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Step-by-Step: Practical Living from the Book of James

Take the Step of Steadfastness

James 1:1-18

The Book of James:

- Author: James, the half-brother of Jesus
- Date: 40-45 A.D.
- First Readers: Jewish Jesus-followers scattered by persecution
- Purpose: How to follow Jesus step-by-step

“James shows us how to have a living, visible, productive faith in a fallen world.”

Kent Hughes

Step-By-Step: In each message, we will look at another “Step” in the journey of a follower of Jesus. Today, we take the first **Step of Steadfastness** in James 1:1-18.

Steadfastness: The ability to endure, remain under, and continue despite opposition or resistance.

“I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” **John 16:33**

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

2 Timothy 3:12

Main Idea: Steadfastness in Following Jesus Comes through the Trials of Life

“James, a servant of God & of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect & complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, & it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven & tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, & the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat & withers the grass; its flower falls, & its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, & he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured & enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, & sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift & every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

James 1:1-18

Three Types of Trials that Produce Steadfastness from James 1:1-18

I. Trial of Personal Identity

“James, a servant of God & of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.” **James 1:1**

“In spite of his prominence, what stands out in the first verse of his epistle is James’s humility...by taking that title, James numbered himself with those honored not for who they were, but whom they served – the living God.” **John MacArthur**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” **2 Corinthians 5:17**

II. Trial of Developing Discernment

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect & complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, & it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven & tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” **James 1:2-8**

- **Celebrate the Growth:** This is the only avenue to spiritual maturity and steadfastness, so progress is being made.

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, & endurance produces character, & character produces hope, & hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” **Romans 5:3-5**

- **Look to God for Help:** If you are having trouble, turn to God in confidence that he will help you endure!

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists & that he rewards those who seek him.” **Hebrews 11:6**

Situation: “A guy’s best friend stabs him in the stomach with a knife.”

Perspective: “The friend is a doctor who is removing the man’s ruptured appendix.”

Discernment: “Pain is real and miserable, but going through it saves the man’s life.”

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare & not for evil, to give you a future & a hope.” **Jeremiah 29:11**

III. Trial of Enduring Temptation

“Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, & the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat & withers the grass; its flower falls, & its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, & he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured & enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, & sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift & every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” **James 1:9-18**

“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan & was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil...” **Luke 4:1-2a**

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, & he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” **1 Corinthians 10:13**

Types of Temptations to Endure:

- **Temptation Tied to Wealth (James 1:9-11)**
- **Temptation to Minimize (James 1:12-15)**
- **Temptation Concerning God (James 1:16-18)**

“Looking to Jesus, the founder & perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, & is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” **Hebrews 12:2**

Jesus was steadfast to endure the cross & is worth our steadfastness!

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities:

- *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* – Elwell & Comfort (2001)
- *New American Commentary: James* – Kurt Richardson (1996)

- *Shoe Leather Christianity* – Johnny M. Hunt (2014)
- *Holman NT Commentary: Hebrews & James* – Max Anders (1999)
- *The Book of James* – Johnny M Hunt (2003)
- *James: Faith that Works* – R. Kent Hughes (2013)
- *Exploring the Epistle of James* – John Phillips (2003)
- *Be Mature* – Warren Wiersbe (2010)
- *Swindoll's Living Insights: James, 1&2 Peter* – Chuck Swindoll (2014)
- *MacArthur's NT Commentary: James* – John MacArthur (1998)