

James 1:1-11

"An Attitude Adjustment"

The epistle James is a very "put feet to your faith" kind of book. It's blatantly all about practical Christian living. Out of the 108 Vs found in this book, we find 54 imperatives. If you're wondering, "What's an imperative?" An imperative is a command. It's not a suggestion ☺, it's a *command*. Which means, we essentially have on average, some kind of call to action every other Vs throughout this book.

As to where much of Paul's writings (not all of it, but much of it) emphasizes that inward *saving* faith (which lends itself to *God's* perspective). James writes about that outward *servicing* faith (which lends itself to *man's* perspective). The harmony of those things is found in that the seed/root of *saving* faith will bring forth the *fruit* (or the tangible evidence) of *servicing* faith. The one (saving faith) will necessarily lead to the other (servicing faith).

James is believed to be one of (if not the) earliest written book of the N.T. & Just so you know, this isn't James the brother of John (if you remember right, he was martyred relatively early in the book of Acts), this is James the ½ brother of Jesus. (Same mom, different dads ☺). This man's dad was Joseph as to where Jesus was the Son of God being conceived by a virgin having been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. Then being found w/Child, He was to be named "Jesus" or "Jehovah/God is salvation" for He would *save* His people from their sins.

Vs 1

Probably the 1st thing that jumps out at us in this Vs (ironically enough) is something we *don't* see. It's not what's *there* that surprises us, it's what's *not* there. He doesn't mention that he's the brother of Jesus. Look, I'm just saying that if *I* were the brother of the Lord (as Paul refers to him in the book of Gal) I'd have found a way to slip that bit of information (albeit as humbly as possible ☺) into my writing!

But James doesn't do that. He doesn't refer to himself as the "brother of Jesus" but rather as the "bondservant of God & of the Lord J.C.". Jesus was way more than James' brother; He was his Lord...

Now; if you're very familiar w/the gospel writings, than you know that initially James *didn't* believe in Jesus at all. I would imagine that growing up, he probably considered Jesus to be a little eccentric at best if not altogether weird. Jesus was a different kind of kid (how could He not be?) Even at 12 yrs old He was blowing the minds of the teachers in the temple w/His insight, understanding & questions.

But as you read the gospels, you discover that James & His other brothers & sisters just thought that Jesus was kind of coo coo for coco puffs... “Seeking & saving that which was lost? Ok Jesus...” They ridiculed Him, harassed Him & just seemed to belittle what He was all about... BTW, as a sub point, let that be a word of encouragement to you today. Maybe since you’ve given your life to Christ, you’re family thinks you’re a little strange... Or they don’t believe it’s really gonna “take”, it’s just a matter of time before you come crashing back into your old ways. Family members are always the hardest to win over. It’s hard for them to get past you as that person they’ve always known.

But something happened in the life of James that changed him forever. We discover in 1st Cor 15 that Jesus appeared to him personally after His resurrection. After the resurrection of J.C. everything changed for James (& his brothers/sisters) & understandably so... Listen to me, the resurrection of J.C. changes lives. The Bible reports over 500 eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ... If you haven’t up to this point I’d encourage you to quit ignoring the evidence & join James in believing.

As you read the book of Acts, it seems that James became the primary leader and a pillar of the early church. Not that he was over the apostles, but when there was a decision that needed to be made, it seems they primarily defaulted to James to be the final say in a situation.

But we note that James looked at himself, not as the brother of Jesus, but the *bondslave* of God. This word “Bondservant” or “bondslave” is the word “doulos”. It means to be completely devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interest. He’s essentially saying that he is God’s property to do w/as He pleases. To use as He sees fit. It’s that to which Paul was pointing when he wrote, “...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”¹ Our responsibility isn’t to ourselves, to do as we please. It’s to God, to do as He pleases. He’s the One who purchased you! Peter pointed to the same thing when he wrote, “...you were not redeemed (purchased) with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ”²

& Again we see that James recognized Jesus a more than his brother, but as a co-equal w/God. He was the bondslave of the Father & of the Son... “The Lord J.C.”

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 6:19–20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Pe 1:18–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“To the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad.” This is one of the indicators that lends itself to the early writing of James. Its application is to all believers everywhere. However, you have to remember that when the church was born, it was 100% Jewish. It wasn't until Acts Ch 10 that we even see the 1st Gentiles being brought in.

So it would seem that James wrote this, either before Gentiles were brought into the church, or at least before they were appearing in significant numbers. When he says, “12 tribes” it's just another way of saying, “All Jewish believers, everywhere”. Regardless of where (be it because of persecution or any other circumstance) they had been “scattered”, this letter was written to instruct & encourage them, to help mold & mature them.

The word “scattered” could also be translated “dispersed”. Think of scattering seed, or dispersing seed. That's how James perceives the believers who'd left Jerusalem or Israel for whatever reason. Like seed having been scattered all over the place that they might bring forth the fruit of the gospel wherever they landed. **So to w/you & so to w/me. Wherever you may be, wherever you may “land” in life. God would have you be encouraged, instructed by His word, being molded & brought into maturity, bringing forth fruit sharing & showing Jesus to others for the glory of His name...**

Vs 2-4

James wastes no time in exhorting us to a certain course of action. Vs 2 finds our 1st imperative, Vs 4 finds another.

There are a # of things here that we do well to highlight & think through a little bit. Right off the bat he exhorts us, “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials...” Again, he doesn't suggest or recommend that we do this, he requires us, commands us to. He's highlighting the appropriate attitude in adversity. But we'll note that the *attitude* is tied to an understanding of the *advantage* of the trial & from where we obtain *assistance* in the trial.

It's not the trial itself that we embrace, but the outcome. Knowing what it is that God will accomplish, knowing that God has a plan & a purpose *in* it & that spiritual growth will be the result of going *through* it.

But again, let's take note of a couple of things. The 1st thing that we want to highlight is the inevitability of trials/tribulations in your life. He doesn't say, “If” you fall into various trials... He says, “when”. It's (as we say) not a matter of “if” trials will find you, only when... & It's not a “one size fits all” trial packet that we're all subjected to. They are (the word is) “various”. They'll vary in all kinds of forms & fashions.

As *believers*, we have the potential for the “double dip” kind of trials ☺. Meaning, some trials will visit us simply because we’re human. No different than anyone else. It may be health related, some kind of tragedy, it may be work related, relationship related, could be finances or whatever kind of tough time or tragic circumstance that could befall any of us. But as a Christian you also have an enemy who is seeking to destroy your life, which brings in a whole other spiritual dynamic to the trials you may face. Some troubles will find you for no other reason than that you’re a Christian. Therefore you’re persecuted, hated, perhaps looked over at work or sided against... on & on, right? So, you have *double* the potential for trials in your life!

But let’s not pretend like this isn’t anything we were made aware of. Jesus was very clear that the road that leads to life is difficult. He said, “*In the world you will have tribulation;*”³ Not, “you *might* have” or “you *could* have”. Paul expounded on that when he said, “*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*”⁴ (These are the kinds of Vs likely to be left out of your Bible promise books ☺).

Now, I should say that if your bible says, “Temptations” here. That would be an incorrect translation according to our modern vernacular. The word is “trials”. “Trials” speaks to outward adverse circumstances as to where “temptation” speaks to inward solicitation to sin, make sense? Trials are outward, temptations are inward.

& He says, “Count it all joy (that is whatever various/sundry type of trial you find yourself in) when you (here’s our next word) “*fall*” into various trials. It’s a very descriptive word, Jesus used it of the man who went down from Jerusalem & “fell” among thieves. It speaks of being suddenly surrounded on every side w/no chance or opportunity for escape. You’ve “fallen” victim to the thugs... *It’s not you making a bad decision & reaping the error of your ways. You weren’t looking for trouble or trials, but trouble/trials found you... The point being that at many points in your Christian life, you will be surrounded by adversities, afflictions & calamities that are hard to bear. They won’t be something that you ease into, but that you’re plunged unsuspectingly into.*

Now; what I’m about to say can be difficult for us to receive in a 1st world kind of culture. We’re accustomed to niceties, we love being entertained & having things the way we want them. But as many of you have heard me say before, we need to understand that God’s not trying to make us *happy*, His goal is to make us *holy*. It’s not our *comfort* He’s concerned w/so much as it is our *character*.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 16:33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 14:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We tend to live w/a view toward the temporal, God seeks to develop us w/an eye toward the eternal. & This is why it's so important that we learn & remember to maintain an eternal perspective because if we only live for the present & not for the future, trials can make us bitter, not better... Job had the right perspective when he said, "*But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.*"⁵

So when James says, "Count it all joy", we need to pay attention to the words he's using. He doesn't say, "Be joyful about it". That would be (in many cases) contrary to the way we're even wired, "Yay! A trial!" No. Jesus wept. Paul said we're to weep w/those who weep... So we want to remain balanced in our approach to this... He doesn't say, "Feel it all joy" it probably won't *feel* too joyful. The word is "count it", it means to evaluate or estimate something (in this case the trial) as joy? Why? Because it means that God is at work & the result of it will be both *good* for you & *glorifying* to Him. Hey, I can *joy* in that!

Listen, God wants to *grow* you (& me). He has a *goal* in mind for you (& me). He wants to produce something in you that will bless & benefit you (& others) throughout your entire stay on this earth & the way He does that is through adversity. Again, I know it's not popular. We all want to go to bed, say a little prayer & almost as if some magic pixie dust was sprinkled over us in the night, we wake up a little godlier. Of course, God *could* do that, odds are He *won't* do that... Let's remember that the emblem of Christianity isn't a comfy bed, it's a cross, an instrument of suffering & death. It's not a refiner's feather pillow, it's a refiner's *fire*. Purified as by *fire*.

But James wants us to know that God has a goal in mind when trials befall us & this should adjust our attitude toward them. Let's remind ourselves of Rom 8:28, "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*"⁶

But as we read here, let's be clear that we may not understand every detail of what God is accomplishing *in* it (though he gives us a couple of benefits resulting *from* it). James is clear that it's a test of *faith*. "Count it all joy... *knowing* that the testing of *your faith*." Your faith will be tested by trials.

Now, trials won't *result* in faith. Trials will *reveal* genuine faith. The Bible is clear what *results* in faith. "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"⁷ So trials don't *result* in faith, they *reveal* faith. Not to God, He knows. But to you & to those around you.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Job 23:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 8:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 10:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But the testing of your faith *will yield* something, *produce* something in our lives. “The testing of your faith *produces*... patience.” This word “patience” is the Greek word “*hupomone*”. It means “an active steadfast endurance”. It’s not the patience of passively waiting for test results at the Drs. Office. It’s the ability that enables you to keep going so that you finish the marathon. It’s steadfast continuance under the weight of adversity. God wants you to learn to keep on keeping on when times are tough.

& I’m just going to tell you that *patience* is absolutely necessary if you’re going to be a mature man or woman of God. Again, not the passive acceptance of circumstance, but active endurance in the face of tragic times, suffering & difficulty... **You show me an impatient person & I’ll show you an immature person. Impatience & immaturity are hand in hand. You show me a mature person & I’ll show you someone who is patient & persistent. Faith & patience work together.** This is what the author of Hebrews was referring to when he wrote, “*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish (lazy/passive), but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*”⁸

& We should make plain the fact that (in Christ) growing *old* doesn’t equal growing *up*. It takes this “patience”, this ability to actively endure if we’re going to grow to be mature men/women of God. & The way God develops this characteristic in us is through *trials*. (Write it down, look it up later Rom. 5:3-4) You can’t read a book or listen to a podcast & develop this patience. It takes difficult, trying times.

Listen, I want you to think about this. We discover in Gal Ch 5 that patience (longsuffering) is the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. It’s not a *gift* of the Spirit. It’s the *fruit* of the Spirit. A gift of the Spirit is something freely given to you. *Fruit* (on the other hand) is something that has to be *cultivated*. There’s a process by which it’s developed. Now, the *seed is there*. When you believe upon the Lord J.C. & the Holy Spirit takes up residence in you, everything you need to lead a mature, godly Christian life is present. But God will grow & cultivate that seed through a process & part of that process involves trials, tribulations, pain & suffering. & What James is telling us is that the right outlook results in the right attitude & the right attitude will result in the right outcome.

You’re free to kick/squirm, fail the test & remain a superficial/shallow saint. God will let you take the test over & over again until you pass.

⁸ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Heb 6:11-12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But in order to pass, we've got to learn to submit to God. We've got to (the word is) "let" patience have its perfect work (meaning we're not trying to *escape* the trial, we actively *endure* the trial, no short cuts). *The result being that you'll be perfect (not sinless, but complete, fully mature) lacking nothing.* & It's a lifelong intermittent process. But believe me, you want to submit to God. If not, we tend to transition from character building to child chastening... Encourage others to endure.

Again, we don't have to understand it all. But we can rest in the fact that God loves us, He knows what He's doing, you will grow & He will be glorified in your life in the end. *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*⁹ Listen, sometimes it's not only about you, but it will impact those who are watching you as well. & Seeing your faithfulness to God, watching you find strength in the Lord can cause them to turn to the Lord as well...

Vs 5-8

3 Things that James draws to our attention here as we move toward a close. #1 Trials demand wisdom. Is this particular trial something God would want to deliver us *from* or have us persevere through? If I need to persevere how would God have me do that? How do I deal w/this person, or this problem in a manner that's acceptable to God & leaves a positive impression on those around us? I need wisdom.

#2 Wisdom demands prayer. If we lack wisdom, we're to ask of God. We're to pray. Btw. What is wisdom? It's more than raw information, it's the appropriate application of that information. If knowledge tells you "its storming", wisdom tells you "seek shelter" ... I should also point out that we're not to "demand" of God or "earn" from God. We're to humble ourselves & "ask" of God... Btw, that's important as well. We're to ask "of God". Not of books, or of your pastor or another friend... Those things are fine w/in their appropriate context, but go to God 1st. Ask of God.

Because He gives wisdom liberally, generously & w/out reproach. He doesn't shame you, belittle or chide you, scold you for asking. He wants you to ask. Any/every time. & We shouldn't forget that the foremost place God will point you to find wisdom is in His word. & He will never instruct you in a manner that runs against His word.

#1 Trials demand wisdom. #2 Wisdom demands prayer. #3 Prayer demands faith. "But let him ask in faith, w/no doubting." Don't doubt God's ability to give you what you need.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Je 29:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What? You can trust Him to save your soul, but not help you w/your present problem? Seems a bit inconsistent... Or as James has it, "Doubleminded" wishy-washy. That's what doubt will do for you. I believe, I can't believe. I trust God, I'm going to handle it myself. Like waves of the sea. Up & down, this way & that. Unstable, easily tossed to & fro by any little wind of adversity. But it's like this. Either I can work it out, or God can work it out, I can't have it both ways... & If I won't trust God w/it than I shouldn't expect that God will do it... I had some measure of faith, so I asked. But then I didn't really believe so I doubted. I'm in that middle, double-minded ground.

Vs 9-11 (Closing)

Riches are but for a moment. I've never seen a hurst pulling a U-Haul. You can't take it w/you. Rich or poor, we place our trust & find our *identity* in Christ.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word. Thank You for the practical instruction & words of wisdom for us to grow by. May our lives honor You, may our actions be reflective of You & strengthen us that we not *doubt* You in time of need.

God loves you. He wants to encourage/instruct you, bless & be there for you. But before you can receive *from* Him, you have to belong *to* Him. Salvation awaits you in the Person of J.C. turn from your sin, trust in Him today.