

"True Faith Grows in Trials"

Part 5

James 1:2-12

Introduction: Today we return to our study of the book of James and in our study we are looking at James 1:2-12.

Now if this is your first time with us since we started into this section let me take a moment and bring you up to speed. James is writing to believers who are scattered because of persecution. In this letter he instructs them how true faith is to respond in the midst of practical everyday life situations.

But at the same time James gives to his readers, through these instructions, an opportunity to examine their faith to be sure their faith is real. You see James knew what Jesus had said in the Sermon on the Mount about the straight gate.

Matthew 7:13-15

¹³ *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

¹⁴ *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

¹⁵ *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

James knew that there were many who were convinced in their own mind that they were on the path to heaven but really they had been deceived and they were on the path which was leading them directly to hell. In this letter as he shows how true faith responds in everyday life he is providing a series of tests which each reader can use to check their own faith.

Important note: True faith is a faith that is resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ as the payment for sin. It is a faith that has said "NO" to the old life and "YES" to the new life which God offers when we come to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. It is a faith that causes your life to be changed forever.

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

That is what true saving faith is. **It is not a reformation of your life but it is a transformation of your life from the inside out by God.**

Now the first practical situation which James writes about is one that all of us are very experienced in. It is the trials of life.

Notice James 1:2

The word "temptations" here means "trials" or "the testing of your faith". It is a reference to anything that disrupts our everyday routine. It can be small or it can be large. It is something which we have no control over.

Now I have told you that these trials are permitted by God and are used by God to strengthen us.

I. True Faith Grows in Trials

In our study of this section we have been looking at points which James gives to us that will help us as we face the trials of life.

A. Attitude and Focus

Notice James 1:2

We are to have an attitude of joy and our focus is to be on the end result.

The second point of help which we see is:

B. Knowledge

Notice James 1:3

As we study the Bible we learn more about God and how He works. As we get to know Him deeper we also begin to understand that He uses every situation in our lives for our good and His glory.

The knowledge we gain from God's Word is a great benefit as we face the trials of this life. This knowledge helps us to know that when our faith is tried God uses the trial to

build our endurance. This truth is discovered as we read the Word and study the lives of the Bible characters. You will not find this knowledge anywhere but the Bible.

C. Surrender

Notice James 1:4

Here we see that we are not to fight against the testing of our faith. We are to "let" God do His work in our lives and we are to surrender to His plan and His will.

I told you last week that we can see in this verse that when we fight against the trials of life that we hinder the work of God.

Notice James 1:4 again.

The word "that" introduces the reason we are to surrender and it is so that God can work and bring us to spiritual maturity. We can assume that if we do not surrender then we are hindering His work in our lives.

Now let me remind you of one more thought then we will continue on in our study. It is God's plan for others to see Jesus Christ in us when they look at us especially in the midst of trials. Therefore when we refuse to surrender and we fight the trials then we are keeping others from seeing Christ in us thus we are hindering the plan and the purpose of God.

Isaiah 53:6-7

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Now we come to the next point which James gives to us to help us through the trials of this life.

D. Dependence

Notice James 1:5

Now when we face the trials of this life there are often with the trials decisions which we must make. Let me ask you a question, "Where do you go for the wisdom when you are faced with the trials of this life?"

James tells us that we need to go to God. We also need to understand what James means when he tells us that God gives "liberally" and "upbraideth not".

This means that God is generous with His children when they ask Him for wisdom. When James says that He "upbraideth not" it means that God gives "without reproach". Let me illustrate what that means. Have you ever been ask by your son or your daughter for something and they had ask in the past and you provided so this time you say, "I am going to give you this but this is the last time!" That is giving with reproach. God never does that. God waits for us to come to Him and ask for wisdom to make the proper decisions as we go through this life.

Notice James 1:5 again.

This is a promise. At the end of the verse James tells us that God will give us the wisdom if we ask Him.

Now many of God's children seek wisdom apart from God when they go through the trials of this life. They will go to their friends or co-workers and seek their opinion.

Let me just say that there are 2 kinds of wisdom which we can draw from.

1. Worldly.

There is something which you need to know if you seek wisdom from the people of this world.

Notice James 3:13-17

Here we see that there are 2 sources of wisdom. One is from the earth but notice really close at James 3:15. He tells us that this wisdom is "devilish" which means it is "demonic".

Then in James 3:17 James tells us there is wisdom that is from above.

Here is what I want you to grasp here. It is so important that we go to God when we face the tests of this life because Satan is waiting to give us his wisdom through a friend or co-worker and it is wisdom that is completely against the will of God. It is a demonic wisdom that will lead us right down a path of heartache.

2. God's wisdom.

Then there is God's wisdom. We need to look at what Job said about the source of wisdom.

Job 28:12-22, 28

¹² But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?

¹³ Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.

¹⁴ The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.

¹⁵ It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

¹⁶ It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.

¹⁷ The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.

¹⁸ No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.

¹⁹ The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

²⁰ Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?

²¹ Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.

²² Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

²⁸ And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

This wisdom which Job speaks of is the very wisdom which we have access to and James tells us God will give it if we ask for it. But there are 2 points which we must exercise when we seek the wisdom of God. These 2 points are so important so keep them tucked in your mind at all times:

1. We must exercise patience.

God does not always give us the answer to our prayer right away. Therefore we must learn to wait for the answer to our question. Waiting is also part of God's plan to build our spiritual strength.

Isaiah 40:31

³¹ But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Let me show you an example of how God does not always answer our prayers immediately.

Genesis 25:20-21

²⁰ And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

²¹ And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

At first glance it looks like Isaac prayed for Rebekah and God answered his prayer immediately. But that is not the case. Notice he is 40 years old when he started to pray.

Genesis 25:24-26

²⁴ And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

²⁵ And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

²⁶ And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

Here we see that Isaac was threescore years old when she gave birth. That means he was 60 when she gave birth. He started praying when he was 40 so Isaac prayed for 20 years.

This is exactly why we need to wait upon God. Let me also remind you that God always answers on time.

There is something else which we must be willing to exercise.

2. Trust

We must trust and obey His answers.

This is difficult when God's answer is not what we desire to hear. I have seen several people who were seeking the wisdom of God and they came to me for advice and the answer was crystal clear in God's Word but I watched many of those people walk away and reject God's wisdom because it was not what they desired to hear.

Illustration:

Let me take your mind back to when Israel came out of Egypt. They came to the land of Canaan and they sent 12 spies into the land to spy it out. The spies came back with a report of the people who were in the land.

Numbers 13:26-29

²⁶ And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

²⁷ And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

²⁸ Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

They were faced with a decision. They could go into Canaan or they could return to Egypt.

The answer was very simple; God had promised to deliver into their hands the people of Canaan. Israel was promised the victory. So the answer was to proceed into the land of Canaan and trust the Lord.

But the people chose not to believe God and they decided to appoint a new leader and go back to Egypt.

Numbers 14:1-4

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

² And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

³ And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

⁴ And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Now listen, this decision cost them far more than they wanted to pay. They would wonder in the wilderness for the next 38 years and all the numbered men would die in the 38 years.

Numbers 14:29

²⁹ Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.

That would be 603,550 men in 38 years. That is about 16,000 men a year. That is 44 men a day. That is about 2 men an hour for the next 38 years.

Conclusion:

When faced with the trials of life and with a decision in the trial we must seek the wisdom of God. Then when He gives to us His wisdom we must trust Him and walk in obedience.

Let me also say there will always be people who will not understand. Don't let them deter you. There were 12 spies that went into Canaan and 10 brought an evil report and insisted they turn around. Only 2 were willing to trust and follow God. Someone will try to turn you from the will of God.

Next week we will continue this very thought.