

James 1:1-12

Love

I. Intro

What are the top 10 New Year's resolutions? (Crowd participation)

Lose Weight/Get Organized/Spend Less-Save More/Enjoy Life/Stay Fit/Learn Something/Quit Smoking/Fall in Love/Spend more time with family...

I'm not here to make a statement on resolutions, but I do know this...

We choose them for a reason. We want something to be different about us. Which on some level is a good thing. But... I do think that often times our resolutions address surface issues and not the deeper flaws that exist. And if we are honest, most of us don't want to know what our deeper flaws are. We don't even want to think about it.

But maybe this New Year, we should approach things a little differently.

Maybe we could let James' letter to the 1st century church shape our perspective on a resolution this year.

You see... God also wants something to be different about us.

I just wonder if we are working with God, or against Him sometimes...

Let me ask you... Have you ever taken the time to ask God what He is working on in your life?

If you are a follower of Christ, God's desire is to make you perfect, complete and lacking in nothing. He is just going to accomplish in a paradoxical way, through trials. But He will provide you with everything needed to be transformed.

What we will see today is that...

The way to maturity is to view all of life through the lens of God's wisdom.

Here is what we are going to talk about this morning...

What is the maturity, or completeness that God is working towards?

What is the wisdom of God?

How do I get God's wisdom?

1. What is God working towards?

James 1:2-4

God is working towards our perfection and completeness.

The words here give the idea of perfected all over or fully developed in every part.

For followers of Jesus there is an already/not yet state that we experience in several aspects.

And James is teaching that here.

On the one hand, because of Christ, when we stand before the throne of God, we are seen as perfect and complete. Jesus' perfect life and perfect death are given to you. When we put our faith in Jesus, we become hidden in Him and God therefore sees us.

However, we have not yet been made all the perfect. That will come when God returns and completes the process of glorifying us. But until then, God is working in such a way to bring maturity and completion in our lives.

He wants the faith that we have in Christ to actually become a reality. He wants you to be like Christ.

God designed each one of us and sin has corrupted us. When we put our faith in Christ, it begins the process of God working in such a way to restore to how He designed us to be.

Let me ask you, would you like to be whole, complete and lacking in nothing?!

We all would... and here is the paradox of it...

The way God is going to work that out in our lives is through testing and trials.

A trial is a trouble. It's a difficulty. It's a problem. It's a test.

The connotation here is of smelting... If you take ore and you apply enormous heat to it, the precious metals in it, like gold or silver, survive, but the worthless metals and the impurities are oxidized or they fall off.

God uses trials to mature us, to complete us, to make us like Christ.

Now, we may have heard this before, but let's be honest... we struggle to like it.

If we could have our choice, we would all have as few problems in this life as possible.

Wouldn't you rather James say... ok... God's going to complete you and the way He is going to do it is give you a bunch of money? Or the way God is going to do this is give you the perfect job? Or the perfect spouse?

Nope, God says trials...

In essence, suffering is the furnace that produces the gold for us.

Trials show us our limitations. They show us our flaws. Trials teach us humility. Trials makes us empathetic towards others.

And that is why James says, consider it pure joy. It's important to point out, that James isn't saying enjoy suffering, enjoy trials... Christians twist this sometimes and act like everything is great, when it is not.

No... we consider it joy in a trial because we can be confident that God is at work. God is going to produce in me maturity and completion, and that is what the joy is.

There is a story about Michelangelo and his sculpture of David. The Pope came to look at it and he said, how do you know what to chip away? And Michelangelo replied, 'It's simple. I just remove everything that doesn't look like David'.

God is at work to bring us into completion.

Now, what's awesome about James' thought process, is he knows exactly what we are thinking.

How am I supposed to know what God is doing? I get it, I'm in a trial and God is perfecting me, but how am I supposed to know what He is doing.

James 1:5

2. What is the wisdom of God?

There is a promise here for us. When you are facing trials, if you ask God, He will give you the wisdom to know what He is doing, what He is working on, what He is shaping.

The wisdom of God will give us perspective to bear suffering, to grow in trials, to understand difficult circumstances.

Here's the problem...

Our culture has programmed us to see things a totally different way.

And when we view things through the wisdom of the world we don't have God's view. In fact, trials become unbearable.

a. The wisdom of the world says: tests can be solved.

The world's wisdom gives us blogs on 10 ways to a fixed body, a fixed marriage, a fixed sex life, a fixed you.

The world's wisdom wants us to look through life like we are in control. Like the world revolves around us.

Have you ever taken the time to really unpack how programmed you are to think this way?

I love to fix things. I love to solve problems. I've gotten really good at it too.

Six years ago this February I experienced a significant personal trial. I was being assessed as a church planter and I had a group of men expose some significant flaws in me. It was a very crushing moment. But they gave me some very practical things to do.

And so my immediate response was what... let's fix this. I can fix this.

And I'll never forget, I was at a Culver's with a mentor of mine, just unpacking all that was happening, and said to me... Brian, don't rush out of the chaos. It's good sometimes to listen for God's voice in the chaos so we can let Him do His work.

The wisdom of God says: tests are used by God.

The lens through which we look though life is to remind ourselves that God is in control.

God is working in a way to perfect me and mature me.

b. The wisdom of the world says: tests can be painless.

Two things that happen here when we face trials... one we either quit, or we go find something that will help numb our pain.

I think in my own personal experience and especially as a pastor I have seen this a lot.

When something difficult comes I either run from it or hide from it.

This is rooted in a mentality that this world is all we get, so we should do everything possible to be happy here.

The wisdom of God says: tests are to be persevered.

As Christians, we believe that this world is not the end. There is a greater joy, a greater life, a greater happiness that is in front of us. And my best days are the days in front of me. So if God needs to put me through the fire to produce maturity in me, than I want to persevere through that trial.

Are you struggling with trials? Are you quick to fix things? Are you quick to run? Are you quick to quit?

The problem is that you are looking through the lens of the worlds wisdom. And we need to reprogram our hearts.

Because... **The way to maturity is to view all of life through the lens of God's wisdom.**

3. How do I get God's wisdom?

James 1:6-8

James uses very strong language here doesn't he?

He says... you can ask God, but you better not doubt.

We get God's wisdom by how we understand ourselves and how we understand God.

First... us...

I receive God's wisdom by knowing that I'm not wise.

To know you don't know much about life. To know God is far wiser than you.

A person who doubts, a person who is double-minded... they think they are close to as wise as God.

A few years ago we were doing some work in our basement and we ran a gas line. Now the day before we had it inspected I was talking to one of my friends about it and he asked me, did you use copper pipe for water or for gas to do that... and I was like... I don't know... Well I thought, I'll just ask the inspector...

So, he shows up, he's looking around and I asked him... are there two kinds of pipe? And did one of those double takes and said... no. You are fine... I was so not satisfied, and I called Laclede and they said there are two kinds of pipe, and we actually had put the wrong pipe!

When I asked that inspector for wisdom, I went doubting. I didn't trust him.

Is that how you approach God? God, I think I know just as much as you. And if you don't tell me what I think is right, I'm going to go somewhere else.

James says that person won't receive anything from the Lord!

I receive God's wisdom by asking in faith.

I think there are two parts to this... Faith that God is working and faith that God will answer.

Do you believe that God is working in every circumstance? In every situation?

That's the point here. Start there. I get God's wisdom by acknowledging that He is doing something. That He is at work. And so I can learn from Him about what He is accomplishing.

And I can have the faith that God will give me wisdom to know what He is doing. What is he trying to perfect in me.

II. Conclusion

It's a new year. It's time for resolutions.

Here is my challenge to all of us... instead of saying we are going to lose weight or be nicer this year...

Let's boldly go before God and ask Him, God where are you perfecting me? What are the things that you want to accomplish in me, and will you give me the wisdom to better see and understand what you are doing?

The way to maturity is to view all of life through the lens of God's wisdom.