



THE LIFE-GIVING TRIAL

9 July 2016
Cecil Ang

James 1:1ESV

¹James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And
are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and
Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man
get all these things?" Matt 13:55-56 ESV

Introduction to the Book of James

Author

- Traditionally, James the Lord's brother, who was the leader of the early church in Jerusalem
- He chaired the Jerusalem Council to decide whether Gentile believers should be circumcised and keep the laws of Moses (Acts 15)
 - well-versed in OT Scriptures
 - decree sent - abstain from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, blood & things strangled
- Known as James the Just/Wise for his piety, prayer and wise counsel; they called him *Old Camel Knees* (thick calluses) due to long hours spent in prayer
- Died a martyr in AD 62

Introduction to the Book of James

Date

- Around AD 48-49, prior to the Jerusalem Council held in AD 50

Audience

- 1st century Jewish believers residing outside Palestine

Message

- Christianity must not only be believed, it must be lived!

Is there a contradiction between Paul and James' teaching on faith?

Paul was answering the question, "How is salvation experienced?"

James was answering the question, "How is true saving faith to be recognised?"

Introduction to the Book of James

Key Verses

²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not **bridle his tongue** but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their affliction**, and to **keep oneself unstained from the world.** Jas 1:26 – 27 ESV

Outline

Basic Christian Principles (1:2 – 27)	Distinctive Christian characteristics (2:1 – 5:6)
1:2 – 12 The life-giving trial 1:13 – 18 The life-giving God 1:19 – 27 The life-giving Word	2:1 – 16 Concern of the needy 3:1 – 18 Words and Wisdom 4:1 – 5:6 Christian constancy <u>Conclusion: abiding Christian concerns (5:7 – 20)</u> Marked by perseverance (v 7 – 12) Marked by prayer (v 13 – 18) Mutual concern for one another (v 19 – 20)

James 1:1-12 ESV

¹James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

James 1:1-12 ESV

⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. ⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Quotations

“For he who much has suffered, much will know.” Homer in The Odyssey

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Heb 4:15 ESV

Jesus,... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Heb 12:2 ESV

Progression towards Christian maturity

Therefore, since we have been justified by **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we **rejoice in hope of the glory of God**. ³ Not only that, but we **rejoice in our sufferings**, knowing that suffering produces **endurance**,⁴ and endurance produces **character**, and character produces **hope**,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Rom 5:1-5 ESV

Trial (*peirasmos*): “to examine or to put to the proof”

- Lead us not into **temptation** but deliver us from evil. Matt 6:13 ESV
- No **temptation** has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Cor 10:13 ESV
- And when the devil had ended every **temptation**, he departed from him until an opportune time. Lk 4:13 ESV
- Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. Heb 5:8 ESV

Three varieties of trials

I. Cause & Effect: we reap what we sow

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. Gal 6:7 ESV

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Jas 1:13 – 15 ESV

We reap what we sow

"Sow a thought, reap an act
Sow an act, reap a habit
Sow a habit, reap a character
Sow a character, reap a destiny"

Emerson, Ralph Waldo

Three varieties of trials

II. Spiritual: suffering for the sake of Christ

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

Three varieties of trials

III. Mysterious: unexplainable based on human logic

- Abraham offering Isaac (Gen 22)
- Suffering Job
- Man born blind (John 9:1-3)
- Woman bent over for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17)

Wisdom

- Wisdom in the Bible is a practical, down-to-earth virtue that provides us with insight into the will and ways of God.

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity. Pr 2:6-7 ESV

Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Pr 4:5 ESV

Acquisition of Wisdom

- **Hindsight**: The ability to reflect and learn from the past; action informing thought eg. Touching a hot stove
- **Foresight**: The ability to predict and prepare for the future; thought informing action eg. Insurance companies
- **Insight**: The ability to interpret and respond to the present; integration of hindsight and foresight to tackle present challenges; more often than not, a special revelation (word of wisdom) regarding what to do with present reality

Reception of Wisdom

- God gives generously: “with a single, unwavering intent” (Rom 8:32)
- God gives to all: no one is excluded
- God gives without reproach: without holding our past failures against us nor begrudging us when we come to Him often (1 Jn 1:9)
- We have to ask in faith and not doubt: not like a wave caught in the conflicting impulses of wind and tide (Mk 11:23-24)
- Double-minded: two-faced with God

“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?”

Jas 4:4 ESV

An Illustration

- Poverty is a trial. The lowly brother, instructed by wisdom, does not see the poverty of his circumstances but his high status in Christ
- The rich ought to see his humiliation because the wisdom that comes from above will reveal the transient nature of his life & the wealth he has accumulated. Wealth has the potential of dividing our loyalties. Recall the parables of Jesus: rich man & Lazarus and the rich fool

⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

The Crown of Life

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Jas 1:12 ESV

Out of the Darkness

Out of the dark forbidding soil
The pure white lilies grow.
Out of the black and murky clouds,
Descends the stainless snow.
Out of the crawling earth-bound worm
A butterfly is born.
Out of the somber shrouded night,
Behold! A golden morn!
Out of the pain and stress of life,
The peace of God pours down.
Out of the nails -- the spear -- the cross,
Redemption -- and a crown!

Source: Unknown



For the glory of God

⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Pet 1:6-9 ESV