

Series Title: Faith Works  
Message Title: How to Face a Trial  
Text: James 1:1-13

## BACKGROUND

### Author – James the brother of Jesus

- Brother, not apostle
  - Author does not describe himself as apostle...James brother of John and James son of Alpheus
- No greater authority
  - Born and reared in the same house
- Saved after resurrection
  - Not a believer until after the resurrection
- Style as different from others
  - Similar to the OT wisdom literature
  - Similar language to his message in Acts as described by Luke
- Rose to high position within the church
  - Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13)
  - Judaizer heresy
  - James nickname – James the Just (the righteous)
  - Origen – extraordinary life of righteousness
    - No wine, no meat, no cutting hair, law of God, but not legalist
    - Called the Royal Law of God and Law of Liberty
- Focused on behavioral issues and how we live a Christian life
- Knees like camels knees due to prayer life – a warrior of prayer

### Date of Authorship

Earliest epistle written –

- Before the year 50 AD – Council of Jerusalem
  - Not a word mentioned regarding the matters of that council
- Before 62 – died a martyr's death
  - 1 tradition – After beaten to death by clubs
  - 2 tradition - Thrown from the pinnacle of the temple
    - Interesting that this was the temptation of Satan – his own brother faces that death

## BEGINNING OF LETTER

### The Heart of a Bondservant

**James 1:1** - *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,*

- Bondservant
  - **A bondservant / a slave of God** - spiritual liberation and free FROM the slavery of the world
  - Servant – a paid worker, a day laborer
- A bond slave and bond servant – was purchased by a Master and Lord
  - It is our duty to do what is commanded
  - To be a slave of God
  - Our will and duty is to do what God commands
- Of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ

- He worked alongside Jesus in Joseph's shop
- Ate at the same table
- Took trips and shared life together
- Written by a Jew and written to Jews
  - Style of Greek is very high, one of the highest levels of any NT books
    - Some think James wrote it and had it transcribed
    - Or James wrote at such a high level
- Writing about Jesus – The Messiah – the long awaited Messiah of Israel
  - The LORD

## **The Unity of the Brethren**

**James 1:1-2a** - *To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers...*

James is writing to the brothers; really to the brethren or the entire family of God.

- We are united in our faith in Christ.
- Christianity has a great bonding power.
  - Redeemed by the same blood, we share the same salvation, the same Spirit, the same mission and the same destiny.
  - This is why we are to love one another in words and in actions.
  - Our love for one another is the symbol to the world that we are truly in Christ.

## **The Diaspora – AD 35**

Though scattered, they would all face the same battles and would need the same instruction.

- So James gives the family of God instruction as to how to live out the Christian life not just in times of struggle, but also as a picture of what Christian living looks like.

James is going to begin his letter with the faith that is necessary to live out the Christian life: Chapter 1:1-18.

He will conclude at the end of chapter five the prayer life that is necessary to live out the Christian life.

Chapter 5:13-20

All that lies between are some wisdom truths revealing what it looks like to live the Christian life: evidences of genuine faith, if you would, that we are living out the Christian life.

## **Illustration:**

- Master's degree – I was given assessment tests.
  - They revealed what I knew.
  - They revealed what I had done.
  - They revealed areas of focus and a plan was laid out for the degree.
- Spiritual gift tests – early revealed top two; later revealed strengths and opportunities for growth.
- A test is not created to condemn but to reveal.
  - What have you learned?
  - What do you know?
  - What can you be trusted with?
  - Are you able to handle this?

In these first 18 verses, we are going to see the basic fundamental truth **that must be in place and strong** if one is going to be able to live out a victorious Christian life.

## TWO BASIC FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

### Truth One: We cannot please God without Faith

**Hebrews 11:6** - *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

- Impossible
  - No Chance

What does this mean? – “I am struggling with my faith.”

One of three things

- I feel far from God.
- I do not believe in God anymore.
- I do not see God’s help in my life.
  
- I feel far from God - **Draw near to Him**
  - You are not alone
    - Job loses everything
      - **Job 23:2-5** - *“Today also my complaint is bitter; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me.”*
      - **Job 13:15** – *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.*
    - David cried to God regarding dealing apart from him
      - Psalm 22:11 – *Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.*
      - Psalm 22:1-2 – <sup>1</sup> *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?* <sup>2</sup> *O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.*
      - He follows this up with – **YET YOU ARE HOLY**
    - Elijah (1 Kings 19) was so despondent he asked that he might die, saying, *“It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life...”*
    - Isaiah says the Messiah would be a man of sorrows – see Jesus in the garden agonizing over what lie before him.
    - Paul (2 Cor. 12) prayed to have a thorn, or affliction) removed and it was not removed.
  - Opposite of what most do
    - Run from Him
    - Accuse Him
    - Refuse Him
    - Deny Him
  - Rather, we are to draw near to Him
    - Prayer, the Word, communication, reliance, relationship

- I do not believe in God anymore - **Believe that He exists**
  - I do not believe in a God who would do Judge, condemn,
  - I do not believe in a God who allows pain, sorrow, illness, loss

**Psalm 14:1** - *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."*

- There is no wisdom in the statement
- Creation screams out that there is a Creator
- Life does not come from no life
- Something cannot arrive out of nothing
- Order does not arise out of chaos
- Precision does not emerge from thoughtlessness

**Hebrews 11:3** - *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

- Without the Bible and without Christ and his fulfillment of 351 prophecies we still have the general revelation of God in Creation that draws us to the clear reality that He exists.

I do not see God's help in my life - **He rewards, blesses those who seek Him**

- unanswered prayers, constant struggles
- This brings us to the second truth

## **Truth Two: Faith is only proven through trials**

**James begins his letter the topic of trials, tribulation, and afflictions that we will face.**

*Peirasmos* - (pi-ras-mos') –

- Meaning trial, probation, testing, being tried, temptation, calamity, affliction.
  - **Temptation and test** – at the same time: Temptation a negative sense. Test – a positive sense.
  - Probation is viewing of what you've got. An investigation, research into what is present. It is an evaluation.

Wayne Gretsky – Life is full of ups and downs - Where are the ups? Where are they?

**- Everyone will face trials**

**You may not be facing a trial today, yet others around you may be facing them today.**

- This heart of unity and family love ought to call us to come along those who are presently burdened with the trial they are facing.
- There is a brotherly empathy that calls for us to bring help to those who are going through a trial.

**Be sure that there will be a day ahead where you, as well, will face a trial.**

- On that day, you will need the care and comfort of the Body of Christ to walk alongside of you.

**We all will face trial and temptations.**

- Jesus experienced trials and temptations
- How could we escape them?

## **Trials are to bring us encouragement**

**James 1:2** – *Count it all joy, my brothers...*

### **Remembering the trials of the family, James tries to encourage them.**

- Our work is not to put brothers and sisters down, but to encourage them in the midst of their sorrows and struggles.
- There is a joy to be reaped at the end of the trial they face.
- No only a joy....but ALL joy.
- With full joy we know that the struggles we are going through are intended to reveal the faith that is there, perfect the faith that is there, or produce faith that is yet to be there.
- There is a blessing in the proving of our faith.
  - This proving reveals if we have correct faith or incorrect faith.
  - How critical is it that we are walking in the correct and mature faith?
    - Without faith, we cannot please God.
    - Without faith we can expect nothing from God.
    - Without faith we do not have salvation.
    - Without faith we are simply punching bags for the enemy.

## **Our Faith is the target of the Enemy**

### **What is the target that these trials are focused on?**

In the text we must see, that in speaking about trials, temptation, and afflictions,

- That the focus of enemy in bringing trials is to crush, collapse and destroy our faith. It is our faith that is targeted by the enemy.
  - There is where he will aim his arrows.
- Yet the focus of the Lord in allowing these trials is to prove what faith is present and to build the faith that we need.

## **EVERY TRIAL IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH**

### **James 1:2-4**

<sup>2</sup> *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,* <sup>3</sup> *for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.* <sup>4</sup> *And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Understand the Process by working backwards

- The goal - *perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*
- The means - *And let steadfastness have its full effect*
- The steps - *testing of your faith produces steadfastness*
- The attitude - *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds*

A closer look:

- The goal - *perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
  - That we would be whole, content, fulfilled
  - **How do we get to that state of wholeness?**

- The means - *And let steadfastness have its full effect*
  - We get here through steadfastness (patience)
  - That patience must have been pressed to its full effect
  - **How does my patience become its strongest?**
- The steps - *testing of your faith produces steadfastness*
  - Patience is built up by the trials we face
  - The trials reveal how much patience is there
  - The trials continue to come until patience is built
  - **What am to feel about this process?**
- The attitude - *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds*
  - We are to feel joy when it comes.
  - There is no joy in the failing.
  - There is joy in the learning.
  - Being taught something new.
    - Embarrassing that we do not know
    - Frustrated and agitated
    - Until we KNOW it.
    - Then there is confidence and happiness
    - You get nowhere by ignoring the moment of learning
      - How many times do we need to go through the same scenario?
      - Until you learn it!!!!

The trial is a testing of the capacity of your faith

- Without faith we cannot please God
- Standing strong in faith builds commitment and dedication (Steadfastness)

### **The Faith that is built**

**Hebrews 11:1-2** - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation.*

- Assurance
- Conviction

### **How do we build such faith?**

#### **Ask for wisdom**

**James 1:5** – *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

- The only stupid question is the one not asked
- Duty was to paint the garage – found paint – could not find brush – one hour, nothing done
- Bus – destroyed
- Ask –
  - he won't get mad or rebuke you
  - He Gives generously

**The only asterisk here is that when you ask... You must not doubt!**

### **Ask without doubting**

**James 1:6-8** – <sup>6</sup> *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

- Faith
  - Assurance
  - Conviction
- Faith in the request?
- Faith in the answer?
- Faith in the Sovereign Lord?

### **Ask in Humility of Heart and Humility of Means**

**James 1:9-11** – <sup>9</sup> *Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup> and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

- Humility is the point of wisdom
- The commentary writer from the website “The Bible Says” writes,
  - The biblical notion of humility is the willingness to see reality as it is. Moses is said to have been the most humble or meek man in all the earth (Numbers 12:3). Moses was a powerful leader, with great command. But he understood and played his role, serving the mission God gave him. Moses saw himself, and God, as they were. Jesus also called Himself meek and lowly.
- Each station in life holds its own challenges.
- The brother in low circumstances is in fact in an exalted or high position.
  - The world looks down on the individual with no means.
  - Yet there is a different godly reality.
  - The brother of humble circumstances can consider that he has the opportunity to trust God, because he has a diminished ability to trust earthly goods.
  - Therefore, even though the humble circumstances would be considered bad by the standards of the world, through spiritual eyes the believer can see great opportunity to mature in faith, and rise to a high position.
- The brother in the rich circumstances must choose to be humble
  - The wealthy person is told by the world that they have succeeded. They need no more.
  - Yet there is a Godly reality that must be recognized.
  - The rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. The perspective of the rich man is to choose to be humbled, or lowered, by recognizing the ultimate future of his financial circumstance: leaving it all behind.

### **Ask with patience**

**James 1:12-13** – <sup>12</sup> *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*

- Remain patient when in the furnace
- Stand through the test
- Yes, no, wait