

# James



**“BUT BE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT  
HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOURSELVES.”**

# Take Hope In Trials



- vs. 2-4 – “trials” is *peirasmos* and literally means an experiment, a test in order to prove (cf. vs. 3)
  - Luke 4:13 – as Christ was tested by the devil
  - I Cor 10:13 – trials are common to man, not unique to you
  - Gal 4:14, II Cor 12:7-10 – as suffered by Paul, for his good
  - Jam 1:12 – same word here (“temptation”) in the NKJV
- Not a unique, historical trial, but the various trials faced by all people
  - Esp. Christians (cf. John 15:18ff; Lk 9:23ff; Matt 10:34ff)
- But what reason is there to find joy and hope in trials like these?

# Take Hope In Trials



- *Tested* faith produces perseverance leading to spiritual maturity, character, hope (Rom 5:1-4)
  - A mature faith that will not wither or fade away
  - The harder evil rallies to destroy your character, if you strive and endure, your character is perfected!
  - I Cor 10:13, II Pet 2:9 – the Lord knows how to build you up and how to preserve you
  - How do you view trial: joy, or sorrow and complaining?
- Allow patience to do its completed (“perfect”) work
  - This is part of growing and maturing into what God is helping us to be (Matt 5:48; Rom 8:29; II Cor 3:18)

# What If We Don't Understand?



- Coping with trials, per vs. 2-4, is a difficult lesson:
  - *Why* are we being tempted and tried?
  - We could drive ourselves crazy trying to identify the exact reasons and peculiar providence of the Lord...
- Notice that the answer is not *knowledge* in this case:
  - Who can know the mind of God outside His word? (Isa 55:8f)
  - Who could possibly understand all His reasons? (Rom 11:33ff)
- The answer, in this case, is *wisdom*: “insight into the true nature of things” (see Strong, *sophia*)
  - In trial, the peace that comes through trusting God, *understanding* but not necessarily *knowing* (Phil 4:6-9)

# What If We Don't Understand?



- **vs. 5-9** – if anyone lacks wisdom: **ask of God!**
- Two glorious truths:
  - God – yes, **GOD** – is listening! Do you take this lightly?
  - God is ready and willing to give unrestrainedly!
  - cf. Matt 6:8,7:7,11; I Chron 1; Dan 2:20-23; Matt 25:29
- In many ways, *asking* of the Lord, seeking reverent counsel in prayer, is the beginning of wisdom...
  - Ps 111:10 w. Prov 9:10
- “*without reproach*,” i.e. without harshness or rebuke, cf. Ps 84:11 w. Luke 18:1-7, Matt 7:7-12

# The Double-Minded Prayer



- Praying without faith, wavering between belief and doubt, takes on many forms:
  - The prayer without belief in God's power
  - The prayer without belief that God hears and answers
  - The prayer that trusts in self too much to need God
  - The prayer that is offered by tradition and no true faith
  - The prayer that is offered just in case...
- Heb 11:6 – God is a rewarder of those who seek Him, believing who He is and trusting His power and will
- How can we gain this unwavering faith? See Rom 10:17

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 9-11** – The trials and temptations of rich and poor
- These verses do not stand alone, but fit the context of James 1 in at least a couple of ways:
  1. *Wealth is one of the greatest hindrances to truly trusting in God, both:*
    - The possession of it (cf. Matt 6:19-24; Ecc 5:9-20)
    - And the struggle to attain it (I Tim 6:6-10)
  2. *Trials and temptations do not discriminate between types of persons:*
    - Read with I Tim 6:6-10, 17-10

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 9-11** – Whether rich or poor, trials come upon every Christian, and in every case they help us grow:
  - The poor Christian finds glory that he or she is rich in the gospel, learning:
    - The wealth abiding in faith (Luke 4:18; Jam 2:5)
    - The peace of contentment (I Tim 6:6-10)
  - The rich Christian finds glory in his or her abasement (i.e. “made low,” ASV), learning:
    - Trust in Christ, not riches (I Tim 6:17-18)
    - Blessedness of giving (Acts 20:35; II Cor 9:6ff)
    - Brevity, insecurity of life (**vs. 10-11**; I John 2:17; Luke 12:20)

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 12** – The result of endurance through trial:
  - Vss. 2-4 remind us that trials bring patience, which molds the character as only God knows how
    - cf. Heb 12:3-11; Rom 5:1-4; I Pet 2:20-25; II Pet 1:5-11
  - Now vs. 12 (similar to the passages above) remind us of the end result of faithfully enduring trials:
    - The crown of eternal life: “crown” representing the prize, the ultimate goal (cf. II Cor 9:24-27; II Tim 4:8)
    - *We endure trial and temptation with faith and integrity because we know that this life is not the end!*
    - I Pet 1:6-9; Heb 12:1-2 – this is what faith is all about!

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 13-18** – Do my trials come from God?
- If God is using trial to mold and test my faith and character, isn't He the *author* of these trials?
- Defensively: if God is the author of these trials, am I to blame when I sin, or is He?
- What does this argument *really* imply? That God actively tries to lead people to spiritual death! (Rom 6:23)
- *The assumption is wrong*: that God *uses* trials for good does not make Him the *originator* of those trials.
  - As God is able to use the free will of wicked rulers to bring about ultimate good (Ps 2)
  - cf. Isa 10:5,7,12,24-25; Jer 25:9; Isa 44:28,45:1; etc.

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 13-18** – Do my trials come from God?
- Three truths demonstrate the error of this argument:
  1. *God cannot be tempted by evil*: how could He unrighteously tempt anyone else to do evil?
    - cf. Ps 145:17; I John 1:5
    - God cannot do anything that contradicts His nature and character (e.g. Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18)
  2. *Temptation comes from within, through the free will and lusts of man*:
    - This is the honest assessment of everyone who chooses to sin (cf. Ps 51)
    - I John 2:16 – pride, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 13-18** – Do my trials come from God?
- Three truths demonstrate the error of this argument:
  3. *God is the giver of every good and perfect gift:*
    - God showers the earth – His children (Matt 7:11), unbelievers (Ps 107:8, Matt 5:45), all creation (Ps 104) – with His blessings continually, unwaveringly
    - How could the giver of all things good possibly be tempting you to do evil?
    - *Ultimate example:* God saved us in Christ through the “word of truth” (i.e. the gospel, Col 1:4, cf. I Pet 1:22-25)
    - “of His own will” – i.e. by His own desire and goodness, see Rom 3:21-26, 5:6-11 and Eph 1:3, 2:1-10

# Trials Such As Are Common To Man



- **vs. 17** – Note: “*Father of lights*”
- God is light (I John 1:5) and the Creator of all light:
  - Physical – Ps 8:3,4; 19:1-6; 136:1-9
  - Spiritual – Isa 9:2 (w. Matt 4); John 1:1-13; Eph 5:8
- James uses astronomical language: “lights,” “variation” (*parallax*), “shadow of turning”
  - Refers to “the varying measure of light seen on the earth from the sun” (see Reese 26-27)
- As light from the heavens, God’s blessings shower all the earth continually
- Though the sun and moon are sometimes hidden from our gaze, God’s goodness **always** shines down on us

# Summary



- Count trials a joy: God, in His care and wisdom, is molding your character and faith
- When we struggle to understand truths this profound, we need to pray for wisdom
  - Not as an afterthought, heartless tradition, or just in case, but with faith in the word of God
- Rich or poor, we will all face trial, and such trials provide us all opportunities to mature in faith
- Don't accuse God of tempting you: your own lusts bring on temptation, and choosing to sin brings death.
- God only gives us good things: *just consider the gift of His Son!*