

Sunday Morning Message

October 17, 2021

Putting Your Faith to Work – Study of The General Epistle of James

Putting Your Faith to the Test

Text – James 1:1 - 12

Congregational Reading – James 1:2 – 4

Introduction

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

We introduced this series of messages from the Epistle of Jude by giving an over view of the letter and discussing a little bit about the background. The basic thrust of the letter is very practical and perfectly apropos for us today as it explains the necessity of our putting our faith to work. James very plainly reminds us that faith without works is dead; it's useless. God did not save us to do nothing for Him on this earth. He wants us to glorify Him and serve Him by serving the people of this world. God has ordained works for all of us who are part of the household of faith. We were not saved by our works, but now that we are saved, God wants to put us to work:

*"(8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
(9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*
(Ephesians 2:8-10)

This morning, we will get into the meat of the text itself, and see what to do when God puts our faith to the test.

I. Accept the Trials (vs. 2 – 4)

This speaks of your attitude toward the difficult situations in life.

A. We are **Perfected** through trials.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers (ποικίλος – poikilos – diverse, various kinds) temptations (πειρασμοῖς from πειρασμός – peirasmos – meaning a test or a trial);"
(James 1:2)

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience (ὑπομονήν - ὑπομονή - hypomonē – endurance; not veering off of the path when pushed)." (James 1:3)

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

(James 1:4)

James is saying that trials are used by the Lord to **perfect** or mature, or strengthen, the believer. It is through the difficulties of life that the child of God will grow spiritually.

"(10) If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10)

B. We are also **Purified** and **Purged** through trials.

Peter also wrote about having joy in the midst of trials and suffering in the sense that they **purify** the child of God:

"(6) Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold (also ποικίλος – poikilo – same word translated divers) temptations: (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: (8) 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: (9) Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Illustrate – Texas Die Cast – the aluminum had to be skimmed to remove the impurities that would rise to the top.

When trials come your way, understand that God has allowed them in your life for a reason. He may be trying to teach you something, or he may be using you to glorify himself through your endurance of the trial. When God's people patiently go through the painful difficulties of life they are great advertisement for evidence of the fact that the grace of God is working in them. We make the Lord look good when we patiently go through our troubling situations.

II. Ask God for Wisdom (vs. 5 – 8)

We are going to need God's help when we go through the difficult situations of life, and He promises to give us all of the wisdom that we need if we will simply ask Him.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth (ὀνειδίζοντος from ὀνειδίζω – oneidizō – meaning defame or rail at; reprimand) not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5)

"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." (James 1:6)

"For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." (James 1:7)

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8)

When we are going through a trial, we have to believe two things: first we have to know that God allowed this trial for a reason; and, second, we have to trust that God will give us the wisdom that we need in order to accomplish through the trial what God wants us to. Everybody goes through trials – both saved people and lost people – but the saved person can know that he is accomplishing a purpose through his trial.

A double-minded man will waver in his faith when trials come.

"(14) That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" (Ephesians 4:14)

Illustrate - Peter was double-minded in his faith when he walked on the water.

Illustrate – Job went through his great trial with his faith intact. He struggled in his trial, but he never lost his faith in God.

You need to be spiritually strong in the first place in order to pass the test of the trial. Trials will strengthen you, but they will also reveal how much strength you already have. Too many believers are very weak spiritually, and when the trials come, their weakness is revealed.

Practical Points

1. Before the trial comes, allow God to strengthen you through spiritual growth. Walk with the Lord daily: read the Bible and pray; get around other believers who will strengthen you; study the Word of God with your church family and allow yourself to be challenged through the preaching of the Word of God. These will all help you to grow spiritually.
2. When the trial comes, believe that God is in it with you, and immediately go to the Lord and ask Him for His wisdom. Lean on the stronger faith and clearer sight of other believers to guide you through the trial.

Illustrate – Solomon asked God for wisdom:

"(5) In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. (6) And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast

given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. (7) And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. (8) And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. (9) Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:5-9)

3. Be available to help other believers as they experience the trials that you have already gone through.

III. Don't Aspire to Be Rich (vs. 9 – 11)

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:" (James 1:9)

*"But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away."
(James 1:10)*

"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." (James 1:11)

In some ways these sections of this Letter are like the Proverbs in that they can all be taken separately; but they are also connected. For example the section dealing with wisdom, though applicable to every situation in life, particularly applies to the times in life when we are experiencing trials.

The same is true here with this next section that deals with the poor and rich. Both poor people and rich people go through times of testing and trials in life, and often the financial resources of the rich will not be able to deliver him from the painful situations that come in life.

Christianity has a way of leveling the ground. The wealthy and the poor both meet together at the foot of the Cross. Eventually, the poor believer will be exalted after death, and the wealthy believer will be humbled through death.

"(4) Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." (Proverbs 11:4)

The disparity between the rich and poor within the church was apparently a big problem in the early church, which James will deal with extensively in this Letter in chapter two.

Wiersbe states: *"God's testings have a way of leveling us. When testing comes to the poor man, he lets God have His way and rejoices that he possesses spiritual riches that cannot be taken from him. When testing comes to the rich man, he also lets God have His way, and he rejoices that his riches in Christ cannot wither or fade away. In other words, it is not your material resources that take you through the testings of life; it is your spiritual resources."*¹

Conclusion

"(12) 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." (James 1:12)

McGee said: "Testing will either drive you to the Lord or it will drive you away from Him. So many Christians become bitter. My friend, it is not going to be a pleasant experience to come someday into the presence of Christ if you have let the very thing your heavenly Father was using to develop your character and to bring you into a loving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ make you bitter. We will have testings, but there is going to be a crown of life for those who persevere under trial."²

To those who faithfully and patiently go through the trials of life with their faith intact, the Lord promises a great reward – the Crown of Life.

Note - The Bible speaks specifically of five "crowns" that are awarded to faithful believers:³

1 **Striver's Crown / Incorruptible Crown** (I Corinthians 9:24, 25)

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

2 **Soulwinner's Crown / Crown of Rejoicing** (I Thessalonians 2:19; II Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 4:1; Luke 15:7, 10)

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

3 **Soldier's Crown / Crown of Righteousness** (II Timothy 4:6-8)

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 340.

² J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 632.

³ Ramos, William. Bible Doctrines I Notes (Theology – p. 12)

a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

4 **Sufferer's Crown / Crown of Life** (James. 1:12; Revelation 2:10)

"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." (James 1:12)

5 **Shepherd's Crown / Crown of Glory** (1 Peter 5:4)

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

We are all going to go through times of suffering and trials, but God will help us go through those situations, and we will grow us through them as well. And when we grow, we will be better equipped to serve Him in greater ways in the future.