

## Lecture 11 – James 1: The Trials of Life

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4*

### Key Terms

Living faith, rich & poor, true wisdom, doing the Word, Christian life as trial, joy, endurance

### Lecture Objectives

- Locate the context (historically and theologically) of James, noting its impact on interpretation
- Outline James' purpose and development
- Identify common issues between first readers and ourselves, noting how James ought to impact our life and ministry

### Preliminary Questions

- What is the role of suffering in the Christian life? What role has it had in your life? In your family? In your church?
- What are some ways that trials can lead to individual maturity? The maturity of a local community of believers? The maturity of God's people worldwide?

## James 1: The Trials of Life

### I. Introduction

#### A. Illustration

#### B. The burden of James:

1. To exhort the church to live its faith in the crucible of life - in all its tests.
2. Chapter 1 as overture, chapters 2-4 developing its themes
  - a. Rich and poor 1:9-11 and 4:13-5:6
  - b. True wisdom: 1:5-8 and 3:13-4:10
  - c. Doing the word 1:22-26 and 2:14-26
3. Therefore not truth just for hour of sorrow but for all of life, because all of life is a trial.

*What is some evidence that we need this same exhortation?*

#### C. Outline of James 1

1. Blessed is the man who perseveres in trial (12, 25), by keeping faith in goodness of God.
2. First cycle: Focus on how to use trials 1:2-12.
3. Second cycle: Focus on how not to regard trials and the word.
4. Three main themes: Control of tongue, care for poor and freedom from world.

### II. The Sense in Which Christian Life is a Trial

#### A. Life setting and its limits

1. Setting: Strong in knowledge but weak in life.
2. Today?

#### B. Trial theme in James

1. Poverty tries us (1:9-11, 2:5-7, 5:1-6).
2. Riches a trial: Can produce pride (1:9-11, 2:1-15, 5:1-6)
3. Knowledge tries us, for we must then practice what we know (2:15-17, 3:1, 4:11-12,

17)

4. Abilities and ambitions try us
5. Lure of world tries us. Ambition (4:13-16) Impatience (5:7-11).
6. Illness tests us (5:13-16).

C. Basic counsel: Rejoice in trial and let it do its work, so you come to maturity.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

D. Illustration of growth through trial

III. Thesis: James 1:2-4, Two Commands for Trials of Life

A. Count suffering as cause for joy (1:3).

1. Who?
2. Why?

B. Endurance results

1. Maturity, complete development
2. The wrong questions: Whose fault is it?

*In what ways do these commands impact you in your current place in life and ministry? In your family? In your church?*

IV. First Development of Thesis

A. Wisdom for trial 1:5-8 The need for wisdom, getting wisdom to survive trial

1. Lack nothing; if you lack anything, don't lack wisdom
2. He gives to all without reproach - if we ask sincerely
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Ask and act to gain wisdom (see James 3:13)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Rich and poor 1:9-11

1. Poor man's boast
2. Rich man's boast. (see Is 40:6-7)
3. The connection

C. Conclusion and transition

1. Believe God means to bless those who persevere.

V. Second Development of Thesis: God's Purpose and Human Disposition in Trials

A. He has good purpose in trial, specified (13-18)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Why is it difficult for us to believe that God has good purposes in trials?*

B. Receiving the word (1:19-21)

1. *iste* = “Know [this]” or “You know [this]” (19a)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. (21b)

C. Hearing and doing the word

1. Ancient Rhetoric: Thesis, Reason, Embellishment (more reasons, objections, illustrations), Conclusion

2. Thesis:

3. Reason:

4. Illustration:

5. Conclusion:

D. Doing the word is the proof of true religion 1:26-27

1. “Religion”

a. False: Failure to control tongue (prepares for 3:1)

b. True: Visit for widows and orphans in distress (2:1-26)

c. True: Keeping self unstained (4-5)

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

2. “Show of religion ... ?”

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_