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## Into Thy Word Bible Study in James

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### **James 1: 9-11 Seeking the Proper Perspective on Life!**

**General idea:** This passage is about our eternal perspective! James' premise is to move us to more maturity by moving our mindset away from false beliefs and ideas. What we tend to pursue, in our desires in life, is meaningless against the backdrop of seeking faith and the call that Christ gives us. How do we keep on His track? Perspective! Perspective is the mental view or outlook of what we see in our world, our circumstances, our situation, and our Lord. The reality and outcome of our viewpoints influences our beliefs that in turn influence our attitude which affects our actions. This is also called "worldview." It is a position which will dramatically and dogmatically affects our outcome in trials and in life. How do you look at the world? Is it for what you can get out of it and what is in it for *me*, or is it for what you can learn and grow? The answer will determine your character, maturity, spiritual growth, how you deal with problems, and how you can make your situation positive and meaningful! Without proper perspective, we will be torn apart by our desires and the world's influence, while our faith and God's precepts are being ignored.

Perspective is also the hope we are to have because of the reality of Christ's redemption. Our hope is anchored because He paid our debt. Because of this, we will realize that He is more than able to carry us through whatever happens to us. We will be able to see beyond the appearance of our circumstances and into the depths of our significance in Christ. Then, our thinking will cause us to see interrelations and outcomes that are pleasing to Him.

**Vs. 9-10:** Money (greed and corruption), sex (unhealthy relationships), and power (pride and arrogance that oppresses others) are of no use in and of themselves unless they are tools for His glory—as in money (stewardship), sex (good marital relationships), and power (positive influence and encouragement). Pursuits, in our lives, will burn and be of no value some day; only what we learn, how we have grown, and the people we touch will be the real value that will echo throughout eternity! We have the determination and ability to make something better of ourselves by our spiritual, emotional, and social growth for our Lord's glory. We do this by seeing the situations we are in from a higher perspective. If we have the mindset of learning in this way, trials will work for us and not against us!

- *Lowly* refers to poor and oppressed. Such people were common then and had little opportunity to get out of their situation, as they were oppressed by rich landowners and a culture that said *you deserve it*. For us today, this means a trial that we can endure! Both riches and poverty bring upsets and bad circumstances.

- *Glory*, here, refers to the fact that both the rich and the poor can take pride in what they have—in their positions and not possessions. The real treasure is who we are in Christ, not what we have (Psalm 103; Job. 14:2; Isaiah 40:6-7)! The NKJV uses the words *take pride*; this brings out the meaning that we are made rich because of whom we are in Christ, not in our circumstances! Christ will take us beyond our circumstances. The world cannot give us true riches—only Christ can; He gives us our hope! Thus, we need to see beyond our pain and our broken world.
- *Exaltation* helps us see the big picture, from God’s perspective, as best as we can, so we can see what He has for us and what we can learn. This helps us see our self worth in Christ, and this produces godliness and deeper faith (James 3; Heb. 5:14). Human social structure is not God social structure! Asking for wisdom means to be committed to the faith and to what God gives (Gal. 3:26-29; James 2:14-26).
- *Rich*. People who have land and great possessions will rot and fade away (Psalm 102:4, 11, 16). James is referring to where our trust and hope is placed. Is our security in wealth or in Christ? These people historically and typically exploited the poor; thus, tensions existed between the poor and rich, which gave rise to insurrections and revolutions. If the Roman Empire did not exploit the poor, they would perhaps still be in power today! America is great because of the biblical precepts for all people to better themselves and the owning of property that the founding fathers gleaned from this passage (Federalist Papers)! *Riches* can also mean being self-focused. Being self-focused will never gain us a thing of real meaning.
- *Humiliation* refers to being poor socially and financially because of oppression by others or themselves.
- The O.T. and Jewish “wisdom” literature both tell that riches fade, and that God vindicates the poor and oppressed. God will judge the oppressor harshly—especially those who have yet do not share with those who do not have (Psalm 102; Isa. 40:6-7).

Take comfort that God does not take us through trials to punish us, although He may at times (Rom. 1:24). Rather, He takes us through them because they are a part of life. They are a part of our sinful nature, the sins of others impacting and converging upon us, wrong choices, and our sin all congregating, building in synergy, and affecting all—us, others, and our environment. So, we will face suffering! The great news is we do not face it alone; Jesus is there! He will take us through it even if He does not take us out of it. He will even use us to help others around us. So, never consider trials and setbacks as a personal attack from God, but, rather, opportunities for you to learn and grow, and to be better, stronger, and more mature!

Our perspective is eternity. When we see our life here on earth as a mere rehearsal, and how to learn and build to what is to come in eternity, we can be better prepared to face anything—even dire situations and death, because our eyes and attitude are in Him and not our circumstances! If we do not learn in our trials and circumstances, they will be a waste. We need to seek their purpose and allow them to better us and not bitter us! When we trust in Christ, we will be allowing ourselves to learn from suffering and not take our blessings for granted.

**Vs. 11:** Poverty, in this context, is referring to a trial that we can overcome. Rich people have their problems as poor people do. Money really does not bring satisfaction; it only takes a person from one set of problems to another. Being either rich or poor will bring trials and circumstances we need to learn from and overcome. Thus, our focus needs to be on Christ and not wealth. Christ, who saves us, is the same Christ who is there for us and gives us our significance and hope. Being in Christ means our social structures have been obliterated (Gal. 3:28).

- *Burning heat and scorching wind* refers to the “Sirocco” (not the VW sports car, rather the hot winds that came during the summer from the desert into the Palestine area). They were devastating to crops and people’s health. The scorched crops were useless as food so they were used as kindling for fires for the cold winter ahead.
- Wealth is never a proof of God’s work or blessings, only growth in Him is. Wealth is not wrong; it is only a mere tool. However, it can also be a deadly distraction! Wealth does not bring real security or contentment; it only brings more trials and obstacles! James is condemning the Jewish Aristocracy that saw material blessing as a sign of God’s blessing. This is not so!

When we realize who we are in Christ, all of our problems and opportunities come into perspective (1 Pet. 1:6-7). We need to realize where our security is placed; is it in stuff that will rot, or in Christ, who loves us and is eternal? We should never trust in wealth and what is temporary when we can have so much more in Him! We need to admit we cannot get out of trials ourselves by just working harder; we have to realize Christ is willing and able to help us! He cares! Go to Him with all honesty; do not make up situations, edit, or distort them, for He already knows. Seek Him, His perspective, and His wisdom to give you understanding, skills, opportunities, forgiveness, Fruit, the help of others, attitude update, counseling, or whatever it may be. Then, do what He reveals to you that you should do (Prov. 2:6; John 7:17).

God gives us the plan and the victory. We may not see it at times, but, nonetheless, victory is there, because victory comes from being obedient. Our key to growing as well as to reaching others for Christ is our patience while we rely on God’s power (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16-18)! God gives us His Spirit and

His power in love, and we are to take that power of love, with the care and compassion that God gave us, and present it as a tender mercy (Luke 1:77-79; Colossians 3:12-17). This is what God does for us and calls us to in our dealings with others, whether poor or rich! The love will be the power, as when the Spirit intercedes in the lost soul (John 6:44-45; 64). They will see your efforts of care and consistency (John 13:34-35), and they will see His Fruit in you (Galatians 5:22-23)! Your growth and experiences while coming out of trials will be the evidence of Christ's power! Your ability to be a Christian who realizes that you are a witness to the Light of Christ will be the light that impacts others. Your reliability in being a light to those who are weak in Him or do not know Him will be the essence of Christ that others may see in you (John 1:6-9; 1 John 1:7)!

What is our benefit of perspective? Perspective will focus upon Christ as Lord, the One to carry us through. This will infuse with our spiritual formation and personal growth. When we are growing, we are becoming more mature in Him and then being contagious with our faith. We will then be able to witness because we will have something to say and something to model that people will want. Everyone hurts; everyone needs help! When we are growing, we will become the church that Christ designed, mobilized in Him to be welcoming and connective to others for Him. This is the church triumphant! Let us, as the church triumphant, adhere to His call and follow. Apply your faith! Watch yourself succeed and grow and be contagious to others (Psalm 16:11; 107:09; Isa. 26:3; John 14:21; Gal. 5:16; 22-23; 1 John 1:7-9; 3 John 4)!

Put yourself in Jesus' hands, and then your heart will be on Him and not on what you desire. You will then be the person of faith and integrity who is surrendered and poured out to Christ and will be used, powerfully, in the lives of others (John 3:30; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:10)!

***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. As you look back on your life, do you see good times or bad times as more prominent?
2. How would you describe your perspective on life; what is God doing in you and through you?
3. How important are your perspectives and viewpoints on life? Are you confident that you are right? How so? What would cause you to change your viewpoint on a particular subject?
4. How does your world-view influence your beliefs and actions? How does it affect your outcome in trials and in life?
5. Have you realized yet that how you deal with trials will determine your character, maturity, and spiritual growth? Have you realized that how you deal with problems can make your situation positive and meaningful? How so? If not, what is in the way?
6. How do money, sex, and power have an influence on you? What about in your church? How can you be sure that money (stewardship), sex (good marital relationships) and power (positive influence and encouragement) are tools for His glory? What will be the real values in your life that will echo throughout eternity?
7. How does being *self-focused* prevent you from gaining anything of real meaning? Do you believe that *wealth is never a proof of God's work or blessings*? Do you believe that we are made rich in who we are in Christ, not in our circumstances? Why, then, do many Christians think otherwise?
8. How does knowing that God does not take us through trials to punish us (although He may at times) give you reassurance and trust in Him?
9. How does your ability, to be a Christian who realizes that you are the witness to the Light of Christ, become the light that impacts others? Do you realize that your reliability, in being a light to those who are weak in Him or do not know Him, will be the essence of Christ they may see in you (John 1:6-9; 1 John 1:7)?

10. When we realize who we are in Christ, all of our problems and opportunities come into perspective. How has this been so for you? How can this be so for you?
11. How can you put yourself in Jesus' hands, to be more of a person of faith and integrity? How can you be one who is surrendered and poured out to Christ and used powerfully in the lives of others (John 3:30; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:10)?
12. How can you seek Him, His perspective, and His wisdom to give you greater understanding, skills, trust, hope, security, and opportunities?

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