

## TRIALS OF A CHILD OF GOD

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### **JAMES 1:1-21**

"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings."

#### **Profiting from Trials**

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

#### **The Perspective of Rich and Poor**

"Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits."

#### **Loving God Under Trials**

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

#### **Qualities Needed in Trials**

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

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The book of James, or more specifically, the epistle of James, epistle being a Greek word that means a written correspondence, is unique amongst the other books of the New Testament. First off, it only mentions the name of Jesus twice, in His opening address, "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ", and then in the start of the second chapter he opens with, "My brethren, do

not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality." (2:1) Another thing that sets the epistle of James apart is the apparent lack of a unifying theme. It seems to be more along the lines of a book of wisdom than it does an apostolic letter to God's people. What is likely remembered by many if not most people about the epistle of James, aside from the wisdom stuff, is that it pointedly comes out and says, "faith without works is dead." It has such a strong and unavoidable message about works needing to be present with one's faith that it bothered Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, who posited the five solas, 1. Sola scriptura, Scripture alone, 2. Sola fide, **faith alone**, 3. Sola gratia, grace alone, 4. Solo Christo, Christ alone, and then 5. Soli Deo gloria, to the glory of God alone. This isn't a message on the five solas but they have been foundational truths within the Christian church ever since. The 2nd one, faith alone, can SEEM to be at odds with what James says in that faith without works is dead, but James was really saying the same thing Jesus and all of the apostles were saying, that if you do have faith in Christ and you have been born-again, that is that you have received the Holy Spirit, which is being born of the Spirit as Jesus put it in **John 3:5**, you will without a doubt be doing those works, or bearing fruit for God's glory.

That leads us back to the theme of James. It was proposed by the author of a textbook called "Letters to the Church, a Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles" (Karen Jobes) that the theme could be this: "Living under the New Covenant-The Royal Law of wholehearted love for God and love for neighbor as oneself." In a way, I guess you could say that is the overall theme of the whole Bible. Then as Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, "Jesus answered him, **"The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."** (Mark 12:29-31) That works perfectly into the proposed theme of James and it fits into our passage of Scripture today in the epistle of James.

In God's personal love letter to His people, the love letter being the Holy Bible, and His people as including us, He reminds us in **Isaiah 44:6**, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God". Then, that we were created by God for His purpose and glory: "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." (Isaiah 43:7) "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." (Revelation 4:11) There is not one person here that wasn't created for God's purpose and pleasure. We are all significant

to God. In this short epistle of just 5 chapters, James mentions faith 12 times. What is another word for faith? As **Hebrews 11:1** states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What are we hoping for? The great and many promises of God, right? There are two prominent and noticeable promises of God in our passage of Scripture today that speak of the here and now and speak also of the things to come- that He will get us through what comes against us and that a crown of life awaits us. What that should say to us is that the interchangeable word with faith is a word that is perhaps a little easier to understand and that is word is TRUST. We have to trust God that He will keep His Word and His promises. A passage of Scripture that everyone should memorize and store in their heart is **Proverbs 3:5-6**, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

It is God who breathed the breath of life into each of us making us a living soul. (**Genesis 2:7**) We wouldn't be here if it wasn't God's purpose and pleasure and as mentioned before, we were created for God's glory. God desires for each of us to be in His eternal kingdom. It was God's will, His desire, that we were created. "**In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.**" The other thing that we have to always have stored in our heart and mind is God's promise that He will NEVER leave you nor forsake you! (**Hebrews 13:5**) You don't sense God's presence or His leading? He's there. Will you trust Him with your whole heart, mind soul and strength. That really is what loving God means. While James makes a point to say faith without works is dead, faith without trusting God is dead. We are then not believing on Jesus if we aren't trusting Him. Several passages of Scripture that are my go to verses in times of trial or temptation are the following: 1. "But of Him [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us Wisdom from God—and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**) When God works in us His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, God IS glorified! 2. When God works in us the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (**Galatians 5:22-23**), God is glorified! How so? As Jesus said, "**By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.**" (**John 15:8**) 3. When, as we are promised, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (**Philippians 1:6**), God gets the glory! Then 4., as the Apostle Paul says in **Philippians 2:12-13**, " Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for **it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**" Having faith, trusting God, loving God, and obeying God all are inseparable, you can't have one without the

others but in all things it is God doing the work even when we don't know what exactly He's doing, all to His glory.

James, after introducing himself and gives a quick greeting to the 12 tribes scattered abroad, he dives right in with, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." James doesn't say "if you fall into various trials", he says, when you fall into various trials. We know from Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy he says, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (**2 Timothy 3:12**) Something I say to the Lord occasionally is this, "I don't mind being persecuted for Jesus' sake. What is the toughest is the daily, grind-it-out times of just dealing with life in this sin-addled, fallen from grace world that we live in." You know, the strivings of man, the temperature extremes, the bugs (like fire-ants and mosquitos), and then even the mind-games that we have to overcome, the questions that pop up in one's head out of nowhere, "are you really saved?", "does God really love you?", "has God left me?" All of those questions WILL pop up in the mind of a child of God. Satan tried to put those those seeds of doubt in Jesus' mind, to operate outside of the will of God, to tempt God, and to dishonor God and worship Satan. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (**Ephesians 6:12**)

That is why we have to trust God, acknowledge Him in all we do and then to remind ourselves that God will never leave us nor forsake us and that God will answer all of our prayers according to His perfect will. Sometimes that's tough when we're waiting and waiting on the Lord as David says in **Psalms 27:14**, "Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!" Yet while we're waiting we can remind ourselves of what David said in another Psalm, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies." (**Psalms 18:1-3**) And Christ is our Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. What that leads me to remembrance of and should be our understanding is what the Apostle says in **Romans 6:11**, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord". "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**" (**Ephesians 2:8-10**) Not only are we to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, but as Paul

says in **Galatians 2:20**, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me", just as James considered himself a bondservant of Christ. From time to time it is inevitable that we are not going to get our way, according to our prayers, even if they are completely in good faith for the glory of God. It may not always seem uplifting to be reminded when your going through something to "count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing", yet that is where we have to "trust in the Lord with all your heart."

While I make it a point to warn others about straying from the Word of God, that is, the 66 books that we call the Holy Bible, there are extrabiblical books that can shed some light on historical facts and there can be texts that can edify, such as reading a devotional like "My utmost for His Highest" or the "Daily Bread", but it always has to agree with what IS in the Word of God. I came across a passage in a book called Sirach, also called Ecclesiasticus (2:1-18) and it beautifully says what I've just shared with you. It speaks of clinging to God, trusting Him, loving Him, and continuing in the faith and hope that we have in Him. It was written a century or two before Christ so it doesn't mention Him, but it is the same hope we have in Christ, the same faith in God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, and do not be impetuous (or quick to react) in time of adversity. Cling to him, do not leave him, that you may prosper in your last days. Accept whatever happens to you; in periods of humiliation be patient. For in fire gold is tested, and the chosen, in the crucible of humiliation. Trust in God, and he will help you; make your ways straight and hope in him. You that fear the Lord, wait for his mercy, do not stray lest you fall. You that fear the Lord, trust in him, and your reward will not be lost. You that fear the Lord, hope for good things, for lasting joy and mercy. Consider the generations long past and see: has anyone trusted in the Lord and been disappointed? Has anyone persevered in his fear and been forsaken? Has anyone called upon him and been ignored? For the Lord is compassionate and merciful; forgives sins and saves in time of trouble. Woe to timid hearts and drooping hands, to the sinner who walks a double path! Woe to the faint of heart! For they do not trust, and therefore have no shelter! Woe to you that have lost hope! what will you do at the Lord's visitation? Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his words; those who love him keep his ways. Those who fear the Lord seek to please him; those who love him are filled with his law. Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts and humble themselves before him. Let us fall into the hands of the

Lord and not into the hands of mortals, for equal to his majesty is his mercy; and equal to his name are his works."

The similarity to what I just read to what James says is striking, almost to the point of thinking perhaps James referred to that when he wrote his epistle. He speaks of the trying of one's faith will bring forth a reward. But, "Woe to timid hearts and drooping hands, to the sinner who walks a double path!" James put it a little different saying, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways." The writer, Ben Sira, or son of Sira, speaks of loving God, hoping in Him, trusting Him, keeping our faith in Him, and fearing Him. We have to trust God wholeheartedly that He will accomplish in us what He has begun, refining us like gold, and that He will come through on His promises.

How many times though are we acting in that double-mindedness? Like the man who wanted Jesus to deliver his son from an evil spirit. "Jesus said to him, **"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:23-24) Help our unbelief, Heavenly Father. Our belief starts with the revelation from God to what Jesus said in **John 3:16-17**, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."** We believe on Jesus being the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world who died on a cross for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself. We are then, as mentioned before, to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive in Christ, to obey God, as He gives us His Holy Spirit that dwells in us making us a new creation, to where we are as Jesus said, born-again. We then begin our new life in Christ, letting Him work in us His wisdom and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption, letting Him work in us the fruit of the Spirit, and to begin loving God and loving others. All of that is part of God's plan in His building His eternal kingdom, to which we get to be used by Him in His building His kingdom as He leads us to share the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes it may not be the big, ugly, abominable sins that set us back. Sometimes it is just the persevering day to day, moment by moment, trusting God along the way, and acknowledging Him in every situation. Sure you can be all ready and prepared for when you go to church or participate in some type of ministry. How about when your going about your daily tasks. He never leaves us or forsakes us. As

King David said in **Psalms 34:17**, "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles." We are His righteous ones in Christ Jesus! He hears our cries, He knows what we are going through. Sometimes He is saying, "Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!" God will allow evil to come against us to try us, to test us, that doesn't mean He caused it. James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." We have to trust God that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (**Romans 8:28**)

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Being slow to speak is in being reminded of what it says in **Hebrews 12:11**, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." We are being trained in righteousness and we are being taught to trust in the Lord. If it seems like your on a merry-go-round to where you keep saying, "yeah I've seen this before, and this, and this" it is that God is not just bringing us back to the same place, but that He can't move us forward until we begin trusting Him and taking Him at His Word. It's God working in us, giving us His wisdom but we have to be obedient in knowing His Word by reading His Word, and meditating on His Word. In those times of trials, the Word will come forth if it is in your heart. One that came to me the other day was simply this, "He will never leave you, nor forsake you." Even when God seems far away and silent He is near. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. **The Lord is at near**. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 4:4-7**) Like a child that is taught to ride a bike, the parent is right there in case they begin to fall. Eventually, the parent lets go of the child and the bike. Sometimes the child crashes or sometimes the parent catches the child before they begin to fall. We are being trained to trust God and to walk in His righteousness all with some incredible promises. We will be joint-heirs with Jesus, we will reign with Him, and we will be glorified together and we will have eternal life in His glorious kingdom.

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have sinned against You.  
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.  
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,  
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,  
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,  
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,  
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.  
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,  
and live in the newness of life, being led by Your Holy Spirit,  
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!