



**JAMES—A STUDY (PART ONE)
CHAPTER 1 VERSES 1 TO 8**

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This is the first in a series of messages on the book of James. Before embarking on the series, we suggest that you read the whole book of James in one sitting. This will give you a sense of the flavor of the book, its main themes, and God's message to us through His servant James. It will also help prepare you to study it in more detail. Then, as you join us on our journey through the book, you may wish to take a notebook and journal your thoughts.

Introduction

"This epistle of James is one of the most instructive writings in the New Testament... The leading truths of Christianity are set forth throughout and [should be given] attentive consideration... The truths laid down are very serious, and necessary to be maintained; and the rules for practice ought to be observed in all times." (Matthew Henry)

The book of James speaks of the fact that if a person has faith, fruit must also be seen in their life. It's useless to say I have faith if my life bears no fruit. According to God, there is no such thing as a faith that does not bear fruit. Where there is no fruit, there is no real faith.

Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance (Matthew 3:8 AMP.) If we say we have repented and given our lives to Christ, our lives must bear fruit. The verb used is "bring forth", which is a command, an active verb, something we have to do. If you plant an orange tree, it will bring forth oranges, but only if you ensure that it is given the right conditions to be able to bear fruit. If the soil contains no nutrition, if the tree receives no water, no sunlight, it will bear no fruit. And at times you must prune the tree. If a tree could feel, pruning would be a very painful process. God's word says that He prunes us at times. It's a painful process. But He has to do this so that we can bear fruit. So, part of the responsibility for us bearing fruit is God's; He has to work in us by His Spirit. But part of the responsibility is ours; seeing what God wants we must do it. Otherwise there will be no fruit. If we call ourselves Christians, that is, followers of Jesus Christ, we must live as Christians. So let's bring forth fruit in keeping with our repentance.

Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV.) Here the apostle Paul is speaking about how church meetings should be managed; that everything should be done decently and in order. But this truth applies to every area of life, because God is not a God of disorder. He's a God of order. Hence He wants us to live decent, ordered lives. Part of the purpose of studying the book of James is to help us see what God wants in our lives, so we can order them more in line with His will. Ephesians tells us we must be imitators of God, as dearly loved children (5:1.) If we're going to be able to imitate God, we need to know what He's like; what He hates and what things please Him. Thus we'll know how to live decent and ordered lives.

So as you read James, certain verses will probably jump out at you, and you'll feel like this, "Oh Lord, in this area of my life I'm not living according to Your Word..." Or, "This area of my life is disordered..." When a verse strikes you like that, you need to pay careful and close attention to what God is saying to you, and take action on what you read, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to bring your life into line with what you've read.

**THERE IS NO SUCH
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Chapter 1, verses 1 to 8

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings. (James 1:1 KJV) Who is James? He's a servant of God. We're not told anything more about him here. Just that he's a servant of God. That's how he introduces himself, showing that his focus, his call is to be a servant of God. Nothing more and nothing less. Many people say, "I'm a servant of God." But their lives don't line up with their words. When James says, "I'm a servant of God," it's because he's a true servant; the whole focus of his life is to serve his King. He doesn't live for people's praise, or for some kind of fame even as a minister. We know this partly because history tells us that he was one of Jesus' brothers, but he doesn't even mention that here. He lives just to please his Lord. So what he writes is going to be strictly what God wants us to hear.

IF THERE IS NO
FAITH, YOU
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FROM GOD.

Who is he writing to? "*To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad...*" The nation of Israel was formed from twelve tribes. In the Bible, Israel represents God's people. According to the New Testament, the church represents the new Israel, the people of God. So James is writing to the church. He mentions the twelve tribes because as the church, symbolically speaking we are the twelve tribes. And by mentioning all twelve tribes, James shows that he's writing to the whole worldwide church, with no exceptions. You can't say, "Ah, but this letter doesn't apply to me." It's written to everyone in all churches, without exception.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (James 1:2) "Divers temptations" is also translated "various trials." There are various trials in life. The trials that you have to go through are probably not the same trials that I have to go through. But they're all still trials. Most likely you have various trials in your life, trials of different kinds and for different reasons. Many times we don't know why we have to undergo certain trials. God doesn't tell us. We only know that we are in a trial and that all God's children experience various different trials.

Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (James 1:2-3) What does the testing of your faith produce? Patience. And when you are in a trial, what is being tested? Your faith. Because here it says, "*divers temptations... knowing... that the trying of your faith...*" Trials and faith go together. So whenever you are in a trial, your faith is what is being put to the test.

That's why when we find ourselves in a trial, sometimes we react like this, "Maybe God doesn't love me." Our faith is being tested. "Will I make it through this trial or should I just give up now?" Your faith is being tested. "Will things turn out OK in the end or not? Because if not I may as well just throw in the towel now." Your faith is being tested. We may even ask ourselves, "Could it be that God doesn't even exist?" To be honest, and I always want to be honest with you, at times I have asked myself that very question. I haven't asked it now for a long time, but there have been moments in my life when due to various trials I've had to contend with that lie that Satan has whispered into my ear. But thank God, the faith that He has put in me has always helped me to make it through, to keep trusting in Him. **Whatever your trial may be, it is your faith that's being tested.**

Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations... All joy? "All joy" is also translated, "great joy" or "wholly joyful." Great joy? Great joy when you have a painful illness? Great joy when you are unemployed? Great joy when someone you love rejects and abandons you? Great joy? What kind of person was James to say things like this? And what kind of human being could honestly say, "Oh, how wonderful, God is testing me!" But the command here is plainly stated: "*count it all joy.*" What does this mean?

You have to read verse 2 together with verse 3 to be able to understand it. "*Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*" There's the key. The trial itself is not a cause for joy. It doesn't make us joyful. But **God's purpose in permitting the trial is a cause for joy.** "God, this trial is so very painful. There's a sadness in me because of the trial. But I have joy because I know that through this trial you are producing patience in me." So, the trial itself is not what gives us cause for great joy. But we have cause for great joy knowing that God is working in us something of incredible value: patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James 1:4) “Patience” is also translated “endurance,” “steadfastness,” and “perseverance.” Let perseverance do a thorough work, so that you may be people perfectly and fully developed, lacking nothing; that is, people of integrity.

This shows just how important it is to have patience, to be persevering people. “Patience” is often misinterpreted. It does not mean that when you are in a trial and know that God wants you to have patience, you just sit down with your arms folded and wait for God to do something. The patience that is mentioned here is a very active thing, not a passive thing. It’s a perseverance that continues trusting in God and obeying Him in spite of the trial.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5) We’ve seen that the person who perseveres is a complete person, a person of integrity. What a great character quality to have! But then James says that even though we may have perseverance, we also need wisdom. It’s not enough just to persevere. Many times I’ve been in some kind of trial, I’ve been persevering, trusting in God and trying to honor Him in my actions, but I’ve realized that I lack wisdom. I’ve asked God, “God, I need to know what to think and what to do to be able to move forward with You in this thing; not blindly but with my eyes open.” “*Who does not want wisdom to guide him under trials, both in regulating his own spirit, and in managing his affairs?*” (Matthew Henry) So if you are persevering but in need of wisdom, what should you do? Ask God. Simple as that – ask God. And it says that God gives “to all men liberally and upbraideth not.” In other words He gives to all people, not just certain ones; He gives abundantly; and He does not rebuke you for asking for wisdom.

But there is one exception. There’s one situation in which even though you ask God for wisdom, you will not receive it. What is the exception?

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:6-8) So it seems the double-minded person will not receive anything from the Lord. God gives to everyone, but if there is no faith, you can’t receive from Him. He wants to give, but in order to receive, you have to have faith.

What is “faith?” Many messages have been preached on faith, and many of them are very misguided. Let’s give a simple definition in an effort to express what faith really means. **Faith is trust in God based on contact with Him and expressed through obedience.** Trusting and obeying Him, based on being in contact with Him.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17) When you accepted Christ, He gave you the gift of faith. He gave you faith. You have faith, if you have accepted Christ! But you need to grow and mature in that faith. How does this happen? By hearing God. Hearing Him. Because here it says that faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. That’s why we’re always exhorting you to read the Bible. So you can hear the word of God. And we’re also constantly encouraging you to communicate with God, to talk with Him, to take time each day to converse with Him. It’s very to develop these habits, because they give God opportunity to talk to you, and thus faith can grow in your life, in the fertile soil of your contact with Him.

But it’s not enough to just hear the word of God. You also have to act upon it, because faith without actions is dead. There is no such thing as faith without works. Faith always manifests itself through works.

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. (Hebrews 4:2) This is speaking of the people of Israel when they were in the desert and God told them to enter into the Promised Land. They didn’t believe God. Their response was, “Oh, but there are giants there; we can’t enter!” Even though God had told them that He would give them the victory. They’d heard the voice of God, they’d heard His words, but the word they heard was not mixed with faith in them; that is, they didn’t choose to trust in what God had told them. So they didn’t enter into the Promised Land. In the same way, when God speaks to you, you have to make a decision to trust in what He’s told you. And from that position of trust you’ll be able to act on His word.

GOD WANTS
THERE TO BE A
SPIRITUAL
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A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. The double-minded person is someone who listens to the word, who hears God's voice in His word, but doesn't trust in what he's heard or act upon it. On numerous occasions I've been ministering to someone, counseling them, and it has been very evident what they must do to bring order into their life, to bring it more in line with God's word, and they've told me, "Yes, I know that this is what I must do..." But then they've not done it. And some time later it's clear from their life that they have not grown in Christ, in fact they've gone backwards, because they've heard the word, maybe even believed the word, but have not acted on the word. There are things that only God can do for us, but there are things that God cannot do for us; we have to do them ourselves. If I feel that God wants me to call a certain person, I have to pick up the telephone and dial the number. God isn't going to do that for me.

So when we hear God's word we have to trust it and act on what it tells us. **The double-minded person hears the word but does not act on it.** Such a person will not receive wisdom from the Lord even though he or she asks for it.

When we are in trials, God wants us to continue to trust in Him and obey Him, not giving up, in spite of the intense difficulty of the situation. Because He wants there to be a spiritual stability in our lives. For us not to be double-minded people, driven back and forth like the waves of the sea. He wants there to be stability in our lives.

Many times there is no stability in our circumstances. In the various trials. There is no stability in the way others treat us. At times it seems like there is no stability or order in what God permits in our lives. But we have to persevere, with this attitude, "Lord, I'll continue to trust and obey You; to move forward in You because you have a purpose for my life."

I want to mention Glenda, the wife of one of our leaders, Oscar. This has been a week of trial for her, because for a while we didn't know if Oscar was going to survive the illness he's had. People are dying of hemorrhagic dengue fever here. And Oscar was bordering on that very illness. When I went to visit Glenda, I knew in my heart that it is a difficult time for her. But take note of what I saw in her: a stability. Why? Because she is trusting in God. Even without knowing how things would turn out. I saw a trust in her, even though she didn't know if her husband would return from hospital alive or not. She has a maturity based on this, "God, I will trust in You. I will not give up. I will keep honoring and obeying you, because I know that You are God and You love me." I didn't see any double-mindedness in her. Instead I saw a stability; otherwise known as perseverance, or patience. Perseverance in spite of the trials; in fact, perseverance because of the trials.

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. (Hebrews 6:11-12 NIV) Once again, faith and patience go together. Those people who walk by faith and with perseverance are those who inherit the promises. So let's not be lazy about what God says and what He wants. Let's move forward, trusting in Him. That's the kind of character God wants us to have.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Those who draw back don't bring pleasure to God's soul. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:35-39) But we are people of faith. Let's walk in true faith: trust in God based on contact with Him and expressed through obedience.

We've seen that God wants us to count it all joy in the midst of our trial; to take joy in the fact that He is doing a most important work in us. We've seen that trials produce perseverance in us, a perseverance necessary in order to inherit all that God has for us. And that we are not to be double-minded people; rather to walk in faith, listening to and trusting in Him; continuing to do what He wants in the midst of the trial. This brings great pleasure to our Lord's soul. Amen.



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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK"- JESUS
(JOHN 7:37)