
Growing Up

WEEK 1: SEPTEMBER 12, 2018

GROWING – GIFTED – GLOWING

JAMES 1:1-4 (NIV)

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

INTRODUCTION

- ***“If There Is No Struggle, There Is No Progress”***- Frederick Douglass (1857)
- We say, “When life gives you a lemon, just make lemonade.” But that is a whole lot easier said than done. The Bible is filled with people who were dealt hard hands, but through faith in God and through perseverance, they made sweet lemonade.
- Just as God helped these biblical heroes and heroines, God will also walk us through each struggle/trial that comes our way.

INTRODUCTION

- James is only mentioned by name a few times in the N.T.
 - He was the leader of the Jerusalem Church
 - He was the brother of Jesus
- James in his letter does not have a lengthy introduction as we have seen in other Epistles. He gets right to the point and addressed the trials. Which leads us to believe that believers in his time were dealing with some serious Trials.

INTRODUCTION

- God brings difficulty into believers lives for a Purpose.
 - This purpose can only be accomplished if we respond in the right way to our problems.
- ***Q: How do you normally respond to problems?***
 - ***Our response will reveal our maturity (or lack thereof) in Christ.***
 - “Why does God allow the righteous to suffer?”
 - *Read: Psalm 34:19 & Matthew 5:44 – 45*
- *Our suffering is by God’s providence who always wants what is best for us?*

JAMES 1:2

- This letter is addressed to everyone (Men & Women)
 - No one is exempt from facing the trials of life.
- When difficult situations arise, we often tend to get angry and even blame God. James here directs us to have a mature response..... Joy when facing Trials.
 - ***“When trials come, don’t resent them as intruders, but instead welcome them as friends.”***

JAMES 1:2

- Pure Joy - is based on Greek phrase “pasan charan” = *all joy or genuine rejoicing*.
- This is not joy about facing trials but joy during trials.
- Why? Because when we are spiritual mature we understand that trials represent the possibility of growth.

JAMES 1:2

- James does not suggest that we should present to be happy about trials. Joy or rejoicing goes beyond happiness.
- Happiness focuses on earthly circumstances and how well things are going here.
- Joy is God-oriented rather than event-oriented.

JAMES 1:2

- James says have Joy whenever you face trials. Which doesn't allow much room for doubt. We are to be joyful not if we face trials, but when we face them.
- Trials – is translated “peirasamos”(Greek) and its verbal cognate “peirazō”. Both words have 2 distinct meaning in the N.T.
 - Outward trials of process of testing.
 - *Read 1st Peter 4:12 & 1st Peter 1:6*
 - Inward enticement to sin: temptation
 - *Read 1st Timothy 6:9 & Luke 22:40*

JAMES 1:2

- James says “Trials of all kinds”. His readers were facing all kinds of challenges:
 - **Poverty** – James is filled with references to poverty and wealth.
 - **Religious persecution** – which caused poverty
 - **Exile** – they were forced to adjust and establish themselves in a new strange land.
 - James deliberately doesn’t mention any specific trial to cast a wide net to include sickness, loneliness, bereavement, disappointment, etc....)
- **Q: How can we react to trials with joy?**

JAMES 1:3

- James response in verse 3 was a familiar early Christian response to those who were suffering.
 - *Read Romans 5:3-4 & 1st Peter 1:6-7*
- *James states that Trials involve the testing of faith.*
- *Testing – Greek word for Dokimion (approved after testing)*
 - *Read 1st Peter 1:7; Psalm 12:6; and Proverbs 27:21*
 - Both the O.T. verses suggests a process of refining silver or gold which is how James used the word.

JAMES 1:3

- The difficulties of life are intended by God to refine our faith (prove its genuine). The heating process ensures that no impurities remain therefore making the times pure and valuable.
 - *Ex. Flu Shot – doctors inject you with the flu so your immune system will be strong enough to fight off the flu when you encounter a flu strain.*
- The testing of faith is **NOT** intended to determine if one has faith or not. But rather to purify and mature the faith that one already has.

JAMES 1:3

- Testing produces endurance. Endurance is faith stretched out; it involves trusting God for a long duration.
- Again James knows that his readers have faith, but it lacks maturity. None of us knows how mature we are until we see how we react under pressure.

JAMES 1:3

- Perseverance is not a passive submission to difficult circumstances. Instead it is a strong and active response to the difficult events of life.
- Spiritual Maturity is not just about survival but it is exhibited in how one survived.
- *Can you turn your problems into praise and your gloom into God's glory?*

JAMES 1:4

- The word perseverance in Greek suggests “*steadfastness*” under trial.
- What faithful perseverance generates is a whole person, recognized by 3 characteristics:
 - **Mature** – seasoned, experienced, well developed, fit for the tasks God sent us into the world to do.

JAMES 1:4

- **Complete** – fully trained. The weakness and imperfections are being removed from our character. Which means we are gaining victory over old sins.
- **Not lacking anything** – is a goal of being perfect like God. This level of maturity (teleios) will never be obtained. But it is what growing up in Christ looks like.
- Perfect work = a believers response to God's grace with sincere obedience (ideal Christian character.)