
Into Thy Word Bible Study in James

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James 1: 12-18 Holding on to the Goodness of God!

General idea: We need to realize that we have a purpose; we have a reason to keep going even in times of dire stress and when all seems lost. Even in our darkest hours, God is there communing with us, enabling us to persevere. His blessings come to us in ways we cannot always fathom. So, we need to realize that God is indeed good. He is there for us! He does not bring harm to us; rather He helps lead us out and away from sin and harm. He will take our temptations and turn them into His great glory. Because of this, we will wear an inconceivable crown all through eternity. Therefore, since God is good and we have a reason to go through what we go through, then we can resist temptations. In fact, we can stop blaming God and others, and take responsibility for our temptations. Then, we can come to a place where the evils and ways of the world will no longer interest us! Why? Because. Christ is formed in us, and He becomes greater than our desires (John 1:29; 3:30; Gal. 4:19).

Vs. 12: James jumps off one of Jesus' Beatitudes; he tells us how happy we *need* to be because happy is what we *ought* to be. Keep in mind that true happiness is like joy; it is not constrained to our circumstances. Rather, it is determined by how we choose to respond in attitude and will. How and why can we be happy? Because God loves us and cares for us, we can respond to His precepts and apply them to our lives. Abiding in His will brings happiness; but, living outside of it brings doom and gloom. He does not bring it; on the contrary, we bring it by our disobedience, by being self-willed and not Christ-willed. The results of realizing we are approved by God will bring perseverance that builds our maturity, character, and faith.

- *Blessed is or happy is*, refers to an emotional state of satisfaction, well-being, and contentment that results from being approved by God, by our fulfilling of our duty. God is happy when we do not give up. So, let us persevere and learn that He is happy when we do not give into sin. It is devotion, enjoying God's special favor and His Grace working in us. It is like being told by our parent/father that He is proud of us. This is also a prophetic oracle (Psalm 1; 32:2; 34:8; 84:12; Isa. 56:2; Matt. 5:3-11; 17:7).
- *Endures or Perseveres* means one does not give up. It is similar to patience with tolerance of and fortitude to others added on. It means even accepting difficult situations from them and God without making demands or conditions (Matthew 27:14; Romans 12:12; James 1:3). It is the possession of inner strength needed to remain in Christ along with staying power in order to accomplish God's will. Thus, we can have confidence in Him and not be faint

with our call or situation so we are able to persist and continue to deal with stress in order that we can accomplish that to which God calls us.

- *Temptation, Tempted, or Testing*, in this context, does not refer to tempting. To tempt usually means to lure someone by deceit or enticement to sin; test means to see if it is good. Here, it refers to our inclinations to either lean on God or on our apathy. To the Jews, this meant poverty, famine, or oppression from either the government or the rich. And, many did. But, God does not tempt us in this way! He does test us, as in Jesus' example; God tested Him while Satan tempted Him (Matt. 4:1-11). We do not get even with God nor do we have the right to do so, because He is not causing our situation. He, rather, desires that we learn and grow from it, and then get out of it.
- *Approved or stood the test* is a term meaning to test a precious metal, such as gold, to make sure it is genuine. It means we overcome the obstacle. God sees if we are genuine and real, such as, is our faith real all the time or is it real only when we feel like it. God looks for authenticity; Satan seeks to get us in trouble (Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3).
- *Crown of life* is the prize given to a winning athlete. It was usually a wreath of woven olive leaves the athlete won, and was valued more than a gold medal today. The value is not in the substance of the medal, but, rather, in its meaning and the achievement. When we endure, we win too! We are victorious when we endure struggles (Psalm 16:11; 25:4-5; 119:30; Rom. 5:3-5)!
- *Promises* refers to our place in eternity and for a higher quality of life now. The catch? We have to receive Christ first (John 3:16; 5:24).

James' Jewish audience saw temptations as testing, as many frustrated Christians do today. They saw God as the One who caused the evil or allowed the suffering. So, they saw their distress as opportunities to sin, thinking, *well, what worse could happen or God does not care. Look what He has done to me.* The Jews then, and some people still today, thought that God was causing them to sin merely for His own amusement or for some purpose that was not understandable. The fact is, we choose to sin. Period. God does not tempt us to sin. Sin comes from our choices and those of others conflicting on ours. God seeks that we avoid them and thereby grow in maturity. James is making the point that we need to be responsible with temptations and avoid them—not to blame God or others. The Christian life is also about being responsible! We have to realize we are responsible for our welfare, the choices we make, and the consequences from such choices. God will get us through them even when we mess up; this is His love and grace for us. But, why get ourselves in a bad situation and have to face repercussions from our actions (Rom. 6:1)?

Vs. 13-16: The Jewish people, at that time, thought God had bad motives (at times), was callous, or was unconcerned with them, personally. Some Christians today also think this way. Some think He tests us to cause us to fail or to suffer needlessly. God does test us by bringing us into situations where we can learn and grow. But, James' point is, He does not tempt us to cause us harm nor does He seek to cause us failure. Rather, God's desire is for us to persevere and be victorious in Him (Gen. 11:1-f; Deut. 8:2; 13:3; Judg. 2:22). It is Satan's motive to tempt and cause us harm, cause us to fail, and cause us to be immoral so God's character is not seen in our personal lives (Job 1:9-12; Matt. 13:19; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). Although, in this context, James is focusing on the human element; he takes on spiritual warfare in chapter four.

- *Tempted* is what the Israelites did to God in the Old Testament (Num. 14:22; Psalm 78:18, 41, 56; 95:9; Mal. 3:15), deliberately sinning by disobeying to invoke His anger. They used sins such as pride, greed, lust, and sexual impurity, showing themselves to be callous and unconcerned with truth or the true benefit of self and others. God cannot be tempted, nor does He have any malice or evil; therefore He will not direct any malice to us!
- *Desires* is to seek out and entice yourself or someone else to sin by trickery or aspiration; this is a form of lust, an evil impulse we all have. God has no evil or impulse to cause us to sin. This is the role of Satan, not of God. God is working His plan of redemption to save us, not destroy us.

The fact is, Satan does not tempt us just so we can do the wrong things in life or so we can gain more in what we feel is owed to us; rather, he tempts us so we can *lose* more! It is his desire to block or take away what God has given and what God has for us in future opportunities, experiences, relationships, and ministry. We tend to want to make the world a way that will please us, and not seek how we can please Christ and thereby, by this mindset, make the world better. Our focus tends to be on Satan's ways and not God's way; while we will fight with all of our might and say this is not so, it still is. Our focus needs to be on the victory we have in Him and the perseverance we earn, not the desires we may have or the defeat we may feel.

Vs. 17-18: God does not send temptations to break us; rather, He gives us good gifts and abilities to fight them off! God is the Author of life and goodness. He desires us to be good. The question for us, do we seek God's sovereignty and His birth for us, or the birth of our desires? The Bible tells us to be good (Psalm 103:17; 131; Prov. 8:13; Col. 3:12-17; Phil. 2:14-18; 4:8; 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:22; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 10:5-10; 2 Peter 1:3-5; 2:9)!

- *Do not be deceived*, as in *do not cave in to false thinking*. We have to have the right view of sin and temptation. Satan wants your thinking to shift away from truth and the Spirit and to the slippery slope of sympathy for worldly ways (Matt. 4:1-11; 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; 1 John 3:7).

- *From above* refers to *from God*. Goodness and kindness are from God. We should not seek contentment from our circumstances (1 Cor. 10:13).
- *Father of Lights* means Creator of the stars, and Creator of the universe (Gen. 1:14-19; Jer. 31:35). Pagans saw the stars, and especially the moving stars (planets and comets), as gods, and astrology to predict the future. Here, God is above all gods! He does not fluctuate!
- *Shadow of turning* or *shifting shadows* refers to the phases of the lights in the sky and how they change, becoming dim and bright; yet, God remains the same. Some misguided Christians use this passage to support their belief in astrology. This is very wrong! Our trust needs to be in God as LORD, not in the created things we see in the sky or the universe!
- *No variation* or *who does not change*, in context, also refers to the phases of the moon and stars. God is consistent. He is not evolving or in a process. He is Lord! Not a stray partial of matter in the entire universe is out of His control! We are not subject to random chances or fate; God is sovereign. Because God is faithful, consistent, and in control, we can place our faith in Him and trust Him!
- *He brought us forth* or *give us birth*. God brings us into the world, as in He births us, then extends grace to us and saves us (Gen. 1:26; Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:10; John 3:3-16; 1 Pet. 1:23). This is another testimony to God's control and power, and His desire to regenerate us. He created us, He loves us, and He cares for us. The question is, *how will we respond to Him?*
- *First fruits*, in this context, refer to becoming or being made new and giving first to God. In the Old Testament, it is at the first crop of the fields and trees that God told the Israelites was the time to perform an offering to Him; then, they would celebrate the Feasts (Ex. 23:16-19; 34:22-26; Lev. 2:12-14; 23:10-20; Num. 18:12; 28:26; Deut. 26:10; 2 Kings 4:42; 2 Chron. 31:5; Neh. 10:35-37; 12:44; 13:31; Prov. 3:9-10).

We can trust that God is indeed in control. He will not lead us astray or direct malevolence toward us. The Israelites did not cause God to sin or lead Him to it. Rather, He led them, with their sin and their malevolence, out of their slavery and the desert and into the Promised Land—as He will with you! As a loving God, He is testing you to see what you know and to further teach you. He does not tempt us, as in lead us to succumb to our situation. God is not affected by our actions or sin; rather, He is hurt that we choose to disobey and destroy, and not live to build and be better. God does judge; He has, and will cause destruction (Amos 6:4-11). In these cases, the situation was hopeless and the people would not, and did not ever repent, and this was the best way to prevent others from being taken in by sin. But, even in such dire cases, God listened to

human pleas and saved whomever was willing to be saved (Gen. 18:22-32; Ex. 32:10-13). For us, we now have grace!

We, today, like to say our temptation is too tough to resist. We do face more temptations and options for sin today than in all of human history. They may seem to be aimed at us personally and deliberately, yet most are meaningless, casual cruelties that build from others and ourselves, and are easily accessible. Consider the media, internet, magazines, or places we can go that are full of sin and temptation within an easy drive or at the touch of a button. Such ideas of temptation were inconceivable to James, even to people just a few decades ago. However, in Christ, we are given the strength to endure and to avoid temptations, even in our easy, “have it now” society. So, you *can* avoid sin and temptation. It starts with your mindset and willingness to allow the work of Christ in you.

The one temptation that all will fail at is the loss of hope! When you have the hope of Christ in you, you will persevere and be triumphant! Never lose your confidence of who you are in Christ! We can look to God for our help (Heb. 4:15). We can admit we have a problem; we do have a sinful nature and will cave into sin (1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:17). Thus, we have to admit our need and seek help from Him and others (Gal. 6:1-5). We need to set boundaries for our desires so we will not deliberately seek sin out. Then, we will be victorious! We will persevere and be approved because the trials we go through will enable us to be poured out to God (Gal. 2:20-21). We will be able to come to the place where our will is emptied, our desires are set aside, and His will is at work in us. To refinish a fine piece of furniture, it first needs to be stripped of the old finish; we need to have the finish of our self stripped, so His finish will shine through us!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there a sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?

8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. The Christian life is also about being responsible. How is this so? Why would a Christian not want to be responsible?
2. How can you be happy and have a reason to keep going, even in times of dire stress, when all seems lost? How have you been victorious as you endured struggles?
3. What would your life look like if you fully and truly trusted that God is indeed in control?
4. Do you believe that God's blessings come to us in ways we cannot always fathom—that He is indeed good? If so, how has this been true for you? If not, what is in the way?
5. How is *perseverance* a factor in your faith development? What do you need to do to further understand God's sovereignty so you have more willingness to endure, and not give up?
6. How can the accepting of difficult situations from others and God, without making demands and conditions, give you confidence in Him?
7. What would your attitude and relationship be like if you were not faint in your call or situation? If you were able to persist and continue to deal with stress, how would it help you accomplish what God has called you to?
8. Greek athletes accomplished their feats, not by seeking money or power, but seeking what was of more value than the medal—meaning, and achievement. How is this like our faith development and growth in Christ?
9. Do you seek God's sovereignty and His birth for you, or the birth of your own desires? How will this affect your relations with God and others? What can you do to control your desires so they do not take you over?
10. Why is it important to not be deceived, not cave into false thinking? What happens when we do? What can you do to make sure you have the right view of sin and temptation? What can you do to make sure that Satan does not cause your thinking to shift away from truth and Holy Spirit and toward the slippery slope of sympathy for worldly ways?

11. How have you struggled with temptations? How can this passage help focus you on the priority that Christ can and will fill you with Himself so that you will not even be interested in worldly desires?
12. The one temptation that all will fail at is the loss of hope! What can you do to have the mindset and faith to know more in-depth about never losing your confidence of the hope of Christ in you (1 Pet. 1:3, 21)?

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 1 Peter 1:23

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