

Instead, Satan is the one who tries to unravel your faith. Temptation comes from our own physical desires for evil things that go against God's will. So, temptation is a lure that appeals to our fleshly desires. Whenever we are interested in doing what pleases ourselves rather than God and consider the possibility (being drawn away and enticed), we are tempted. This point, however, is not sin (as one can still do what is right, 1 Corinthians 10:13). Sin occurs (is born) when the desire conceives (i.e. when it is put into action to violate God's will, 1 John 3:4). Then, sin results in spiritual death (Romans 6:23; 1 Timothy 5:6). The one who allows sin to continue to grow in his/her life rather than finding forgiveness through Jesus will experience eternal separation from God in Hell (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 21:8).

Recognizing God as the source of all that is good (1:16-18). You must not be deceived so as to think God is the source of anything evil. Instead, God is the source of every good and perfect thing! They are gifts from Him (though you may also do your part in working for them; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). He is the Father of lights in that He is the source of the wonderful blessing of light for everyone (Genesis 1:1-5). And, He does not change like shadows that change and shift throughout the day. Instead, He remains constant (Hebrews 13:8). Furthermore, God is also the giver of every good gift spiritually. Rather than giving us birth to have spiritual death (as sin does), He gives us birth to have spiritual life! God has made His choice to send Jesus to answer the problem of sin and provide the opportunity for everyone to have eternal life in Heaven through the gospel (the word of truth, Romans 1:16). Those James was writing to were a kind of firstfruits in that they were likely among some of the earliest Christians and members of Jesus's church. Today, everyone who believes and obeys the word of truth can continue to be added to Jesus's church and be one of God's creatures (special people) and be saved!

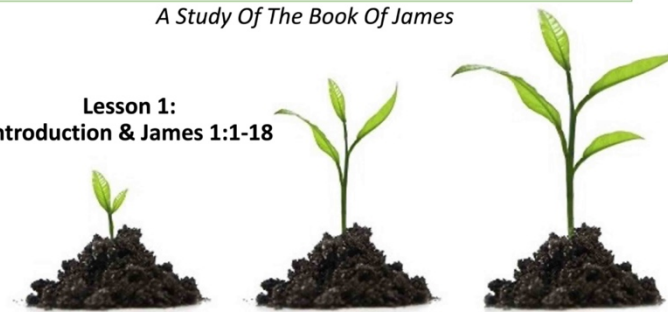
Conclusion

We have explored some brief background information about James's letter. We have considered James's brief introduction. And, we have learned some powerful lessons about enduring trials. In the next lesson, we will study James 1:19-2:13.

"That You May Be Mature And Complete"

A Study Of The Book Of James

Lesson 1: Introduction & James 1:1-18



James 1:2-4 summarizes the importance and purpose of the letter written by James. James was inspired by God to write to these Christians to help them become mature and complete in the Lord and overcome challenges they were facing.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some background to the letter, consider James's greeting, and learn to endure through trials in a study of James 1:1-18.

Background Of James

Author. The author identifies himself in 1:1 as James. There are three men named James predominantly mentioned in the Bible. First, James, the son of Zebedee and apostle of Jesus (Matthew 10:2, who was martyred in Acts 12), is likely not the author. Second, James, the son of Alphaeus and apostle of Jesus (Matthew 10:3), is also likely not the author (as there is no reference to the author being an apostle). Third, James, one of Jesus's brothers (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; 1 Corinthians 15:7) and a leading member of the Jerusalem church (apparently an elder, Acts 12:17; 15:6-21; 21:18; Galatians 1:18-19; 2:9, 12) is the most likely candidate for the writing the letter in my opinion (Jude 1:1).

Recipients. There is no specific congregation or person named as the recipient of this letter (1:1). The reference to the twelve tribes leads many to conclude James was specifically writing to Jewish Christians. But, although this may be largely true, all Christians are counted as part of spiritual Israel (Romans 9-11). Then, the recipients of the letter had been dispersed so as to live in various places (perhaps due to persecution or some other reason).

Date and place of writing. Little can be known for certain about when and from where James wrote this letter. If the author is the Lord's

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brother, the date could range from around AD 31-34 (when persecution hit the church in Acts 7-9) to AD 62 (the date for James's believed martyrdom). Several factors have influenced some to think it may have been the earliest New Testament writing. Similarly, the place James was located when writing is impossible to know (though this James was often connected with Jerusalem).

Purpose of writing. James wrote this letter to Christians and addressed their need to become spiritually mature (1:2-4). Though these verses are particularly in the context of Christians experiencing trials, the instructions given throughout the letter fit with this same central purpose. In fact, the letter contains many practical instructions related to mature Christian living. You may also note similarities throughout the letter to Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7. This letter has also been called "The Proverbs of the New Testament."

Greeting (1:1)

Author (1:1a). It is my belief this James was the Lord's brother. He only identifies himself here as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recipients (1:1b). It is commonly believed that James was writing to Jewish Christians who had been scattered throughout Gentile lands (though Gentile Christians may also be included as part of spiritual Israel). Certainly, it is a general letter applicable to all Christians.

Greeting (1:1c). This greeting is notably different than the apostle Paul or Peter commonly used. With this brief greeting, James begins to discuss what he needed to write.

Enduring Trials (1:2-18)

Finding joy in trials (1:2-4). Christians will experience various kinds of trials in this fallen world (i.e. sickness, pain, death). The Greek word for "trial" can be translated both "temptation" and "trial," depending on context. These are situations that put one's faith to the test. But, rather than these trials destroying faith, Christians can find joy through them. This joy results from knowing that there is a positive outcome of trials (as long as one remains faithful to Christ, 1 Peter 1:6-7). For one, the testing of faith produces endurance, thereby proving to God, to others, and to ourselves we will continue practicing true faith in God. This endurance is critical because it leads to spiritual maturity and completeness. This is the full effect of endurance – to be brought to a place where you do not lack in anything necessary to pleasing God. Therefore, we can rejoice in trials since they are a catalyst for refining and strengthening our faith, knowing the end result is a home in Heaven (Romans 5:3-5).

Asking God for wisdom (1:5-8). Wisdom is needed to find joy in trials. Rather than lacking such wisdom (v. 4), a primary way of gaining true godly wisdom is asking God through prayer (who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly from His great storehouse of wisdom, Romans 11:33-36; 1 Kings 3:1-14). But, the one who asks for such must ask in faith and not doubt He can give what we ask for if it is His will. The doubter is unsteady, like the surges/waves of the sea that are driven by the winds. This one should not expect to receive what he/she asks God for, because he/she is doubleminded and unstable (believing enough to ask God to give wisdom; but not really trusting God can do it).

Boasting in God, whether rich or poor (1:9-11). Financial struggles is often one source of trials. The temptation is often to rely on physical things more than God. To address such, James says that the person who has humble financial means (poor) can boast because he/she is exalted by God (as a poor person can be blessed spiritually through Jesus just as much as anyone else)! Jesus has lifted such a person the world may hold in contempt because of his/her poverty to an honored position of being truly rich in Christ! On the other hand, the one who is rich physically should boast that they are humbled (brought low) in Christ Jesus (having been given no special privileges or blessings as a Christian due to wealth). Such a one can boast in his/her humiliation because he/she will die (pass away like a flower of the field) just like the poor person and lose all his/her wealth. Therefore, it is essential to only boast in Jesus Christ – since the rich person will wither while pursuing his/her activities (unless he/she follows Jesus)!

Standing the test (1:12). The Christian is blessed for enduring the tests of life. While those who fail to show genuine faith through the trials will be punished, those who have endured and stood the test will be approved of God and receive the Heavenly reward God will give to those who truly love Him (the crown of life, 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 2:9-11). So, every trial they experience will work out for their spiritual good (Romans 8:28, 31-39)!

Understanding the source of temptation (1:13-15). While many people blame God and lose their faith during times of testing, we must develop the proper view of trials to recognize God does not tempt us to do anything that is evil. For, He cannot tempt or be tempted. That is, no matter what the test is, God never tries to get you to do what is wrong because He is holy (1 John 1:5; Revelation 4:8). So, there is no desire to do anything evil for Satan to appeal to. Instead, God uses the trials to prove and strengthen your faith.