

STUDY PACK 3

JAMES CHAPTER 1 (continued)

By Dr. Scudder

“God’s goal for us completeness with nothing lacking, is expressed in the word ‘perfect’ and the Holy Spirit will use every trial accepted in the right Scriptural sense to produce in us a maturity of Christian character.”

~~ Lehman Strauss ~~

James 1:1: *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

There are four choices of authorship for this book. All have the name of James, but the vast majority of Bible scholars believe the author was James, _____ from the children born to Mary and Joseph after Christ.

One amazing part of this verse is that the half-brother of Jesus refers to himself as a servant. Wow, that’s truly amazing. He doesn’t think of himself as high up in the church because he is the half-brother of Christ, but he thinks of himself as a servant. He took on the example of Jesus who said that being a servant _____.

Feeling these believers were in his care because he was the pastor of the church at Jerusalem, James wrote this epistle to them. These early believers were scattered abroad at the time this book was written. Humanly, it would be impossible to find the dispersed of Israel, but believe me, God does know every Jewish person and to which tribe they belong.

James, in preaching to his scattered flock, gives even more proof he is writing to those who have believed and are saved. This book is not about questioning your faith but how to live your faith.

James 1:2: *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

The word “brethren” in the Greek is “adelphos.” It could mean brother of the womb or in this case, Christ. It is a very strong word meaning “brothers in Christ” and, as you will see many times in the book, these people are referred to _____.

The word “temptation” used in this verse also means _____. We are to count it joy not because of the trial, but because of _____.

James 1:3–4: *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

Remember this word “trying” is another word for testing. Not as in testing whether you have faith, but testing to have an even greater faith. Saving faith is a one-time faith believing

Testing of faith is continuous throughout our lives. We learn much through the testing of our faith including having possessions is not the key to a happy life. In order to obtain pure happiness, we should live our lives knowing that God is in control.

1 Peter 1:7: *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

With James as their pastor, the Jewish Christians newly scattered throughout the world, needed refining as believers and encouragement to make their lives count for eternity. The testimony of living as _____ would certainly test their faith but would also produce patience and the best life imaginable on earth.

“Teleios,” the Greek word for perfect refers to being _____ and producing _____ that God had in mind. As much as we might wish, being mature is, unfortunately, not automatic.

This kind of maturity takes time and understanding which requires attending a church where the preacher preaches and teaches, as James did, in such a clear manner that you can understand the truth of God’s word. James embraced the God- called role of a preacher and gave the truth with expectation that it be followed. Without this approach, few hearers ever become doers.

The maturity of the believer is clearly the reason for James’ writings here, certainly not to use the book as a microscope to determine if you really have true saving faith. Remember when we looked at Acts 4:4 earlier? Five thousand believed and were saved. When God states they are saved, they are saved. End of subject!

Through the burden of testing and trials in our daily walk, which none of us would want to repeat, we are forced to recognize those trials have helped us to a more perfect understanding of the Lord’s working in our lives. Even through the strongest difficulties, we realize the gain we receive from them and _____.

James 1:5: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

When there are trials in our lives, we essentially come to a fork in the road where we have to make a decision or a choice. The simple truth is, God gives you the ability to make a decision that will benefit both you and more importantly, His purpose.

Webster defines “wisdom” as the ability to make the right use of knowledge. Of course, no wisdom can come without the fear of the Lord for it is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs 1:7: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

If James were written to test our faith, it would follow that we would already have wisdom; as in the old cliché, if you're saved, you will serve. However, the truth is, we have to grow into a mature Christian after we are saved and that's what James is all about.

James 1:6–7: *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

To fight against oneself is to “waver.” Should I or should I not? I'm reminded of certain times out on the ocean when the wind changes direction or the tide is changing. When this happens, waves will change their course, seeming as if they are unsure of which way to go. At times like this, if you're in the boat, you will most likely get splashed.

When we waver, we will not get our prayers answered. Having been in this position numerous times, I had to seek God's wisdom and God always answered and gave it to me. Always remember this: God sometimes gives wisdom through _____.

Proverbs 11:14: *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

I really believe in the local church as set forth in the New Testament, and I believe it's almost impossible to serve effectively without the support of the local church. Counseling from the pastor and other strong believers and leaders in the church is vital to your well-being as a believer.

Ephesians 4:11–12: *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

The act of wavering means we really doubt God can actually answer our prayers. This time of testing forces us to get insight beyond ourselves and benefits us. Times of testing help us realize we have a _____ and _____ need _____. Again, James is teaching in this passage how to be a good disciple, not how to become a Christian or prove you are a Christian.

In this book, we find that many times we as believers lack wisdom to turn trials into triumph. As believers, we need wisdom to see situations and circumstances through God's eyes and not our own.

In addition, it's important for believers to ask for God's wisdom in every situation. This is better than the wisdom for which Solomon asked because God's wisdom can be asked as an ongoing request, whenever you need it. God does not give wisdom with a closed fist and a mean-spirit.

James 1:8: *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

Being unstable is the same as those waves which are going in all different directions during a tide or wind change. A double minded man could also be a person without an open mind who never really seeks truth.

Double minded literally means "two souled." It can also be illustrated when we think of a man who is plucking a daisy speaking the words, "She loves me, she loves me not."

Often folks want to keep from making the wrong decision so they end up never making a decision at all. Learning that our trials and difficulties don't go away and dealing with things now before they become much worse is an important lesson of maturity.

A man I knew was so unstable he went from one mental institution to another. After he trusted Christ, he became one of the most stable people I ever knew.

Can a Christian become unstable? _____. Remember, this book is directed towards believers. We can see God provides a way to become stable in our thinking, taking us in the right direction in our life.

Double mindedness can also be shown another way. How about when folks get excited about serving the Lord and volunteer for a job in the church? They are often so excited they can hardly stand it, but in a few weeks when the fun runs out, they stop doing the job.

You'll never be able to do great things for God until you get all the waves lined up with the boat going in the direction God wants it to go. A double minded man could never be counted on to get the job done. Lordship salvation causes people to be double minded because they are never really sure _____.

James 1:9–11: *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

As a Christian, you should have a radically different viewpoint about possessions. If you're materially poor, you have a new position in Christ just as if you're rich. The rich man has been humbled because he realizes his riches won't get him into heaven. We are all one in Christ Jesus.

Both the rich man and the poor man now find their hope, not in their worldly position but in their spiritual position in Christ. The rich man and the poor man have a level playing field. The poor man is now rich even in his poverty, but the rich man cannot buy the riches of heaven.

James' view, being radically different from the world's view, sees treasure in our relationship with Christ. We cannot place eternal significance on anything _____.

In these verses, the message of discipleship is no different than the rest of James' teaching. When we die, it does not matter how much we had materially but what we did with our lives on earth.

James 1:12–15: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

Using these verses, many imply that a person who did not endure temptation was not saved from the beginning. If this is their proof then they have a problem. What is the problem? Most of them do not believe you can ever lose your salvation once you have accepted Christ, so they have to get around that conflict. And what is their answer? It is that this person was never saved.

In fact, that is not the truth of these verses. It's simply that the crown of life _____. If a Christian is living in perpetual sin and lives completely against God, he can commit the sin unto death. If you serve Christ in your life, you'll be blessed. If you continue to ignore God's chastening and attempts to get your attention, you could be called home to Heaven early because you are not giving glory to God in your life.

Romans 6:16: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

1 John 5:16: *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

If you yield to Christ as obedient servants, _____. If you don't, you will lose the rewards you could have had and you will suffer loss.

One of the pastors in our church has a little girl. She always has an answer for everything. After a while, her Mom and Dad both told her, "You don't know everything."

Remember, she's three and at three years old, she definitely believes she is right! Her reply? "Well, I believe I do. Me and God know everything!"

Of course, it's funny because she could not fully understand the scope of what she said. Even though she was being disobedient, she was still their child. Our children aren't always obedient to us, but they are still our children.

With God, it's the same. Once you become born again, you cannot become unborn.

In our minds, it would be great if we could live life without ever facing temptations. James didn't say "_____ " he is tempted but "_____ " he is tempted. Some try to take their children to some isolated, rural area, some remote location in order to hide them from temptations, but according to the Word of God, you can't hide from it. That is the reality.

Keep in mind though, none of this refers to salvation. Remember as we go through James, the whole book is about the subject of discipleship.

It's interesting to note the passage in verse 13, which tells us God never tempts us. If five-point Calvinism were true, then it would follow that God would be responsible for temptations because we have no choice. That is repugnant and just not true.

2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Five-point Calvinism also teaches God can't be sovereign if His will is not accomplished. The truth is, _____, He gives man a choice, _____.

During one of our conferences, I brought a little two-year-old boy and a two-year-old girl up on the platform with me. I pointed out to the congregation that according to five-point Calvinism, God chose one child before the foundation of the world to go to heaven. God chose the other child to go to hell without a choice.

These two little children were both very cute and adorable and dearly loved by parents, grandparents and family members. To me, Calvinism depicts a totally cruel God, as cruel as any mythological god ever known.

But our God, the One of love for all mankind, reminds us He sent His own Son to die. This is the God I serve, the God of the Holy Bible. He loved us all and gave Himself for all people, not just for some.

John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Remember, Calvinism always adds words to Scripture, too. Their belief teaches the word “whosoever” means “of the elect.” If that is what God meant, why didn’t He say that? God says what He means and means what He says. It’s not complicated. We make it complicated.

James 1:16–18: *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

In these three verses, which are pivotal points of this chapter, we learn God can never tempt us to sin, but our afflictions draw out our graces and suppress our corruptions. James, in writing to believers, is trying to make it clear that God’s characteristics are pure. God is not to blame for sins. We must blame ourselves.

So very often, the question is asked, “Pastor, why did this happen? Why are there hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, diseases and all sorts of really horrible things?” Again, when asking God for wisdom, God will show us answers to our questions.

Every good gift comes from God. Because He is a giving God and He is a loving God, the answer is, there is not one person who cannot be saved. Throughout your whole life, no matter how hard you look, you’ll never see anyone give more to you than God does.

I’m going to paraphrase this story, but when I think of the blessings God gives us, I’m reminded of a dream related by the late John R. Rice. He dreamed he was taken to a room in heaven. When the door was opened and he beheld all the wonderful things in the room, He asked God, “What is this room?” God answered, “This room contains all the things you could have had _____.”

In verse 17, the words “perfect gift” reveal to us the fact that absolutely no evil can be in this gift. God wants us to understand all good things come from Him. How few Christians understand this. In a world full of changes, our life changes, all things around us change, our jobs change, but our God NEVER changes.

If you come to a time in your life when it feels as if God doesn’t seem to be helping you and it seems like He’s changed, remember, it is not God who has changed. It is you who have changed. Something has come between you and God. Once someone said, “When the sun is eclipsed by the moon, there’s nothing wrong with the sun.”

1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

This verse is referred to as the “_____.” Just as we see that 1 John 1:9 is not a salvation verse, neither is the book of James written to those who need to be saved. In the midst of our sins, God is still there to forgive us and cleanse us from sin, restoring us to fellowship with Him.

“First fruits,” the words used in verse 18, are the very best of the harvest. If Christians are the first fruits, then it’s clear God wants us to produce even more fruit. Once again, it is obvious the book of James was not written to check if we have faith. Because we have faith in Christ, God calls us to produce more fruit as a disciple.

If your mother was like mine, she had a tiny mirror in her purse. To have fruit, life must be more than looking through that little, tiny mirror. Looking at life through that mirror makes you miss the purpose of learning how to grow and how to produce fruit in your life.

How many people would have conquered the world but they could not conquer self or temptation? It’s impossible to play around with the old nature without becoming totally dominated by it.

James 1:19–21: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

To those who just “Polly parrot” the same things they’ve heard all the preachers say for years and years, this passage sounds as if doing these good works saves your soul from hell. Notice however, this verse starts out with the words, “my beloved brethren.” How could this passage be about people that are working on getting saved? It’s obvious this is not the meaning of the verse.

What becomes obvious is that the verse explains how to make disciples. It is giving instruction to do what all of the New Testament teaches as well as the Old Testament; to make us better disciples, which will make a better church and in the end, a better world.

If this passage is about salvation, then think of it this way. What would happen if you went into your house and said to your children, “If you don’t clean your room, you cannot become my children?”

The children would answer, “But Daddy, we already are your children!” Your only answer would be, “Don’t confuse me with the facts!”

Do you see how silly this would be? In many ways, those who believe in Lordship salvation and extreme Calvinism come to exactly the same conclusion.

Here is something which is very important to remember: every time the word “saved” appears in the Bible, it does not always mean saved for eternity. Here is just one example of that.

Genesis 50:20: But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

In Hebrew, the word “save” means to heal and to preserve. It can also be used “to mean to do well.”

Finding exactly the same word used in Ephesians 2:8 and 9, we see the context of the verse helps determine the meaning of the word. In Ephesians the context is salvation. In the book of James, the context is to those who are already saved.

Ephesians 2:8–9: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Friends, this is not rocket science. The book of James does not contradict the book of Romans. If the devil can't cause confusion on Romans, he will make sure someone misinterprets the book of James by having the person place it in the wrong context and cause total confusion.

How interesting to note verses 19 and 21 are written as instruction to control anger. One of the biggest curses in the church is people losing their tempers (both inside and outside the church). Therefore, they lose their testimony and credibility before the world.

In the marvelous grace of God, He not only saves and keeps us, but He wants us to grow mature, becoming more like Christ and getting over our pettiness along the way. Having the same church that I founded 42 plus years ago, we've had struggles all along the way and many times it wasn't easy, but I have seen many people grow in grace and mature in Christ. What a wonderful sight to see. They understand the grace of God and how to live the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Having stressed a clear Gospel message that separates grace and works, grace for salvation and works for service, I've had those who have grown for a while then become "Corinthian" on me. You know what I mean, carnal, like the Corinthian Christians. Even during those times, I would never say they are not saved. Many choices made by Christians all through their life _____

James 1:22–24: But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

In the day and time period this scripture was written, a mirror was called a glass. Think of it like this. When you see a baby playing with a toy mirror, the baby only looks at the reflection or mirror as a plaything. The mirror itself doesn't change him. The baby is still a baby.

When a person is not willing to grow into maturity as a Christian, not seeing others around him as in a glass or mirror, he will never be a doer. To become effective disciples, we must quit looking at self and start looking to the Lord and encourage others to help them in their Christian life. By doing this, you will start to become a maturing, growing and dynamic disciple.

The passage reminds us it is possible to hear a good sermon and even like the sermon, but do nothing about what was heard. Many never allow their life to be challenged by the Bible, so they stay the same, never winning any souls to Christ or really serving Him with their lives.

I have known of people who love gospel quartets so much that they will travel from place to place or even town-to-town, in order to hear them perform. Although it's not true of all, some may refer to themselves as spiritual because of their devotion to these groups or the gospel music, but that is not true at all.

In exactly the same way, some like to mark their Bible, but their Bible never marks them. Some glance at the Word and never even give it a thought. Some even read it but never trust and obey it. Some come to church, get convicted to serve or give money to the Lord's work, but then go their way forgetting about it, looking away from the glass, turning away from the light and never serving Christ. But if they have trusted in Christ as their Savior, they are still saved.

James 1:25–27: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Looking into the law of liberty, these verses help to reveal clarity on this point. We have liberty in Christ, for He gives us the liberty. When you realize you don't have to work to be saved, it is more likely you will do all the things spoken about in the book of James.

1 Corinthians 8:9: *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

James 1:15 says to be a doer of the Word instead of someone who forgets everything they have ever learned from the Word of God.

Galatians 2:4: *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:*

Only a Christian can serve the Lord in the spirit of liberty, not because we have to, but because we want to. Except for the spirit of liberty, I myself could never serve the Lord, for there is nothing good in me. When James refers to the law of perfect liberty, he means when we obey it, we have liberty instead of the bondage of the world that has always enslaved us.

James is written so we, as brethren, _____ . Matching up with the book of Romans, it goes hand in hand with salvation by grace followed by serving the Lord with our good works after salvation. If this were not true, we do not have an infallible Bible, and there is no hope. God cannot give us two different ways that are completely opposite one to the other. Otherwise, He can't be God.