



Considering (and Choosing Joy)

An Intro to the Letter of James



Intro to James: the context

- ▶ Who is James (AKA Jacob)?
- ▶ Who is his audience?
- ▶ How is his letter different than other epistles?
- ▶ Stylistic uniqueness of James
- ▶ Controversial aspects of James
 - ▶ Luther's take
 - ▶ Chapter 2...oh boy!

When did James write his letter?

- James - 50 A.D.
- First Thessalonians - 52-53.
- Second Thessalonians - 52-53.
- Galatians - 55.
- First Corinthians - 57.
- Second Corinthians - 57.
- Romans - 57-58.
- Philippians - 62-63.
- Colossians - 62-63.
- Philemon - 62-63.
- Ephesians - 62-63.
- Luke - 63.
- Acts - 64.
- First Timothy - 65.
- Titus - 65.
- Second Timothy - 66.
- Mark - 66.
- Matthew - 67.
- Hebrews - 67.
- First Peter - 67-68.
- Second Peter - 68.
- Jude - 68.
- Apocalypse - 68.
- John - c. 85.
- Epistles of John - 90-95.



What was James purpose?

- ▶ Exhorting followers of Jesus to maturity of faith in the daily aspects of life. More about practical application than about the precepts of our faith.
- ▶ Describing and exhorting his readers to a life of full submission to Jesus – what he or she is, does, feels and has – to live a fully integrated or whole life in Christ.
- ▶ Wants followers of Jesus to see how our Christian faith and love get expressed in a variety of circumstances of life.



James 1:1


“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.”

- “Servant” – in Greek, *doulos* – meaning “bond servant” or the property of a master
- Consistent with James’ frequent admonition of submission to God
- **What is your only comfort in life and in death?** That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. (Heidelberg Catechism)



James 1:2-4 -- his first CTA

Consider it **pure joy**, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.



How can we have an attitude of joy in the midst of suffering and trials?

- Vs. 3 – because we know they are faith-testers. Faith-testing experiences are God trusting experiences
- Vs. 3 – faith-testing brings about perseverance – “the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition”; the ability to endure
- Vs. 4 – Perseverance of our faith leads to maturity and complete (having integrity, wholeness), not lacking anything
- What James is not saying



James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Ephesians 4:14-16

- ➔ 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with **confidence**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.



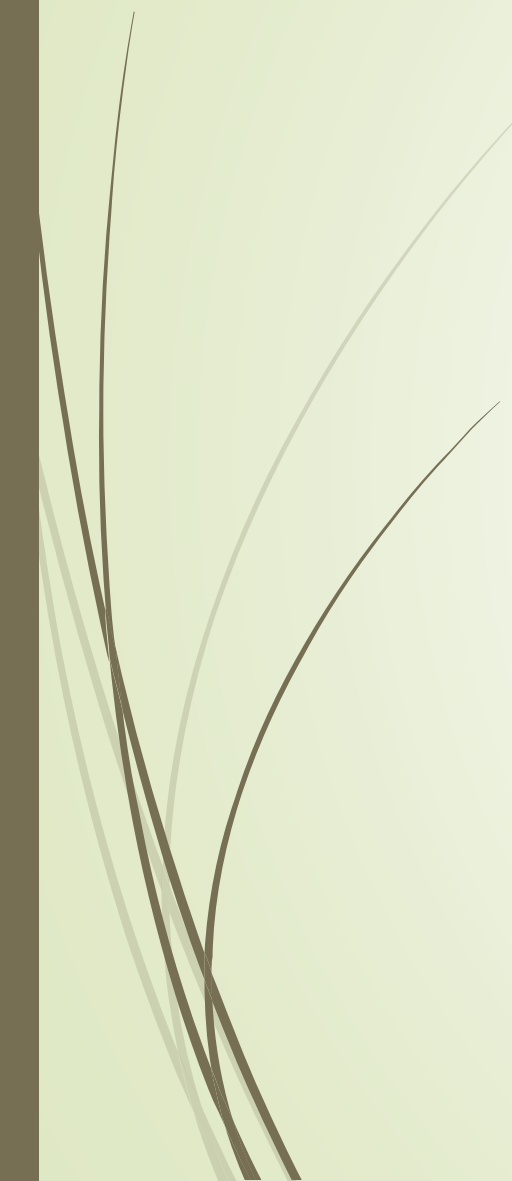
James 1:9-11

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.



James 1:12

¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.



Conclusions

- Remember who you are as bond-servant to the Lord Jesus Christ, his belonging
- Choose joy, not doubt, in the midst of painful circumstances knowing that God is using these to grow your maturity in Him
- Ask for wisdom/discernment to the God who longs to give it to you
- Wealth is neither the condition nor consequence of godly living; choose wisdom
- As we learn and practice perseverance and growing trust in Jesus in the midst of trials, we experience more of His abundant life



Small Group Application Questions

1. How has God grown you through the challenging trials in your life?
2. What has helped you (or will help you) to “consider it pure joy” in the midst of trials?
3. What gets in the way of asking God for more wisdom/discernment for perceiving life and difficulties through His eyes?