

James - Chapter 1

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Good morning. Glad to have you here. I wasn't sure how many guys would be showing up because we're between holidays like this and I know that some are going away and some are not and whatnot. So anyway, glad you made it. Glad to have you here.

And I owe you an apology for last week because there was something. Actually, I completely omitted my two clincher verses. So for just a moment, I want you to turn to Acts chapter 17. In just a moment, I'm going to put Tad on, but I need to clarify this from last week because there may be some misunderstanding.

Remember, we talked about repentance. I made the point that repentance is for everybody and it has nothing to do with trying to atone for or pay for your sin.

Repentance is always in order because when you hear something, learn something new that contradicts what you believed before and you find it to be true, you've got to change your mind. You've got to discard the old and embrace this new information. That is the meaning of repentance. It means to change your mind and it can be about anything. It doesn't even have to have a religious connotation.

[1 : 26] You get down to a dealership and you look at the new Fords and you decide, I'm going to buy one of those next month. And then you go to another dealership and you look at the new Chevys and you say, you know what?

I think I like this better. I think I've changed my mind. I'm going to get that. And believe it or not, that's what repentance is. It just means change your mind. That's all. So when the gospel is preached, people get information they didn't have before and it requires them to change their thinking. You scrap the old idea, whatever it was, and you embrace the new.

And this is also why I said, even as a Christian, you never outgrow your need for repentance because all the time you were learning and discard. You know, Paul talked about this when he says renewing your mind. You know how you renew your mind? You push the old stuff out and the new stuff that is true in.

All right. So Acts 17, and we'll just spend a moment on this. And actually the reason that I'm even doing it is because some in the grace position consider repentance adding to the gospel of grace. And it doesn't at all. Now, if you're thinking of repentance in the sense of penance, where you have to do something or pay something or promise something in order to be saved, that's an entirely different thing.

[2 : 54] And that's pretty much the Roman Catholic idea of penance. But we're not talking about that. We're talking about changing your mind. Repentance. And here in Acts chapter 17 on Mars Hill, and we've talked about this before, but I want to renew your pure minds by way of remembrance.

So in Acts 17, we read, beginning with verse 30, Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

This is the apostle of grace demanding repentance. It has nothing to do with adding to the gospel of grace.

It simply means you embrace something that you have discovered to be true that negates what you believed previously. And you need to cast that aside. And what might that be?

When the gospel is preached, people hear it for the first time. Often the response is, Christ died for sinners. Well, I guess that's okay for sinners, but I'm not one of those. I don't need that.

[4 : 09] Well, you need to repent. You need to change your mind. You do too need that. And then, over in Acts chapter 19, just flip the page over, and we've still got the apostle of grace busily engaged.

And we read in Acts 19, and beginning with verse... Well, where are we?

Four. Thank you. John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in him who was coming after him.

And then, he continues on. That's not what I was looking for. Well, no wonder. I'm in the wrong chapter. Chapter 20. Chapter 20. And here is a tearful, emotional parting of the ways between Paul and the elders at Ephesus.

And he says in verse 20, we're in Acts 20, 20. Paul said, And how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 35] So, fellas, I hope the next time, if there is a next time, and you're talking to someone about the grace message, and they say that, well, repentance, that's the message of John the Baptist.

We don't preach. That's nonsense. You preach repentance because it invokes a need to change your mind. What, Joe? There's nothing wrong with repetition. Repetition is good.

Okay. Repetition is the mother of learning. I appreciate that. Well, let's have a word of prayer.

Okay? Thank you, Father, for this time to share together. And we pray that as we engage the text this morning, you will give the enlightenment to Tad that you will also give to us.

And help him to deliver whatever you've laid on his heart that we might have open minds and open hearts to receive the truth. Thank you for the season of the year, for this time to enjoy and be together.

In Christ's name, amen. Thank you. Head, go right ahead. Well, it's good to be together this morning. You just go ahead and keep eating.

[6 : 36] That's all right. We'll try and get some spiritual food, too. I had to repent this morning about 1230. My wife came to bed, and she said, You made an appointment for a chiropractor, and you've not been to him before, and he hasn't taken any x-rays, and I don't want you going to him.

I said, all right. Next week, we'll go to our regular chiropractor, last scheduled. So I called this morning and canceled the appointment. Lots of things we have to repent.

Some are little things. Some are big things. Yeah. Yeah. Some of you have been reading through the Proverbs, and I've appreciated you telling me about that.

I have to confess, I haven't read mine yet today, although I did get up at 530. I read some other things, but I didn't get the Proverbs chapter.

What's today? 29. Wow. Hasn't this been some kind of a year? Oh, boy. Would anybody say it's been incredibly difficult?

[7 : 45] One group of ladies that would say it's been difficult has been mothers who have been teaching elementary kids math.

It's like, what? It's altogether different than the way you and I learned it. I know I did some substitute teaching some years ago, and it's different the way they do it these days.

Someone said that this year has been like crossing the street. You look one way. Okay. You look the other way.

Okay. And then you get hit by an airplane. Lots of difficulties. Lifetime this year. I can't think of a year that's been more change, difficult things that have happened in 2020 than any other year.

And some of you, I guess you're older than I am. And I didn't hear any amens, but I think that's true, isn't it? Amen. This has been a very difficult year.

[8 : 53] Lots of different experiences, things that we've gone through that we've never gone through before. If you're a sports fan, the year began with a legendary basketball player, Kobe Bryant, being killed in a helicopter accident along with his daughter.

Whoa. Difficult things happening. It started off pretty bad. Who would have guessed that all of this stuff would happen 2020, 2019?

Or, excuse me, 2019, December the 29th. Would you have guessed this stuff would happen? No. No way. No way. Uh-uh. Some ironic observations were made by someone. Senior citizens are sneaking out of their houses and their kids are saying, Mom, Dad, stay home.

Oh, my. How about this one? Never in a million years would you think of yourself walking into a bank with a mask on and asking the teller for money.

[10 : 23] I told her when I was wearing a bandana the first time I went into the bank and it wouldn't stay up.

I said, I'm not used to this. And she said, you'll get used to it. I said, I don't want to get used to it. I'm not sticking you up either.

Oh, goodness. Oh, wow. We have been facing a lot of difficulties in America, but it has not just been in America, has it?

It's been all over the world. Argentines have experienced more lockdowns and quarantines. And people get frustrated.

And there have been political things that have happened. There have been, oh, my. In our country, there have been demonstrations that have turned into riots.

[11 : 24] Citizens in Hong Kong have been subjected to more security regulations. And lots of them were trying to leave the country. Filipinos.

Strict laws that prohibited them going out into public at all. It's all over the world. We've been studying the best book in all the world, right?

You've got your Bibles in front of you. James is the book we've been looking at. And this book calls us to seek God for wisdom. Is that something we need?

God's wisdom we desperately need. We're going through a time of a great deal of discomfort, dis-ease, and disease.

An unseen enemy. How many of you know somebody who has COVID? How many of you know somebody who died of COVID?

[12 : 37] Last Tuesday, I officiated for the memorial service for my stepmom. My father, he lost his wife, my mother.

And he married Hazel. They were married for eight months. I didn't know Hazel.

Hadn't seen her until the day I married them. Talked to her on the phone. But we got to be real close. That was 2005 when they got married. They were married for eight months.

And since then, she became a mother of love. She even wrote like my mother with smiley faces and musical notes in her letters.

She died of COVID. We come home last Wednesday. And Christmas Eve, we get a phone call from someone at our church where I served.

[13 : 42] A buddy of mine in the hospital. They said it's not COVID. Now they say it is COVID. He's on a ventilator. An email this morning.

Someone else. COVID. All of this. We need wisdom in our world, don't we? And how to face changing times.

Here we are at the end of the year. I'm wondering, do you have some things that you are praying about? James says that we should ask God for wisdom.

Maybe it would be a good idea just to take a few minutes. Would it be alright if we just have a little time of praying? Sure. Maybe you right now would just like to express some things that are on your heart to God.

Where you need wisdom. I'll start. Any of you can pray. And I'll close. Father in heaven.

[14 : 56] We thank you for your son, Jesus. You gave your very best and we have celebrated his birth.

That was not his beginning. But he came and was placed in a manger. And because of all of that and what he accomplished, he's been born into our hearts.

And we rejoice in that. And we thank you, O God, for the mercy that is new to us every morning.

Great is your faithfulness. Lord, we have called out to you for wisdom in different situations in our lives.

And we thank you that you are faithful. We admit to you today that as we, in our way of thinking, close out a year.

And we're looking forward to a new year. And none of us know what all is going to come. But we do know that we need you.

[15 : 58] I thank you, Lord, that in 2009, 2020, there have been folks who've made professions of faith and sealed that as well and some commitments publicly as well.

Thank you, Lord, for these young people and older ones as well. God, I need wisdom on how I can properly relate with them.

I need wisdom on how to relate with Steve, who is a neighbor who needs Jesus. He thinks he's okay.

He thinks he's okay. You know his heart. But he's given not any demonstration in the 14 or so years that we've been neighbors that he's following you very closely.

Hey, Keith. He's a father, I believe, now. But he's not married. And I pray for Keith and Ashley.

[17:18] And their son. I pray, Lord, too, for a nephew and his wife that just had a baby girl.

New ones into this world. They need wisdom. Pray that you will help Brittany and Zach as they bring up their daughter.

She's in an incubator right now. I pray that you'll clear those things up. And for Mark, that you will cause the oxygen to get into his blood as it should.

And that this COVID will be eradicated from his body. Thank you, Lord, for men and women of faith. Some of them are going through great trials, like Nancy as well, in the hospital.

Thank you, Father, for these men here. Help us as we bring perhaps some requests silently or vocally to you.

[18:35] Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for the promise, the wisdom of the promise that you give us. That to those that love you, all things work out together for good.

Therefore, whatever we face this year and the next year doesn't look to be any better. But we do know that however it works out, it's going to be for our good. And I love that promise, that wisdom. That gives me peace. Amen. I don't have to be down, Lord, because I know you're in control. Yes. Because I love you, that's going to be a truth in my life.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Yes. Father, we thank you that we can come to you in prayer. We pray for truth. We pray for wisdom. Yes. And instruction. And understanding.

[19:32] And we think of the wisdom of you, Father. How you planned this all out there. And we pray for redemption.

And we pray for Christ. And we pray for the first son of the Lord Jesus. And we want to be thankful for that.

Give us strength and courage and wisdom. For the upcoming year. And we pray for the upcoming year. Mm-hmm. Follow you. And just do what's right.

We pray for our country. Yes, God. And we just commit all these things to you in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, as this new year ends and the new year begins.

Father, we just pray for a new wisdom. Yes. Father, we're bombarded on all sides. From the news media, from the TVs, from the internet. Yeah. With all this information about politics, about COVID, about all the things that come into our life.

[20:40] We just pray for wisdom from you this day. Yes. For this new year. That we can get the information that would be best for us and for our families. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Father, we pray for the evil, evil people that are trying to turn this country into a socialist, communist, out-of-court. Pray for wisdom and what to do and say.

Pray that perhaps some way, somehow, you can get into these people's hearts and change their mind. Renew their spirit so that they will not be the kind of people that they are right now.

Mm-hmm. Become more believers in Jesus Christ. Amen. In His name. Amen. Amen. We thank you, Lord, for those in high places who are believers in Jesus.

Give them continued courage and insight. We pray, Lord, that you will help them. Some of those men and women come to mind.

[21:50] Thank you that you're the God who, who was with Joshua. And you said to him, be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid.

Help us, Lord, with that kind of courage and conviction that we need. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the reality that in you are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And we pray that you would tap us in our minds with your truth. That your spirit might help us.

Thank you that as men, as husbands, as fathers, as grandfathers, some as great-grandpas, that you will give us, that you will give us the kind of leadership in our families, in our community, in our churches, that will truly be Christ-like.

Show us where we need to change. Thank you for the depth of cleansing that you give.

[23:13] That we can count upon your faithful forgiveness. We love you for that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Okay, in James chapter 1, he talks to us about wisdom, and wisdom is the knowledge that we need in order to face trials. We face trials in 2020, 2021.

There are going to be some different ones that come. The Lord is going to be there with us as he gives us time. There's a promise in James that if we will ask for wisdom, that God will give that wisdom liberally, and he calls us to ask in faith.

He wants us to believe him. He says something about our position as well, by way of a little bit of review. In the midst of the trials, we belong to Jesus, and he is the one who is Lord.

Now, James is writing about these things, and there's a corollary statement that is made in Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 14, that Paul makes along this line, and I think Ron has that verse for us.

[24 : 35] James says he don't want you to be wavering, you know, in and out, tossed to and fro. Paul says the same thing. Ephesians 4, in verse 14.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there, by the ways, and carried by the wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness, and deceitful scheming.

Okay, thank you. And then he goes on to how we're to speak the truth in love, so we've got to know the truth, in order to speak the truth. And so don't be wavering.

James addresses that same kind of issue as well. So we can ask God in faith for wisdom, so that this doesn't happen.

So that we're not children, we're not kids, we're not just getting older, we're getting mature. More than just age, we're getting growing in maturity.

[25 : 38] That's what Paul and James are seeking to move us on towards. Conversely, instability and immaturity, oh, those kind of go together too.

But God wants us to experience stability and maturity. And in James chapter 1 and verse number 9, I think that theme comes to the forefront for us.

Let me read verse 9. James 1, 9. Let the lowly brother glory in his exultation, but the rich man in his humiliation, because as a flower in the field he will pass away.

For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat, than it withers the grass, its flowers fall, and its beautiful appearance perishes, so the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

Verse 9. Have you ever thought of the correlation between wealth and status and how those things are really a test from God?

[27 : 05] Wealth and status are a test from God. They certainly are. No matter where you are on the financial spectrum, God is the one who has you right where you are.

Wow. And how you and I deal with that standing where we are says something about our spiritual maturity.

James is teaching us about adversity, about difficulties, about trials, about tests. And the first brother that he talks about here is someone who is of a lowly means.

In other words, here's somebody who doesn't have as much wealth as somebody else does. It's kind of on a scale there.

Wherever you are on the spectrum of wealth or poverty, as you might see it, think of it this way.

[28 : 21] You may be the poorest guy here in this room, but still, you're 90% higher than most people in the world.

That's right. Wow. Yeah. All right. And so when we realize where we are, the status that we have, the wealth that we have, is something of a test from God inwardly concerning the attitude that we have concerning where we are.

For instance, Christmas has passed. You probably got together with some family members. Maybe you didn't get to buy for your children or your grandchildren something that your neighbor got to do. Or maybe your neighbor, like my neighbor, is going to Florida for the next several months. Man, I wish I could jump in that motor home.

No. My attitude towards him, your attitude towards somebody else who could get somebody a new car for Christmas.

[29 : 45] Whatever. You know, someone who is of a higher financial status than you are, our attitude reflects something about our maturity.

So what is the right way to face these trials? You probably know somebody who cannot eat certain foods.

Hmm. Maybe that's you. Maybe that's somebody's you. You know somebody who has greater financial abilities than what you do.

How does a person in those kind of situations reflect Christ-likeness? Joe. You don't be envious of that.

You'd be satisfied and happy with what you got. And if you look at it that way, you got a lot. You don't have to be envious of those things. You know, he's going to have a lot of problems with all those things.

[30 : 51] Those cars break down, that motor home break down. I don't want that. I mean, there's blessings in not having all that. Okay. Keep your life simple. Be thankful. And that's the attitude God is wanting us to have, and yet how often do we get tempted and pulled away from what we know is right?

Or we hear somebody else say that, and how do we respond to them? Actually, there are people today who are smiley-faced, prosperity teachers who say, well, God is the one who will provide for you.

All you have to do is ask Him and have faith in all of that. To ask God is like God is a gimme machine or a glorified bellhop to just do whatever you want.

You know, there are lots of people like that. And even Augustine, he prayed one day, Lord, make me pure, but not yet.

Oh. And James is saying, verse 7, the idea that He is the one who is Lord over all of the circumstances of our life.

[32 : 16] James teaches something quite the opposite than those smiley-faced prosperity teachers. Paul put it this way.

Somebody has Colossians 3 and verse number 2. Roger. Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth. Whoa.

Paul giving us instruction. You died and your life is hidden in Christ in God. With Christ in God. And that whole thing makes it possible if we realize we have died in Christ, we are alive unto Him and alive in Him, then we can set our minds on things above.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33. Does somebody have that one? Jesus said, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things that He's previously talked about in Matthew 6 will be added unto you.

Again, like Paul, Jesus, they're all in harmony, aren't they? They're saying we need to have the proper priorities. So, then to the brother who has wealth, okay, how is he supposed to think of himself?

[33 : 45] There's an outward test. He could, you've probably seen some people like this, they're very boastful and they celebrate, you know, all the stuff that they have and they want to tell you all about it and that sort of thing.

and the Lord says, wait a minute, I want you to be humble and pride comes before a what?

A fall. and that happened for David in Psalm 51 and verse number 3, somebody has that one.

For I am conscious of my transgressions and I acknowledge them. My sin is always before me.

Thank you, Roger. All right? So, we probably come to mind some of the things that David did and we think that that's the situation there when he was involved in adultery and then murder and all of that.

But wait a minute, any sin is an offense against God, against thee and thee only have I sinned. And whenever we get to thinking, I want her.

[35 : 03] I want that. I deserve our pride and humility is something that we need.

Humility is one of the chief concerns I think that James addresses here in this book and we need to realize that we're not saved by ourselves.

God is the one who in his grace saves us and we continually need him. Amen? We need him every day to stimulate our thinking and to help us live right.

Riches and humility, oh, they're really in opposition. Riches and humility. money says, okay, I'm independent.

I can make this. I can do this. I don't need God. I've got enough money. I can survive all right. Wait a minute. That's the idea of flesh and pride, isn't it?

[36 : 17] Okay, we know what David did was wrong, but wait a minute. it's maybe these, would we say a smaller thing?

We need to measure our sin against the one that we sin against and know that these things are an offense unto him. So, when God grants wealth or status, it's a test.

James is talking about tests, trials that come. And, we need to be careful that we do not forego our dependence upon God because we have certain things.

So, how often do you think Christians pass the test? wait a minute. How often do you, do I, pass the test?

And, then maybe just in the context of what James is saying here, how long does this test last? As long as we're here, right?

[37 : 31] And, actually, he's saying, I think, too, okay, I'm 70 years old. Some of you are older, some of you are younger, but life is really pretty short here, but everybody lives for eternity.

The perspective on money is really a tool that God uses to mature us in our attitudes, in our thoughts.

hearts. And, verse number 11, James compares the world's wealth to the beauty of flowers and the grass, and, well, okay, in Palestine, how long does that last?

The growing season is when? From, like, February through June, whatever? It's not very long, it's just a matter of months. Okay? It doesn't last very long.

And then heat comes and it's gone. Can you think of Job for a moment? How long did it take for everything?

[38 : 42] He had family, herds, slaves, people who worked for him, to be taken away. One day, poof!

Wow. So, wealth and things that we have are really a test of maturity, and James is trying to say, these things just do not last.

You know, you keep speaking of wealth. Wealth is not the enemy. It's like a gun. A gun laying on a table. It's just a piece of metal. Well made, but just a piece of metal. Until it's fired, it's not anything. Once it's fired, the bullet's not the enemy, the gun's still not the enemy, it's the one who held that gun. So, wealth itself is not the enemy. That is true. It's the one behind the wealth.

How he uses it, how he feels, what he does with it. Precisely. Very good. So, it's our attitude and our action in relationship to the wealth, just like with the gun.

[39 : 46] Good illustration. Okay. James, writing this book, it's very important for these people to know what he's telling them, because he thinks so anyhow, because he thinks the tribulation is coming real soon.

That's the prophecy he thinks is coming real soon. So, don't put your stock in this world and your wealth. That's not what's important. You better get that now. You know, it's not like you're going to have a long lifetime to enjoy these things and do these things, because the tribulation is around the corner.

That's what they believed in and thought was coming, based on their knowledge of the Old Testament and the prophecies there. So, it is important to us too, because we don't know when it's coming.

That's right. We don't know it's coming. We know we're going to be raptured, but it may come any time soon. So, this information is still good for us today. But, it was especially good for those Jews that he was writing to.

Yeah. Yeah. I believe like when in Matthew 24, Jesus talked about signs. Basically, he's pointing towards the tribulation.

[41 : 02] But, there are some birth pangs. And, are we seeing those today? And, Paul says things are going to get worse and worse. Whoa.

Are we seeing that? what does the rest of today hold? You know, just like that, Jesus could come back. And, then the tribulation is going to come.

Boy, like it's already been indicated, you hear these things about what's happening within our own country and what happened with the thing down there in Nashville on Christmas morning.

Whoa. And, you begin to realize probably what's behind that. My gracious. In America.

With our election and everything. What is all of this? Well, he's going to move now, James is going to move to a different kind of test.

[42 : 08] In verse number 12, it says, blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him.

So, what the future holds for the man, or the woman, or the young person, who faces trials and tests successfully, is what he's talking about here.

What is it that he has to look forward to? Someone who perseveres in the trials is going to experience what we could call the blessed life.

What's the blessed life? It's a happy life. It's a life of satisfaction. It's a life where you are living out the very wisdom of God.

You experience the peace of God that passes all understanding. There is peace and contentment in this happy life, this blessed life that he's talking about.

[43 : 20] So, when we face the trials and persevere through them, there is a contentment, there is a peace.

And James is saying, try it. These principles of wisdom, they work. So, the enduring of the stresses, of the tests, of the difficulties bring about, result in spiritual maturity, a growing up, an ability to look at circumstances of life differently.

And the blessing of contentment comes as we get our eyes on eternity rather than of the present, the turmoil of the present.

He says that the person is approved, and then they receive something. What is that? A reward, a crown of righteousness.

Yeah, it's a crown of life. Wow, approved. Approved means you have passed the test. You didn't fail it, you passed it.

[44 : 53] And then you're worthy to receive this crown of life. The crown of life has been promised to those who what? What's it?

Persevere. Who love him right out of the text, and because we love him, we're going to persevere. We're going to keep on going. The crown that he talks about is the word Stephanos.

It's the word for well, in James' day, if you're involved in the Olympic Games, and you win, you get a crown.

A crown that really fades away. Now, is James talking about working in order to gain salvation?

No. The crown, the reward, is not salvation. It's a crown that demonstrates faithfulness in the midst of a trial, in the midst of difficulty.

[46 : 06] Okay? Paul says the same thing to the Gentiles, the James is saying here, to these Jews. The same thing in Romans 8, 28. Uses the same word, to those who love him.

You know, all things will work together for good to those that love him. In other words, the crown, reward, things are going to be good. You can have peace. Paul says the same thing to the Gentiles here that James is saying to the Jews.

Same thing. And didn't Moses say, and then Jesus say, the great commandment is, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength.

What's he saying? Just everything you've got, love God. And then, love your neighbor as yourself. Does anybody keep that?

Much as possible. The second one. Okay. The first one and the second one both? I dare say we all fall short.

[47 : 11] There's only one person who did it right. as Jesus. And so, he's saying we've got to live with humility.

Okay, so the point here I believe is that the crown of life that he promises to those who love him is something that ultimately I guess is in the future.

First Corinthians chapter 3, he talks about standing before Jesus one day eyeball to eyeball with the king of kings, the lord of lords, and his penetrating eyes are going to look at us and he's going to see us and at that beam of seat, the judgment seat of Christ, he's desirous that the things that we have done, how we have built our lives in this life is not going to go up like with wood, hay, stubble being burned up, but will remain like gold, silver, precious stone.

He wants us to receive that reward and that reward is given to those who persevere because of love.

John says, if, Jesus said, if you love me, in John, Jesus said, if you love me, you will what? Keep my commandments, that's right. Oh, wow.

[48 : 34] And so, faith and action. There's a relationship there, isn't it? We're going to see that in chapter 2 of James.

Faith is important. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. For those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

This isn't something haphazard. So, faith is something that we do. Okay.

And He promises reward. Jesus said something similar to the church, the believers there in the church of Smyrna in Revelation chapter 2.

And here are some Jewish people who are going through a lot of persecution, just like what James is talking about. Here they're going through trial. And Jesus says in Revelation chapter 2 and verses 8 through 10.

[49 : 41] Joe, do you have that one please? And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, the first and the last, who was dead and has come to life, says this, I know your tribulation, your poverty, but you are rich.

and the blasphemy, blasphemy, by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue, synagogue of Satan.

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Wow. Jesus, the one who died, was buried, and rose again, is the one who is talking here to the church in Smyrna.

I need to read again these seven letters. I think it would be good for all of us.

[51 : 03] Jesus talking to his church and evaluating. Jesus himself describes himself as the one who is faithful, who has gone through difficulty, right?

He died, and he's talking to this church and he's saying, you're going to go through trial, you're going to go through difficulty, some of you are going to die. And he says to them, there is a reward for faithfully living and even dying, shedding your own blood, making a stand for Jesus Christ. Now, we need courage to die, but we need courage to live. Amen? for Jesus even today. Wow. Wow. Ted, in that scripture I just read, maybe more can explain too, it says have tribulation ten days.

Now, ten days, you know, a day is to a thousand years to God, so what kind of time frame is he talking about here? do you have any idea what kind of time frame that's being talked about here, that they'll be in tribulation?

[52 : 23] To me, that's kind of puzzling by way of the time frame. I don't think we can really know for sure what the time frame is. He's just saying to them, there, maybe put it this way, there is a limit to the time of the testing.

And for them, they didn't know, okay, maybe it's going to be literally ten days. I don't know. 24 hours, I don't know. I don't think we can say for sure.

But who is it that has his hand on the thermostat? Oh, God does. That's right.

We need to get that. I need to see that. I need to know that. And I think that's some of what James is saying to us in this first chapter.

He's saying, count it all joy. Verse three, knowing the testing, let patience have its perfect worth.

[53 : 34] There's surrender, there's submission. And there's the, verse five, let him ask. Oh, there's the prayer.

And certainly Jesus, the one who was talking to these people in Smyrna, I think he would reiterate those same kind of things and remind them that there is a reward.

reward. And for these folks in Smyrna, he's saying you might have to give the utmost of the sacrifice. And he says, I want you to be approved.

Did you notice in verse 10, Revelation 2 and verse 10, he uses the word test. That's what James is talking about.

Our walk with God is a walk by faith. And our walk of faith is to demonstrate itself in faithfulness.

[54 : 45] Endurance. The tests God brings are intended by God in our lives to be a proof that we can do this in his strength.

We can make it to demonstrate faithfulness and spiritual maturity. And then he prepares us in the appropriate time to receive the reward.

Let me just put it this way. Life is a test. Life is a trust. We are stewards of life.

James is closing out this little section here and he's saying blessed is the man who endures temptation. Blessed, joyous, happy, satisfied, fulfilled is the man.

Oh, that's how he began in James 1 and verse 2. Count it all what? Joy. He begins with that idea of joy.

[56 : 04] He sums up here in verse 12 with that as well. Outlook determines outcome.

And the beatitude that he gives to us here is a promise to those who patiently endure. Okay, I know I'm saying the same thing over and over again, but let's be reminded here that he is not saying that we are saved by enduring.

because we are saved, we endure. You see the difference? A believer is then rewarded for those trials that we go through by the one who's loved us.

Now, love is a spiritual force, and it's the enablement to keep the imperatives that James gives. Somebody has said that in James there's a command for every two verses, an imperative.

[57 : 20] He's saying knowing, accounting, knowing, letting, praying, these key ideas in the first part of the chapter come up.

And what motivates us to keep those commands that he gives, the imperatives is love. A double-minded man, verse 8, oh, he's unfaithful.

It's like a man or a woman who is unfaithful to their spouse. Oh, there's trouble. when we have a, say we have a love for God, but also a love for the world.

Wait a minute, there's a problem there. And James admonishes us, okay, who wants to be this preacher? James 4 and verse 8. Who has that one? Oh boy, here goes.

Listen. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.

[58 : 32] Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you devil minded. Woo! I squirm a little bit with that too, but I like the way it starts, draw near to God, and then cleanse your hands.

Clean up, kid, come on. Alright. Ponder this a little bit with the idea of the weaning process of a child.

And with this we'll quit. A child who knows his mother loves him will love his mother and trust his mother and trust his mother is going to be for my good.

When we know that God loves us and we love him, we know that the trials of life are for our good. And they come from God. Even if it hurts. Ooh, yeah, when it hurts. We're going to take the if out of there.

[60 : 00] Yeah, okay, absolutely. Yeah. A double-minded man is saying, okay, I love God and I love the world and he's in conflict. conflict. When I think of that, I think of Lot in the Old Testament.

Okay, Peter says that he was righteous Lot. He's a believer, but he lived with conflict. Making the right choices.

He wrestled with that. Abraham, okay, he wasn't perfect, but Abraham was a man who was faithful. He's in the hall of fame of faith and he loved God.

He was looking for that city, right? He got his perspective right. And with all of that, he trusted God. He had his faith in God and Abraham triumphed in maturity of faith. And that's what God wants.

[61 : 07] And in James 1 and verse number 4, that's how he began. He said, let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect, complete, lacking nothing.

So, if you want to triumph in trials, then in love for Christ, count it all joy.

have a joyful heart. Know that God is wanting to bring understanding to us so that we can have an understanding mind and understanding him and his ways.

And let God have his way. Surrender. He says there in verse 4, let patience, let it, there's submission.

Let God have his way through surrender and ask God for wisdom. Verse 5, as a demonstration of love for God and then demonstrating that in a believing heart.

[62 : 22] Father, we thank you that we can interact together as men who need to hear from you. We thank you for speaking.

We thank you for the sunlight that is coming in through the windows. We thank you for the light of your truth that has come into our minds.

Stir us up to righteousness, to walking in the way of faith and faithfulness. We don't know what the future holds, but we do know you hold the future, and you also hold our hand.

As James said earlier, help us, Lord, to draw near to you. song comes to mind, and he walks with me, and he talks with me.

May that be our privilege and our desire today, to walk courageously, boldly, generously for you.

[63 : 40] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.