on God's Word, like a newborn child is fixated on its mother's milk, but we can't receive the Word until we remove the appetite suppressants (v1)

• If you remove the mother's milk from a newborn, it will be malnourished, not grow, and wake up in the middle of the night screaming their head off. This is how we are to be with the Word of God.

While v19-21 stress the importance of listening to the Word of God, v22-25 emphasize the importance of putting the Word of God into practice.

**22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.**

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

22 Keep on being obedient to the word, and not merely being hearers who deceive themselves.

**22** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

- "But" - indicates that simply receiving the Word is not enough; it must be followed by active obedience and practice

- "...prove yourselves" - *ginomai*, to begin to be; to become. "To put into practice what you profess to believe." The verb is in the imperative mood, meaning a command; present tense, meaning it is an on-going, rather than a one-time, command.

- "...doers of the word" - in this context being a "doer of the word" means to persevere in God's will when we experience temptation to depart from it

— In general, it means submitting ourselves to the Word's authority and complying with its requirements (Cf. v23,25; 4:11; Acts 17:28; Rom 2:13). The verb is in the present imperative, meaning it is a continuing, life-long command.

— I become a "doer" of the Word by digging into Scripture, on a regular and habitual basis (not just occasionally), learning what it teaches, marinating on it, understanding what the Holy Spirit is saying to me personally through it, then *applying it to my life*.

— I read it, I understand it, I marinate on it, I allow the Holy Spirit to pinpoint things in my life that the passage is speaking to that I need to start doing or stop doing, then I go do it.

— This is a call to discipleship ("learner"). In the ancient world, it was common for people to listen to various teachers. But if you followed the teacher and tried to live what he taught, you were called a "disciple" of that teacher.

— Jesus taught this same lesson in His Sermon on the Mount. He said that the one who heard the word without doing it was like a man who built his house on the sand. But the one who heard the word and did it was like a man who built his house on a rock (Cf. Matt 7:24-27).

- "...just hearers" - by using the word "just" (merely), James points out that hearing the Word is necessary for believers, but they can't stop there

- "...deceive themselves" - *paralogizomai*, this word is used in mathematics to refer to a miscalculation. If you think it's good enough to hear the word but not put what you hear into practice, James says you're making a serious spiritual miscalculation.

- What is the delusion here? The delusion is thinking that if you study the Bible and know the Bible, you are spiritual. It's thinking that you're becoming spiritually mature simply because you are gaining knowledge, but you're never living out that knowledge.
- James here says that if you think that, you're deceived. You think you've arrived at a level of spirituality or practical righteousness, but you haven't.
- God never intended His Word just to be heard...He intended it to be obeyed, put into daily practice (John 13:17). Jesus never said the blessing comes from hearing or knowing...that is the "Bible study" deception. The blessing comes from doing, putting what we've heard and understood into practice in our daily lives.
- We are blessed in the Christian life when our hearing is put into practice by doing, when knowledge (*gnosis*) becomes wisdom (*sophia*). We're not blessed with *gnosis*, but we are blessed with *sophia*. But you can't have *sophia* without *gnosis* (1 Cor 4:6).

*The blessing does not come in studying the Word, but in doing the Word.* [Wiersbe]

Having been born again by the Word (1 Peter 1:23) we are called to walk in obedience to the faith revealed in the Scriptures. To do otherwise is to be self-deceived, imagining that intellectual assent is all that is required.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who **looks at** his natural face in a **mirror**;

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

23 For if anyone hears the word but is not obedient to it, he is like a man who looks at himself in a mirror

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and a not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

- James now gives us an illustration of the point he made in v22 about not just being a hearer, but being a doer, of God's Word. It's a call for believers to demonstrate their profession...an example of a "hearer only" (v23-24).

- "...looks at" - *katanoeō*, careful observation, not a passing glance

- "...mirror" - James analogizes God's Word to a mirror: a mirror will always tell you the truth, it's simply a reflection of reality. This is exactly what the Word of God does.

— A mirror will tell you exactly what the truth is: if you're overweight, it will tell you; if you're hair is messed up or your face has flaws, it will tell you. That's exactly what the Word of God does...it doesn't sugarcoat reality, but states reality plainly.

— Someone who is a hearer but not a doer, someone who receives v21, but never applies what they heard in their lives, what are they really like? They are like someone who looks at

themselves in a mirror, then walks away and forgets what they look like.

24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten **what kind of person** he was.

24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

24 and studies himself carefully, and then goes off and immediately forgets what he looks like.

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

- A "hearer only" sees something in the mirror that requires action, but never does anything about it. He simply walks away and continues in a perpetual state of imperfection.
- If I hear the Word and don't do what it says (a "hearer only"), I am treating the Word as if it were useless. I am deceiving myself about the very nature and purpose of the Word of God.

- The metaphor is simple: A man looks in a mirror. When looking at the mirror, he sees his real face with all of the blemishes and imperfections. While he is looking, he reflects on what he can change or what he doesn't like. Once he walks away from the mirror, he forgets what he looked like and no longer recollects how disagreeable he appeared or his resolutions for improvement.

- "...what kind of person" - the kind of person we are, as believers, refers to our position in Christ

- James is not saying that if you forget what you look like when you walk away from the mirror, you've lost your salvation. What he's saying is that you've forgotten what you look like, you've forgotten your position in Christ. It's easy for Christians to forget about their position in Christ when their behavior is inconsistent with it.

- The longer I live outside/beneath my position in Christ, the easier it is to forget about my position. What we forget is that in the eyes of the Father, we look just as righteous as Jesus Christ. Not because of ourselves, but because of Christ's imputed righteousness.

2 Peter 1:9: For he who lacks **these qualities** is blind or short-sighted, having **forgotten** *his* purification from his former sins.

- "...these *qualities*" - the fruit of the Spirit

- "...forgotten" - the problem is not that they haven't *received* purification...Peter is addressing believers. The problem is that they have *forgotten* it, they've walked away from the mirror and forgotten their position in Christ.

- This is the danger we run into when we hear but don't do, when we get knowledge but we don't have wisdom (*gnosis*, but no *sophia*)



*He who hears cannot help discovering his own character, and being affected with his own deformity; he sorrows, and purposes to change. When the preaching is over, the mirror is removed, and not being careful to examine the records of his salvation, the perfect law of liberty, or not continuing to look therein, he soon forgets what manner of man he was.*

25 But one who has **looked intently** at the **perfect law, the law of freedom**, and has **continued in it**, not having become a **forgetful hearer** but **an active doer**, this person will be **blessed in what he does**.

25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

25 But the one who looks at the perfect law of freedom and remains committed to it—thereby demonstrating that he is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of what that law requires—will be blessed in what he does.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

- Contrasting with v23-24, James now describes a "doer of the Word"...

- "...looked intently" - *paraklyptō*, emphatic in Greek; means "to stoop down" to get a better look; a deep and attentive consideration given to a thing or subject (Cf. John 20:5,11; 1 Peter 1:12); not a casual or informal glance.

— In contrast with the "hearer" who only held up his mirror and saw his imperfections, the "doer" bends down in order to examine himself more closely, trying to find all the imperfections the mirror shows so that he can do something about it. For him, that is the use for the Word of God.

— Those who look intently at God's Word gain freedom (liberty). God's Word is designed to create freedom (emancipation) in us.

— When you study the Word of God, you realize that you are no longer a slave to sin. We've been freed from the bondage of sin, just like slaves were freed from the bondage of their masters after the Emancipation Proclamation. But some slaves weren't aware of this fact, they didn't have the truth, so they continued to be slaves. The study of God's Word gives us the truth that we no longer have to obey sin (John 8:32).

- "...perfect" - complete and without fault. It is complete in that the Word of God is all we need; we have need of nothing else. It is without fault showing that it contains everything that we need, and no area is not covered within.

- "...law" - the Word of God; in both the OT and NT, God's complete, inerrant, sufficient, and comprehensive Word is called "law"; it's the same as the "implanted word" (v21) and the "word" (v22).

— It refers to the authoritative body of truth proclaimed by the Apostles and later embodied in the NT. It is the law of John 8:32 and Rom 8:12.

— It is the law that liberates from spiritual bondage, which was entitled to believers (John 8:31-36). This is not the Law of Moses, but the Law of the Messiah, which liberates the Jewish believer from the Mosaic Law and liberates all believers from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).

- "...the *law* of freedom" - it is freedom because if we obey it, we find true liberty from sin and the consequences of it

- "...continued *in it*" - or "abides by it"; refer to the person who takes the time to see and examine his soul and the grace of God, and after looking, he is gripped by his reflection and continues looking by obeying the Word's commands

— The metaphor is taken from a female who spends time in the mirror decorating themselves to perfection, making sure that no hair is out of place

- "...forgetful hearer" - this "doer" is not a "hearer who forgets"

- "...an active doer" - a habitual doer; this isn't someone who hears the Word and occasionally tries to obey it when it's convenient. It's someone who, under God's power, seeks to obey the Word the every area of their life.

- "...blessed in what he does" - the blessing lies in the "doing"; the person blessed is the "doer" not the "hearer"; he will also be blessed further in the future as indicated by the future tense of the verb

— The Bible only promises a blessing to the person who actually applies what is taught

Some are deceived into thinking that if they study God's Word, they'll be slaves to good works, to being religious, and they won't have freedom any longer. Just the opposite is true...God's Word and law free us from the bondage of sin, they are given to us by God for our own good.

Examples of habitual doers in Scripture:

- Daniel (and Joseph) are the only two men in Scripture where nothing bad is ever said about them. Daniel was habitually obedient to God (Dan 6).
- Joshua 1:8: This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to **do** according to all that is written in it; **for then** you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.
- Ezra 7:10: For Ezra had set his heart to **study** the law of the LORD and to **practice it**, and to **teach His** statutes and ordinances in Israel.
- Deut 10:13: *and* to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?
- John 8:32: **and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."**

## Summary: James 1:19b-25

Three sections, each with a distinct response to the word of God:

- Hearing the Word (v19b-20)
  - Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to become angry -- because an angry response to trials does not bring about the righteousness that God wants in us as a result of the trial.
- Receiving the Word (v21)
  - Get rid of "filthiness" (any moral uncleanness) and the "remains of wickedness" (sins carried over from our pre-Christ life) because they are appetite suppressants to ingesting God's Word.
  - Instead, humbly receive the Word which will save us from the consequences of our sin
- Obeying the Word (v22-25)
  - Continually make myself a "doer" of the Word, not just a hearer
  - When I look intently at God's Word, I see a mirror of my life. If I continue doing this, hearing then doing, I save myself from the consequences of my sin and I am and will be blessed in whatever I do.

(C) The need for true religion (1:26-27)

(a) What true religion is not: unbridled speech (1:26)

**26** If anyone thinks himself to be **religious**, yet does not **bridle** his tongue but **deceives his own heart**, this person's religion is **worthless**.

**26** If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless.

**26** If anyone thinks that he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but instead deceives himself, his religion is worthless.

**26** If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

- James now proceeds to explain (1:26—2:13) what a "doer" of the Word does...

- "...religious" - *threskos*, pious, spiritual; what we would today call a "good Christian"

— James uses *threskos* here to describe a person who is religious, but is not really right with God. The evidence for this is that he does not control his tongue.

— The externalism, which is so prevalent both in today's society and throughout history, seeks to maintain an outward facade of religious expression. This is insufficient in God's eyes. God is looking for outward expressions of a living faith, which is what James describes as listening faith, believing faith, and a doing faith.

- "...bridle" - *chalinagogeō*, to hold in check, restrain; keep a tight rein on

- A person is not walking in practical righteousness if they do not control (bridle) their tongue. If your mouth is spouting off sarcasm, venom, bitterness, gossip, derisive comments, and you continue to go to church and hear good teaching, James says your "piety" is worthless.
- James pictures a man whose tongue is like an uncontrolled wild horse, which shows that the believer is self-deceived and not as religious as presumed
- James' original readers, Jews, typically regarded alms-giving, prayer, fasting, regular worship service attendance, and the observance of holy days as signs of true spirituality. However, James said a better test of spirituality was a person's control of their tongue. This is the most critical measure of spiritual maturity.
- Ps 141:3 says: Set a guard, LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.
- James will have much more to say about the tongue in 3:1-12
- "...deceives his *own* heart" - present tense verb indicates that he continually deceives himself. The deception is that he thinks he's spiritual, and appears to be spiritual externally to others, but he's not.
- James did not want us to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are spiritual if our obedience to God is only superficial
- "...worthless" - *mataios*, useless; dead; futile, void of meaning; having no value before God or man
- It's important to realize that James isn't saying your faith doesn't exist...he's saying that your faith isn't good for anything. It's good that you're not going to hell, but as far as God actively and strategically using your life for eternal purposes, He can't.
- Reformed theology teaches that if you don't have works, your faith never existed in the first place (2:20). However, James is not saying that if you don't have works you don't have faith...he's saying that if you don't have works, your faith is useless to God to promote His purposes. He can't use you to accomplish His eternal purposes in this world.
- This is the whole point of the vine and the branches (John 15). We can't bear fruit on our own, but only when the vine is attached and receiving nourishment from the branches does it grow and produce fruit.
- If you go to a good church, hear good sermons and are blessed, but your tongue is out of control, you're still going to heaven, but your faith is useless for His eternal purposes.

(b) What true religion is (1:27)

(i) Compassionate acts (1:27a)

(ii) Moral purity (1:27b)

**27 Pure and undefiled religion** in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their distress**, *and* to keep oneself **unstained by the world**.

27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

27 A religion that is pure and stainless according to God the Father is this: to take care of orphans and widows who are suffering, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

- "Pure and undefiled religion" - in contrast to the "vain" religion of those who observe religious rites, but don't bridle their tongue (v26)

— There is a great deal of pure and undefiled religion *in the sight of man* that is not pure and undefiled religion *before God*

- "...visit" - *episkeptomai*, "to look on" or "to go see"; it does not mean to pay a social visit, but rather to meet their physical needs. This is an example of being a "doer" of the Word.

— False religion may perform acts of charity and mercy, but its motives are impure (hypocrisy, selfishness, self-promotion, removal of guilt, etc.). Christians displaying "pure religion" engage orphans and widows in their temporal suffering, for the sake of their eternal good.

- "...orphans and widows" - the neediest classes in Jewish society of that day; representative of those within the culture who are in need of assistance, compassion, love, support and care

— God has a heart for the fatherless (Deut 10:18; Ps 68:5; Is 1:17; Jer 5:28; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10; Luke 18:16; Eph 1:5)

— God has always looked out for widows and orphans (Ex 22:22-24; Deut 27:19; Is 1:17). Christians practicing true religion have always had respect for the vulnerable; atheists have never respected the vulnerable.

— This was the exact area where the Pharisees failed (Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:46-47). It was also a key concern for the early church (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 5:3-16).

— True religion does not merely give something for the relief of the distressed, but it visits them, takes oversight of them, takes them under their care. It goes to their houses, speaks to their heart, relieves their wants, sympathizes with them in their distress, instructs them in Divine things.

— Because of their situation, orphans and widows would usually not be able to reciprocate in any way, so serving them would be demonstrating the type of sacrificial love/works God desires. The motive is for God's glory, not their own.

- "...in their distress" - true piety or spirituality is ministering to the vulnerable and those in distress

— When James wrote, there was no safety net, no insurance, no protection, so if you were a widow or orphan, you were the most vulnerable in society, and someone else had to look out for you.

- "...unstained from the world" - a condition of personal purity that remains unblemished from contact with the world. I
- It surpasses simply a moral injunction to simply not sin, to also include keeping ourselves clean from the world's wrong thinking and faulty worldviews
- "world" - *kosmos*, a system of thought and philosophy which excludes God and alienates our affections from Him (1 John 2:15-17); it has been satanically controlled and energized (2 Cor 4:4; Cf. Luke 4:5-7) ever since the Fall in Eden (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph 2:2)
- This won't change until Rev 11:15...when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our God and His Christ
- Demas was one who did not keep himself unstained from the world. In fact, he loved the world more than God and deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:10).

### **Names & Titles Demonstrating Satan's Post-Fall Earthly Authority**

1. Prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
2. God of this age (2 Cor 4:4)
3. Prince and power of the air (Eph 2:2)
4. Who the believer wrestles with (Eph 6:12)
5. Roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8)
6. Whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19)

Rom 12:2: do not let the world squeeze you into its mold

John 15:18-19: if you're a friend of God, you will be an enemy of the world

James 4:4: friendship with the world is enmity with God

Satan is orchestrating the world system, so believers cannot attain practical righteousness with one foot in the world and one foot in Christianity. It's impossible to live for the Lord when we love the world system.

### **Homiletics for James 1**

- Theme of James: Spiritual Maturity
- Spiritual mature people endure life's trials with joy
  - Trials are tools God uses to grow our faith and mature us as believers; they are to drive believers into greater dependence upon Him, by showing us our own inadequacy
  - We pray for wisdom in trials so that we can understand God's purposes for us
  - When in trials, we should not pray so much for the removal of the trial, but ask God for wisdom to make the right use of it

- When God gives us wisdom and understanding, use it!
- God is the source of all good; whatever that can be called good or pure or excellent of any kind must necessarily come from Him
- Spiritually mature people don't let social position or wealth shape our perspective
- Spiritually mature people control what they say
- Spiritually mature people hear God's word, then do it
- Spiritually mature people care for the unfortunate