

SM 041920

*Wanting Nothing*

Sunday Morning Message

Text – James 1

Congregational Reading – James 1:2 - 4

Introduction (James 1:1 – 4)

The Epistle of James is known as a *General* (or universal) *Epistle*, meaning that it was not written to a specific church, like the letters to the Thessalonians or Corinthians, for examples; or even a group of churches from a particular region, like *Galatians*; nor was it written to a specific person, like the letters to Timothy, Titus, or Philemon. James is addressed to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” James was likely the earliest of all of the New Testament Books or Letters, possibly written as early as 45 A.D., which would place it’s writing before Paul’s first journey into the region of Galatian, which was probably a couple of years later in 47 or 48 A.D. The churches at this time were made up of mostly Jewish believers. It would not be until Paul took the gospel into Asia and Europe that Christianity would become a predominantly Gentile group.

There are several New Testament men who bear the name James. The author of the Letter is likely the Lord’s half-brother James, who became a believer after the resurrection of the Lord, and eventually rose to become the leader of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). According to Greek scholars, there is a resemblance between the writing of this letter, and the speech given by this particular James at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

The overall theme of the Letter has to do with the outworking of the believers faith. The famous phrase from James 2:20 and 26 is “*faith without works is death.*” James does not teach that a believer is saved by works, but he is adamant about the fact that a genuine faith will be accompanied by good works. John Calvin once said that “*faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.*”

The first chapter of this wonderful Letter has to do with going through trials. The early church was well-acquainted with living for God while enduring severe persecution. Many of the first-century Christians were martyred for their faith. These early Jewish believers were being persecuted by those within their former faith, including family members and former friends. They would also become the target of the Roman government. Paul, himself, was a great persecutor of Christians before he himself was saved.

*"And Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen's) death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles." (Acts 8:1)*

This pandemic that we are experiencing is certainly a trial that all people, saved and lost, are enduring right now. Some people are sick; many have died; and most already are or will be adversely affected by the financial fallout that has already started and is certain to get much worse.

My fear for Christians is that this pandemic will be the start of a season of persecution for believers, and the restrictions placed upon churches during this time will be used as a precedent for more restrictions down the road. Churches are being unfairly treated, at least here in New Jersey. You can bring your car to the ShopRite or Walmart parking lot and congregate all you want in there, but you can't park cars in a church parking lot and safely have a drive-in church service. Even the liquor stores are considered essential businesses, but the churches are not. The irony of this whole thing is that churches are supposed to be protected from outside intrusion by the first amendment of the Bill of Rights. The liquor stores and supermarkets do not have that same protection.

The first amendment to the Constitution states: *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

It is my sincere hope and prayer that these restrictions will soon be removed and will never come back again in any form. However, we are told that the last days would be "perilous times." We know from prophecy that there will come a day when the unbelieving world will no longer tolerate Bible-believing Christians and their churches. Is that time upon us now? I hope not, but this is the first time in the history of our nation, since the Bill of Rights were signed into law in 1791, that the government has forbidden churches to assemble in any form. Again, it is my hope that these restrictions, though completely unconstitutional, were born merely out of a concern for public safety due to this horrible virus; but my fear is that some within government will want to use this precedent in order to control what we can and can't do in our churches. The Bible certainly warns us that these days of persecution will eventually come. Will it be today. Will the devil use this pandemic to advance his godless and global agenda. I sincerely pray not. But, if he is, we could be heading into a period in America where we will not be able to worship as freely as we once did.

The believers in James' day were well familiar with and accustomed to being harshly punished and persecuted for their beliefs. People were dying in James' day as well, but not because of a virus; they were being killed by other people who did not like the way they worshipped God.

James 1 is all about enduring trials and temptations, including trials brought about through persecution. The word "divers," in v. 2, means, "various kinds." The same Greek word translated "divers" here is written as "manifold" in 1 Peter:

*"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 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: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)*

We are all going through this trial. Hopefully it will be over soon; maybe it won't; maybe it will get worse. I know this, it will be over for us when God is done working in us through it. Notice v. 4 again: *"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* (James 1:4) God will bring us through the other side of this thing when he has "perfected" or completed in us what He wants to accomplish. He is trying to perfect you as an individual, and He is also working to perfect us corporately, as a church. When He is through, we will "be perfect and entire, wanting (or lacking) nothing." We are not going through this because God wants to take something from us, we are going through this because God wants to give us something.

*"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*  
(Philippians 4:19)

We need to discover and acquire what it is that we need from God. God wants to grow us through this pandemic.

Transition: The rest of the chapter tells us how we are going to get through this trial and acquire what God wants us to learn:

#### I. Seek God's Wisdom (vs. 5 – 8)

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7)*

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)*

Wisdom is more than just knowing something; it is knowing what to do with what you know. It is applied knowledge.

Spurgeon said: "Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom."

Vance Havner said, "If you lack knowledge, go to school. If you lack wisdom, get on your knees! Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge."

It's knowing what to do and when to do it.

It's knowing the right thing to say, and when to say it.

It's knowing when to keep your mouth shut.

*"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." (Proverbs 4:7)*

## **II. See What Really Matters (vs. 9 – 11)**

All of the prosperity and pleasure that we have enjoyed in this nation that has truly been blessed beyond measure, is not what really matters. It is God that really matters.

Somebody has said that God has stripped us of the things that had become idols in our lives. He has taken away our financial prosperity; he has stripped us of our sports entertainment. But, he has also given us back time with our families, and more time to realize what is really important, our relationship with Him.

## **III. Shun Sin (vs. 12 – 15)**

As we are going through the remaining days or weeks of this pandemic, let us strive to forsake the sins that our flesh desires, and let us strive to yield to the Holy Spirit as He guides into all truth and leads us in the will of God.

*"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)*

Many of us have more time on our hands during this pandemic. Too much time can be a dangerous thing if it is used to think about and do things that are sinful. Why not use this time to read the Bible more and pray more. Draw closer to God.

*"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye*

*double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."* (James 4:7-10)

#### **IV. Submit to God's Perspective (vs. 16 – 20)**

We need to recognize that this trial that we are going through is really a gift from God. We may not know it yet, and we may not understand it yet, but God is doing something through this; He will give you something in this that you did not have before.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

Don't get angry at what God is doing. If you will let Him, He will make your life better.

Don't be afraid. God will get you through this. He will not forsake you; He will give you what you need to survive.

#### **V. Search the Scriptures (vs. 21 – 25)**

The answers that we need are all found in the Scriptures. We need to search the Scriptures, and we need to apply the Scriptures to our lives.

#### **VI. Serve Somebody (vs. 26 – 27)**

One of the best ways to apply the Scriptures is to figure out a way to help other people. You know who the heroes are in this pandemic: the people who are doing everything they can to serve other people; to help relieve their misery.

#### **Conclusion (Review)**

1. Seek Wisdom
2. See What Really Matters (Prosperity doesn't)
3. Shun Sin
4. Submit to God's Perspective (God is doing something through this)
5. Search the Scriptures
6. Serve Somebody

This very early Letter to James seems to have everything we need in order to, not only survive, but actually thrive through this Pandemic.