

#2 James Chapter 1b

©Tom Tillman

Verse 9: 'Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, ¹⁰ but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. ¹¹ 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.'

James is giving his readers, and us, several tests of faith; are we really children of God in whom He has created faith, true, saving faith and in whom He is instilling an understanding of Scripture?

The first test was whether or not we face trials with an attitude of Joy, expecting God to produce patience in us through which He will continue to complete His work in us, forming us into the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Second test is whether or not we seek God's Wisdom to carry us through each test and whether or not we ask without doubting, expecting Him to give us Wisdom.

Now he is telling us that wealth and poverty are both tests of faith. Most people, if they were asked, would choose wealth over poverty but those who are wise recognize that wealth can be a much more difficult test of faith than is poverty.

Poverty is a test of faith; will he trust God? The one who is poor can be greedy and selfish; he can be angry and resentful, jealous and covetous but if he is wise, if he asks for wisdom, he will remember that in God's economy, he is not lesser than anyone and in fact, if he will trust God, not only will his needs be met in this life but eventually this life here will be over and he will receive his eternal rewards from the hand of his Lord.

Wealth is a test of faith; will he trust God or will he trust in his riches? The rich person can be selfish, greedy and covetous. Throughout His Word, God warns that it is very difficult for a rich person to trust in God and not in his riches. If he is wise, asking God for wisdom, then he will remember that his life on Earth will soon be over and that he will soon stand before God to be rewarded or suffer the loss of rewards according to what he has done in his earthly body.

With both, the one who is rich and the one who is poor, God's exhortation is for us to see every trial, to see all of life itself from God's perspective: temporal vs eternal: perishable vs permanent and imperishable. Anything money can buy will eventually be destroyed. The things which are eternal, that will never perish... cannot be bought with money.

There is a way, however, to seemingly '**buy**' what is eternal, to '**buy**' eternal rewards. When we are faithful with the resources God has provided, whether we are wealthy or poor, by Earthly standards, when we are faithful to be generous with those who have less, within the Body, and when we are faithful in giving to the work of the ministry where God specifically leads us individually, then those resources, whether large for a rich person or small from a poor person, result in eternal rewards that are beyond imagination. That is another area where God's wisdom is needed; it's one more area where we should always be asking God for wisdom... 'Lord, what do You want me to do with this extra money or this extra time or this extra talent?'

Something to always remember about giving: a poor person might gain unimaginable eternal rewards with just \$1 whereas a rich person might receive very little reward, even for having given \$10,000. To the poor person, that \$1 might have been all they had while to the rich person, that \$10,000 might have meant nothing at all while God might have been impressing upon that rich person to give \$100 thousand.

Verse 12: 'Blessed is the man who endures temptation or, Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.'

Blessed by God is the one who asks for wisdom from God, both before the trial ever comes and also when he sees that he is in the midst of a trial, and then walks through the trial, no matter how short or long its duration, trusting God to strengthen, encourage and uphold him until the trial has passed.

Remember when we were studying Ephesians and the Armor of God? All the different parts of the Armor of God were what we used and the things we remembered from God's Word, in order to stand still in the attack until the attack was passed. Every trial comes from the hand of God, to be used by Him in building patience in us and if we will allow patience to have its perfect work, He will make us perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. We must always remember that along with every trial, there will also come an attack from the enemy, lies to draw us away from God and then, out of our own hearts there will arise the temptation to doubt and fear, to disbelieve God and His Word.

The trial comes from God but the temptation does not.

Verse 13: '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. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.'

God does not sin and He doesn't tempt to sin. John says, 'God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' 1Jn1:5 Usually, our first response to sin, to being caught in sin, is to blame someone else. Most commonly, we try to blame God; You made me like this, You allowed that situation, You didn't protect me. Adam tried to blame God; he said, 'the woman which You gave me'... Eve tried to blame the serpent. James makes very clear that there is only one person to blame when we sin and that is ourselves.

Sin always begins in our own hearts with our own fleshly desires and sin always leads to death. If left unchecked in the Christian's life, it will eventually lead to physical death like we read about in 1 Cor. 5. If left unchecked in the unbeliever's life, it will eventually lead to spiritual death and eternity in the Lake of Fire.

God tests us and tries us to perfect us and form us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. He promises to never leave us, to always strengthen and uphold us. When we believe and trust God, we are glorifying Him because we are declaring, 'God is righteous and holy, He will not lie, He can be trusted!' We are declaring, 'I believe and trust God. I believe He will carry me through this trial or temptation.' When we trust God, we are declaring what we believe and we are glorifying Him.

When we doubt, we are also declaring what we believe, that God is untrustworthy, that He is a liar. I don't trust Him to carry me through this.' When we trust Him, we give Him glory. When we doubt Him, we steal that glory for ourselves because we are saying, 'I know better than God... this is not the best thing for me... this is not right.' We are saying the same thing that Lucifer said, 'I will be like the Most High!'

God said, 'I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; and My glory I will not give to another' Isa. 42:8

Every trial is a temptation and every temptation is a trial and every trial and every temptation is a test... a testing of our faith to strengthen and purify our faith.

Remember how it used to be with old fashioned TV... every week, stations were required to do a test. There would be a long beep; then a voice would say, '*This is a test; this station is conducting a test of the Emergency Broadcast System. This is only a test. If this had been an actual emergency, you would have been instructed to tune to one of the broadcast stations in your area.*' Then, after another long beep, the voice would say, '*This concludes this test of the Emergency Broadcast System.*'

That is exactly what every trial and temptation is... In our spirits, we should hear the voice of the Holy Spirit saying, '*This is a test, a test of your trial and temptation response system; this is only a test. If this had been an actual emergency, you would be waking up in Heaven right now. Wake up! Pay attention!*'

Every trial, every temptation and every test is a once in a lifetime opportunity. We can either ask God for wisdom to see it from His perspective and then trust Him to carry us through it or we can doubt Him and His

Word and struggle through it on our own. If we trust Him, and 'pass' the test, He will reward us beyond our imagination when we stand before Him. Every trial, test and temptation is a once in a lifetime opportunity to gain unimaginable eternal rewards. If we fail and lose those particular rewards, we will never regain them. There will be other tests, trials and temptations but that one will never return.

Here is the picture I use to remind myself: as soon as every trial comes, it's as if we enter a dark cavern. If we do not seek God's wisdom, we will wander about in the darkness and, from within our own double minded hearts will rise up the temptation to fear and doubt God's love and care for us. If, on the other hand, we ask God for wisdom, it's as if He suddenly turns the light on within the cavern and we can see; all around us there are scattered gold nuggets and precious jewels of every kind: diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds all sparkling brightly all around on the floor of the cavern and embedded into the walls and ceiling. God then invites us to gather up all that we can carry, for as long as the trial lasts. When we respond correctly, when we trust and believe God, He will set aside for us eternal rewards. When the trial has passed, we are then able to leave the cavern, carrying with us all the gold and jewels we were able to gather which we can then deposit into the Bank of Heaven, knowing that they will be waiting, to be given to us as soon as we get to Heaven.

If the trial is a seemingly 'small' one, lasting a short time, maybe we got the flu or we had a flat tire on the way to Church, then we enter the cavern and soon return with just what we could carry in our hands. If the trial is more serious and maybe lasts a little longer, He'll allow us to enter the cavern with a backpack or a suitcase. If it's a big trial, He may let us fill up a wheelbarrow but with some very serious trials, like the death of a spouse or child, or a long illness, He allows us to bring a truck into the cavern and continue filling it for as long as the trial lasts and for some, it's a life-long trial with a life-long filling up of the truck with the rewards going directly into the Bank of Heaven, but we are only able to collect all those rewards if we are faithful to ask Him for wisdom and then seek to walk in the light of His Word.

Verse 16: 'Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ 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.'

Remember, these are Hebrew Christians who are already experiencing persecution. Demons will whisper, *'If God is so good, then why does He allow you to suffer; maybe He doesn't love you after all. If He was really all-powerful He could stop this persecution and I'm sure He would if He could... if He really loved you...'*

We have a radio listener who keeps sending me emails to that effect: if God was real, He would have healed my brother of cancer. Therefore He is not real; He is just make believe.

When we fail to remember that God loves us and that He is causing all things to work together for our good, we open ourselves up to demonic deception. In every trial, demons will lie to us, hoping to cause the trial to become a temptation to sin, to disbelieve God and seek to fulfill our fleshly desires or it becomes a temptation to fear or to doubt God. Demons can deceive us or our own flesh can deceive us into believing that God has brought something bad into our lives. James is saying that every good thing comes from God and that everything which comes from God is good, meant for our best. God does not change. If we will train ourselves to believe that everything comes from God's hand in our lives and that His plan is to cause everything to work for our good then we will be much better able to bear up under trials and withstand the temptation to doubt, to disbelieve or to sin.

Reconciling the facts that God loves us and that He not only allows suffering but He even causes it, is a very difficult and thorny issue for Christians, especially when trying to explain it to unbelievers. So, let's look at His Word for proof.

Who caused the plagues on Egypt? Obviously God did. Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, causing Lot to lose everything he owned? Who brought the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, even though there were God fearing Israelites living there?

Who caused Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery? Why would God do such a thing? His plan was to eventually put Joseph into the most powerful position in Egypt in order to create and preserve the nation of Israel through which He was going to eventually bring forth the promised Savior. When Joseph was a servant in Potiphar's house, God caused him to be sent down into prison where his God given ability to interpret dreams would be known and later remembered. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers he said, 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.' Gen 50 It doesn't say that God picked up the pieces and turned it around for good... it says **He meant it**, from the beginning, for good.

At the time, Joseph saw his slavery and imprisonment as trials and if he believed false teachers he would have thought that he was a victim of Satan's scheming.

Peter wrote, 'Therefore let **those who suffer according to the will of God** commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.' 1 Per 4:19 It is **according to God's will** that they suffer!

Job said to his wife, ' Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? Job 2:10

Amos wrote, 'If a calamity occurs in a city **has not the Lord done it?**' Amos 3:6

In 2 Cor 12 Paul writes about his 'thorn in the flesh' that he said was from God to keep him humble. Whether it was a physical problem or a spiritual problem, it makes no difference; it was a miserable thing that was caused by God... not 'allowed' by God... caused by God. It says, 'Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." God even caused this 'messenger of Satan' to come upon and stay upon Paul. How do we know that God caused it and that He wasn't simply 'picking up the pieces' from Satan's successful attack? It's pretty simple... would Satan willingly cause something that would keep Paul from exalting himself or would Satan prefer that Paul was filled with pride and so, far less effective in the ministry to which God had called him?

Our lives are very complicated when we have to spend all our time trying to decide if we are supposed to thank God for something or we are supposed to 'rebuke the devil' about something. Our lives become far easier when we submit to God, acknowledging that He is in complete control and that everything in our lives comes from Him for our good. It's so much easier when we don't have to try and decipher whether or not something is according to God's will. A great heresy of today says that only those things which **we decide are good**, come from God and all the rest... the things that **we decide are bad**... they come from demonic attack. Once again, that is demonic deception; we are making ourselves out to be like God... I will decide what is good and what is bad; I will eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; I will be like the Most High.

Ask yourself, who are the better examples of faith that honors God: Paul and Job who trusted that God was in complete control over their lives... or someone who sees demons as the cause of everything in their lives that they don't like, constantly rebuking demons and supposedly sending them to the 'pit of hell?'

When James refers to every **perfect** gift here in verse 17, he is recalling back to verses 2-4 when he said that God sends us trials to perfect us. Trials are part of God's perfect gifts from above, sent to make us perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Verse 18: 'Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.'

The only way we can make it through trials and persecution is to always remind ourselves that God is always good and that He is always in complete control. He is saying that God chose you and He saved you; He did it by Himself and for Himself. If He chose you and saved you then He is not going to abandon you when trials come because He is the cause of the trial and He is the One Who will never leave you through the trial.

Paul wrote, 'For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.' Php 1:6

James is reminding us that our salvation is all according to God's plans, purposes, will and election.

Before the foundation of the World He chose us and wrote our names in the Lamb's Book of Life. While we were dead in sin, God called us and drew us to Himself. He saved us and He will keep us until He calls us home. It was not according to our will, but His alone.

Paul writes that we were dead in sin and it is only because God chose to shine the light of the knowledge of Himself into our hearts... '(Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts **to give the Light of the knowledge** of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Cor 4:4-6

A good example of what He does with every believer is what He did with Paul. You couldn't be more anti Christ that Paul was; he was rounding up Christians and having them arrested and killed. God blinded him physically while at the same time causing him to see spiritually and knocked him off his donkey. God did not say, 'Paul, are you ready to choose me now?' He said, 'Get up and go where I say, it will be told you what you should do.' Acts 9

Calling us 'first fruits' goes back to the Law, which these Hebrews would understand completely. Israelites were required to bring an offering of the first fruits as an offering of thanks to God for His provision, acknowledging that God caused crops to grow... they grew because He willed it so. Also, the first born all belonged to God and had to be redeemed in the case of human children. The idea is that God owns us and is free to use us as He wills. If we believe that He is sovereign and loves us, then we will believe that even in trials, He loves us and is doing what is best for us. He chose us and bought us; we are not our own. That is why He commands us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him... a first fruits offering of ourselves. Rom 12:1

Verse 19: 'So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.'

James is saying that although our salvation is all according to God's will and His work, we have a responsibility to allow God to cause us to grow through the hearing of His Word. He is saying, be quick to hear God's Word; study it, memorize it, digest it and allow it to produce fruit in your life. The only way we can grow is if we are faithful to hear and listen to God's Holy Spirit as He speaks to our hearts and the primary way that He speaks to us is through His Word. The wise man will be quick to hear and to listen.

A wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance Prov 1:5

We never learn when we speak; we only learn when we listen. James is saying, 'If you want to grow in the Lord, and maybe stave off a few trials, allow God to teach you from His Word; don't force Him to always have to teach you through trials... it's so much easier... and once you do listen, once you begin to understand and learn, be quiet; don't start talking and trying to show how deep, smart and spiritual you are because it is

usually just pride speaking. Once you start to hear God's Word and see how it applies to your life as He shines the light of His Word on the dark corners of your heart...don't get angry when the Word of God steps on your toes. Be honest, be humble be willing to allow His Word to change you.

We are to have a heart that is receptive to God's Word; it will be a heart that hears and listens, a heart that controls its tongue and a heart that controls its emotions, especially anger.

Verse 21: 'Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.'

This is the same idea as Paul saying to 'present your bodies a living sacrifice' and also what he writes in Rom. 13: 'The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.'

Laying aside all filthiness is the idea of laying aside filthy clothes and putting on clean clothes. He says to 'put on Jesus Christ as a covering and to put on the armor of light.

When we are born again, we become, once again like Adam and Eve at first, 3 parts: Spirit, Soul and Body. At the moment of salvation, our spirits are made new and saved completely. At the moment of the Rapture, our physical bodies will be made new and saved completely. In the meantime, our souls are gradually saved, the process of Sanctification. The Word of God did save our Spirits completely, the Word of God is saving our Souls completely and one day soon, according to the Word of God, He will save our Bodies completely at the Rapture. That is what Paul meant when he instructed us to, 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.' Ppn 2:12

God is at work in us through His Word.

Here is another test of true faith: if you are really born again, you will want to know God's Word, it will make sense to you and it will not seem like nonsense the way it does to the lost. This doesn't mean we will suddenly understand everything completely but it does mean that it will begin to fall into place and God's Holy Spirit will confirm to our spirits that the Word of God is true, alive and active, working in us, accomplishing God's will in us.