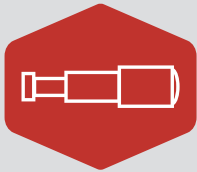




Lesson 3: Trials: The Great Equalizer

Main Idea: This portion of James teaches the believer that trials equalize all classes of people and point to a better future.

Scripture: James 1:7-12



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In verses 1-6, James begins by telling his readers that they will have trials or tests. In verses 7-12, James continues with the thought, offering rules for facing trials. Faith is a prominent theme in James. He uses the Greek word in some form 14 times. For James, faith was a strong commitment to action toward the right things. One author comments, "Faith is not simply a state of mind but rather a posture of trust in God that expresses itself in action."¹ If a believer fails to take an active stance of trust in the Lord, the natural consequence is a hesitation in spiritual commitments.

James instructs the reader not to be double minded. The meaning for double minded is to have a double psyche, a split personality, to have two minds or two souls. One author states, "In the Old Testament the idea was expressed as being double-tongued or 'two-faced,' or having two hearts rather than a single heart of integrity (Nystrom, 53; e.g., Psalm 12:2; Deuteronomy. 26:16)."² Such a person is a walking civil war. First, they are inclined to one alternative and then to another. They are never able to settle down and make a firm determination

¹ Guthrie, "James," 13:215.

² Guthrie, "James," 13:215.

to obey God. This person, James says, is in constant agitation and will make no progress because they are like a wave that is being driven by the sea rather than going in a purposeful direction. The wave has no inward ability to chart a course. Such a person, James says, winds up receiving nothing from God and proves to be unstable.

Since James is the younger earthly brother of Jesus, he is familiar with what Jesus taught. In Luke 6, the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus explains what He means by richness and poorness when He says, “Blessed are you who are poor, . . . but woe to you who are rich” (Luke 6:20, 24). “Blessed are you who weep . . . woe to you who laugh” (Luke 6:21, 25). Jesus is talking about people who are spiritually poor, who place themselves in a position of complete dependence upon God and say, “I have absolutely nothing with which to become a child of God or have eternal life. I take my stand before God as a pauper.” This poorness contrasts with those who say, “I’ve got it all together now. I have everything I need, and I don’t need God’s help.” James is saying that trials may bring you to a position of spiritual poverty, a placed of blessedness, which, according to one author, has to do with well-being that flows from the favorable position in which one is rightly related to God (Johnson, 187).”³

When you have stood the trial, you will receive a crown of life. The crown James was referring to meant a laurel wreath, not a tiara such as the queen of England wears. A bride would wear a laurel wreath on her wedding day, and winners of Olympic games would be given laurel wreaths. This type of crown could be given to someone being honored at a banquet and even to a person visiting royalty. The Lord is telling you, in James, that trials bring out and demonstrate all the festive joy, all the victory, all the honor, and all the royalty that is flowing through you, as a follower of Christ. This is what is meant by the crown of life in James. And no matter what you go through in this life, the future will be better as you look down the road toward how everything will end.

³ Guthrie, “James,” 13:219.

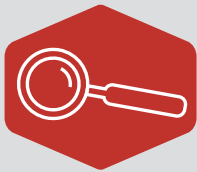


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you.

In this portion of James, he attempts to encourage the reader that no matter the trials or tests, it will get better.

- Through trials or tests, a Christian should not be double minded (1:8).
- Through trials and tests in life, a Christian can still rejoice (1:10-11).
- Through trials or tests, a Christian will receive the crown of life (1:12).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

- » What is happening in this passage?

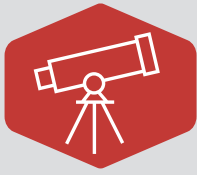
- » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Read James 1:8. What comes to your mind when you read the word “double-minded”?

- Read James 1:10. What does this verse mean to you?

- How can you focus on God in the midst of a problem? Give an example of someone in the Bible who focused on God rather than their problem. What was the result?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 1:6–8. What is the result of not being spiritually mature?

- James 1:9–10. Why are trials and difficulties the great equalizer in life?

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®)
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