

## \*From Trouble to Triumph – James 1:1-12

**Read: James 1:1-12**

### **Introduction**

- QUESTION: James opens his book by emphasizing the reality of hard times. How do you usually respond to trials or set backs in your life? Why?
- CONTEMPLATIVE QUESTION: What do you want to learn in this study? Ask God to open your heart and mind to be receptive to the no-nonsense approach to living your faith.
- MacArthur's context: "James' major emphasis in this section of his epistle is... if a person's faith is genuine, it will prove itself during times of trouble, whatever the nature or source of the trouble may be... Trials are a tool in the loving hands of the Lord. They test the strength of our faith; they humble us; they wean us from our dependence on earthly things; they call us to eternal and heavenly hope; they reveal what we really love; they teach us to value God's blessings; they develop enduring strength for greater usefulness; they help us better encourage others who are in times of trials."
- Jewish followers of Jesus who were 'scattered' (*Gk diaspora*) because of persecution is James' audience.

### **The Testing of Faith (1:2-12)**

- Remember, Christian maturity is the key focus, and we should 'consider it joy' when face trials because the trials actually reveal 'endurance'.
- Last week we covered the greeting and admonition to 'count it all joy' found in verses 1 and 2.

#### ***The Advantage of Trials (1:3-4)***

- (1:3) – The 'testing' of our faith will evidence our endurance. This point is 'known' – James says, 'because you know' (or 'from the experience of knowing'. Faith in God is like gold – the testing results in 'approval' from inspection (not arrogance of 'proving' oneself). True faith, then, 'develops' (or 'works') perseverance as literally staying power. The hotter the fires of testing our faith in God the more resolute and pure it becomes!
- (1:4) – 'Perseverance' must also 'finish its work' (just like the faith that leads us to perseverance). So, what is the 'finished' product of perseverance? It is spiritual maturity and spiritual fulfillment. The main theme of the letter is spiritual maturity that results from an active faith – this REQUIRES perseverance.
- **KEY QUESTION: What does a 'Mature and Complete' faith in Christ look like?**

- Some note this to mean – perfected all over or fully developed in every part – not fundamentally lacking competence.
- MacArthur notes, “complete... from a compound Greek word that literally means ‘all the portions whole.’”

### ***Assistance for Trials (1:5-12)***

- (v. 5) Wisdom, which is far beyond just knowledge, is ‘available for the asking’ from our generous God!
- (v. 6) The provisions of God have a few prerequisites and believers must be wise in their requests to God: We must ask in faith, not in doubt (or vacillating – which is like being double-minded, 4:8).
- (v. 7) Those who live in doubt should not expect to receive wisdom from God.
- (v. 8) Being double-minded, or seeking God and the world simultaneously, is hypocritical and unstable.
- QUESTION: Why do people live with a ‘double-mind’? How can this be remedied?
- (v. 9) Walvoord notes, “one who asks for wisdom needs to evidence hope”. The person who is in poverty, by the world’s definition, can be glad of ‘high’ position spiritually.
- (v. 10) Likewise, the wealthy by world’s standards, can have humility in human frailty because of ‘glory’ in Christ.
- (v. 11) Social prominence passes away, wealth withers like a flower in the full heat of the sun. Yet, hope in the eternal is evidence of believing faith!
- (v. 12) Finally, the one who asks God for wisdom must be steadfast and infused with love. As Christians – ‘trials, testing, and perseverance’ should be on our daily schedule – we can ask God for the right attitude for each day.

### **Conclusion**

- One of my mentors at the Southwestern seminary, Curtis Vaughn, commented on the Greek ‘crown which is life’: “the life which is promised... life here and now, life in its fullness, life in its completeness.”
- MacArthur concurs and adds, the crown of life “best translated ‘the crown which is life.’ ‘Crown’ was the wreath put on the victor’s head after ancient Greek athletic events; here it denotes the believer’s ultimate reward – eternal life – which God has promised to him and will grant in full at death or at Christ’s coming.”
- It is my prayer that you persevere and endure the trials of life knowing that trouble and testing are real and common for all of humanity; but victory and triumph are found only in Jesus Christ! May our faith and hope in Christ singularly focus our minds, and lives, on God’s Word and the wisdom that God liberally grants each of us!