

James 1:1-11
Thriving, not Surviving
January 11, 2026

V 1 James does not identify himself as the half-brother of Jesus, but simply as “a bondservant [*doulos*, slave] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He clearly identifies Jesus as equivalent with God. He knows that spiritual kinship is of more eternal significance than temporal familial relationship.

“scattered abroad” Considering the early date at which this was most likely written, the dispersion in mind is probably that which occurred after the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen, **Acts 8:1**.

V 2 “brethren” occurs 15 times in this short book (1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12,19). This letter is addressed to believers.

“all joy” i.e., pure joy, not joy diluted with distress, discouragement, dismay, and resentment.

“fall into” as in, when in the normal course of your life, something unavoidable, unplanned, unwelcomed, and unfortunate comes upon you; see the same word used in **Luke 10:30** and **Acts 27:41**.

“trials” opportunities to show what’s on the inside.

V 3 What is a “testing of your faith?” Any circumstance which allows you the opportunity to respond in the manner in which God would want, versus the manner in which your flesh wants at the moment. “patience” (*hypomone*), “standing up under;” steadfastness; endurance; fortitude

V 4 The end result of allowing the trials to accomplish in you what God wants, is spiritual maturity. “perfect” = complete; nothing needing adding.

V 5 “wisdom” (*sophia*) is combining knowledge with the appropriate action; “skill for living” is the OT concept. If we do not know how to handle life’s trials in the Godly way, God gives us the skill, freely, and without criticism or rebuking.

Vv 6-8 However, we must ask in the assurance of knowing that He will answer our prayers. If we trust God with our eternity, then can’t we trust Him with our temporary? The doubting believer is the one who goes back and forth between God’s solution and his solution, never fully coming down on one side or the other. Usually this happens when God’s solution doesn’t happen quickly enough. It must not be forgotten that the purpose of the trial is to produce in us “patience.” We cannot pray, “God, give me patience, and give it to my now!” We never develop perseverance when we vacillate between God’s way and our way.

Vv 9-11 need to be understood in the context of the preceding verses. “lowly” most likely means poor, considering the contrast with “the rich.”

The “rich” would seem to the “rich brother,” considering the sentence structure.

The “lowly brother” can take comfort in knowing his trials are producing an everlasting wealth; the “rich” must soberly consider that his riches are of no eternal consequence. (One never sees a hearse pulling a U-Haul). Material wealth cannot buy spiritual maturity, and poverty cannot prevent spiritual maturity. See **Isaiah 40:6-8**.

Summary:

Do I view my trials and my temptations as immediate threats to my well-being, and something to be greeted with dismay and avoidance at all costs, which is the human, fleshly attitude?

Or, do I view my trials and temptations with the joy of knowing that I have an opportunity to grow spiritually, into the complete person that God wants me to be, with the firm conviction that He will give me the wisdom necessary to adequately pass the test under which my character is burdened at this moment?