

Progress not Perfection James 1:1-11 “Faith Works”

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

Author:

Who wrote this book? – James – Right so smart – if you said Paul I was going home.

A) Which James is this?

B) Not the Apostle James, the apostle was the Brother of John the apostle – Jesus nicknamed – Sons of Thunder

1) That James – Beheaded Acts chapter 12

C) One son of Thunder

This James is the 1/2 brother of Jesus – He too was a believer and Follower of Jesus.

A) But Not at first – Not in the gospels! John 7:5 “For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”

B) James and Jude both 1/2 brothers of Jesus – Didn’t believe

C) In fact there was a time when the 1/2 brothers of Jesus came to get him and take him away. They thought Jesus was crazy

1) **Have him institutionalized** - because that's what you do when your brother starts saying he is God.

D) Picture: James calls Jude {“hey Jude”} – he’s being a fool - **he is at it again** – **Messiah Complex** - Claiming to be the son of God –

1) So embarrassing - we have to do something – so they go to get Jesus and take him away. – Commit him

D) They get to the house – so crowded – they can’t get in – no back stage passes - Plan was foiled! – So James didn’t believe at first

But something Changes – {if you are not a Christian here today this is worth considering

A) How many of you have brothers? – What would it take for your brother to believe you are the son of God?

B) Life time supply of Pizza?

1) New Car? Great refund on Taxes

C) Some miracles

James saw some of the miracles – heard the stories – Miraculous feeding of the 5K and then later the 4K –

A) But – none of that did it – Not a believer even up to the Crucifixion. – So what changed for James?

B) What would it take for your Brother to believe you are the Son of God?

C) Here's what you have to do. Are you ready? There are two steps.

1) **Step one** is to die brutally and publicly.

2) To literally be **slaughtered in a public venue** for 100’S and 100’S, if not thousands, of people to see

D) I’m not talking about Dead for 20 minutes, and they brought you back.

1) I’m saying body ripped to shreds. You were dead. Unrecognizable - **That is step one**

Step 2 three days later, come back to life and have a fish sandwich with your family.

A) You have to get buried. Then three days later, you crawl out of the grave and eat some fish with your family.

B) **That is what convinced James** "My half-brother, who I tried to have institutionalized, is God. – **Died and after three days He Rose**

1) He is God! I’m ALL in!"

C) Led James to become a believer! **James became a Believer!**

1) **Jesus became more than his sibling, He became his Savior!**

D) Unbeliever to Believer – to Pillar in the Church – Galatians 2:9

1) Nicknamed Camel knees - Prayer warrior

Notice V.1 James refers to himself as a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ

A) Bondservant is a willing servant

B) James: My Brother who I tried to have institutionalized is my Master – **PRAY TO HIM**

1) My life is all about Him! – He is my God

C)Because He died – 3 days later - He Rose –

Doesn't end there: Unbeliever, Believer, to Pillar to Bondservant - To Martyr

A)This book was written in the 40s. No numbers in front of that. Not 1040, 1140, 1240. - 40's AD – one of the earliest NT books

B)It was written not long after the ascension of Christ.

1)In Jerusalem not long after this is penned, a mob grabs hold of James, **forces him up to the top of the temple**, and throws him off the Temple Mount.

C)**He lands on the ground. But He does not die.**

1)Church tradition tells us he was **praying for the mob that was attacking** him when finally the man picks up a stick and busted his head.

D)That is who wrote this book!

1)Great apologetic for the Defense of the Christian Faith

E)Jesus' own Brother – who didn't believe in Him becomes a believer after the Resurrection

1)And dies for His faith in His Brother!

Audience

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: He wrote it to Christians – persecuted – and scattered!

A)**Scattered = Diaspora – idea of seed being scattered** – which is a pretty cool picture.

B) Persecution. Acts 8:1 **“At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”**

C)They go out taking the gospel and shinning for Jesus – in all these regions

D)People are getting saved – the gospel is spreading – the church expanding.

1)**It was strategic** – Satan thinking – persecution is going to crush the church

God used it to EXPAND THE CHURCH

E)Our lives – Strategic – Scattered – Vista, Oceanside, Bonsall, San Marcos, Fallbrook – Carlsbad

Agenda: He wrote to mature their faith!

A)This is not a sappy – false hope – it is going to get better type of message!

B)**No James's message is that - it is probably not going to get better – this life is hard – world – brutal.**

1)It was tough being a Christian in the first century

C)**GOING TO GET HARDER FOR US-COMING MONTHS –**

1)And if the Lord tarries – Years – it is going to get harder to be a Christian in USA

2)The coming days are going to Reveal the Genuineness of our faith

Theme: Faith Works

A)**BIG IDEA: The Christian life is about Progress – not Perfection**

B)Perfection comes – one day wake up in glory!

1)Progress is important – NOW!

C)**Faith is like a Muscle:** Faith is an action/ But Faith is also a Muscle

1)God wants to strengthen that muscle – build it - NOT faith in me – but faith in Him – His ability!

Progress not perfection:

A)Sometimes James is portrayed as this book – this is **what a real Christian looks like** –

B)Result - we get really discouraged – **Measure up** – Don't Pray enough, read enough – not always does

C)**My senior year of HS – at CCCM – Pastor Chuck hired a new Youth Pastor - Fiery Italian guy**

D)The First book he taught was James – 1 year every Sunday – 1 year – 45min messages

1)**Today He admits – He BEAT THE SHEEP –**

D)**I did not like the book of James for a long time – Perfection**

1)**Not about Perfection – about Progress**

E)The Christian life is a journey with God!

E)The First thing James wants us to understand is

The Journey is going to involve trials!

A)Not smooth sailing – **there is going to be Turbulence.**

B)**No one likes Turbulence** – Bring it on – Hope this flight has a bunch of it

1)But sometimes if we are going to get to our destination – Turbulence is necessary.

C)Maui – Turbulence – windy landing – Necessary – but worth it – **Lying on Beach – Snorkeling - fish**

1) New Zealand – rough – scarred

D)James is one of those places in the Bible where God reminds us – There is going to be Turbulence

1)The Christian life can be hard – anyone who tells you different is lying.

E)How God builds **a Robust faith** in us – He allows us to go through things

1)Strengthen the muscle.

The older I get the more I admire those who have some life experience.

A)I admire those who have been through some battles – struggles – bled a little

B)When we are younger you don't pay attention to that – Like Giant Killers

1)David and Goliath cutting off giants head – Yes!

C)Get older – I want to see how David navigated through that season – when his children were rebellious.

1)What did he do when his **best friend betrayed him.**

Well James is a guy who has some battle wounds

A)He has had friends die for their faith – he has watched families be ripped apart –

B)He knows what it is like to be beaten

C)This is not some guy who hasn't been through anything – **He has some Scars**

Consider what James has to say about the Journey/trials

²My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

⁹Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, ¹⁰but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. ¹¹For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

Two things to notice about the Nature of trials
#1 Trials are no respecter of persons. V.9-11

A) Trials are the great equalizers between the rich and the poor – that is the point of verses 9-11

B)When a rich person and a poor person both get cancer – still the same result

C)Fire strikes – lose all their possessions –
1)Spouse Cheats – hurts the same

D)**Spouse dies** – Same degree of loneliness

E)It seems there were some who were rich in the church that had the tendency in their persecution to lean on riches

1)James is exhorting them not to that!

#1 Trials are no respecter of persons.

#2 Trials come in many colors

A)**Various trials – Multi-colored** – shapes sizes and forms – Not a one size fits all

B) Is he talking about difficult marriages?" **Well, that would fit in the category of various.**

1)Is he talking about being sick?" That would be a variety of trial.

C)"What about this difficulty? You have a kid who is acting like a fool. Out of control

1)Would that be there?" That is various.

D)People at work who leave you out – you are Christian – Various

E)Spouse growing distant – angry – Because of your love for Jesus

Various Trials – Multicolored

A)Some just come out

B)Others in the midst of -

C)Some forming like a wave out at sea - It is going to hit tomorrow – or next week or next month -

1)None of us are immune

D)So no matter what stage we are in – James gives us

3 Directives about trials

1st Evaluate: V.2 Count it all Joy

A)Now if you are in the trial right now – you are wondering – what is James smoking right? – Can't be serious – Count it all Joy!!!!

B)Before you tune out – that is so unrealistic - understand – Joy is not the same as happiness

1)James is not suggesting - Bob Marley “Don't worry be happy – pass me another doobie”

C)James is not saying – Put on a happy face – Pretend - “My wife just died – PTL – she is in heaven – I am so happy”

1)That would be weird. – Even if she was suffering & it ended!

D)Paul said: We sorrow..... but not as those who have no hope.

Joy is more of a Peaceful presence – an assurance in the storm

A)My heart aches – I can't get out of bed – but there is a peace

B)There is an assurance – God is in Control – Not abandoned – He is with me !

C)The word Count means to Evaluate: - See it from the right perspective!

1)Accounting term – checked bank account – can afford that purchase.

In the midst of the trial James says we can count it Joy – Right Evaluation because – WE KNOW SOMETHING

A)Testing works for us, not against us. – knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

B)Patience = Endurance – Spiritual Stamina!

C)God who loves us so much and wants us to grow and Mature is going to use the Trial.

Desire of every parent right – You want your Children to MATURE.

A)DON'T WANT A 30 YEAR OLD – acting like a 2 year old – temper tantrums – Baby food.

B) Count it all Joy - Not Joy FOR – but Joy IN- Difference

1)Peter – the trial reveals the genuineness of your faith – like gold in the fire.

C)Gold is purified in the fire – Fire reveals impurities

1)Trial reveals our impurities – Angry – afraid – things rise

D)Goldsmith doesn't throw away the gold when the impurities rise – He scraps and puts back in the fire!

E)Trials work *for* the believer, not *against* him.

Count it all Joy – Have the right Evaluation – Knowing the trial is working for you, not against you

A)That is easier said than Done Because we live in the world of Illusion.

Sociological study done this year revealed: Instagram can lead to depression.

A)Here is why: You had a really bad week – Saturday rolls around – and it is 5pm and you are still in bed in PJ's -

B)Polished off a ½ gallon of ice cream and blew through a whole season of your favorite show on Netflix –

1) Now you are bored – so you pick up your phone – Instagram – start scrolling

C) Here's what you'd find. Everybody's marriage is awesome, and their kids are incredible.

1) They're visiting these AMAZING places. Eating this AMAZING FOOD! There's no pain, no sorrow.

D) Here you are in your trial. You just ate a whole ½ gallon of ice cream. You start to resent them.

1) You start to grow in anger against them.
I hate that guy!

E) "Really Lord? I'm enduring this trial? What about them?"

1) In your trial, your insidious, wicked heart is exposed, and the comparison is how it plays itself out.

So Instagram can cause depression – because it adds to the illusion – My life stinks and everyone else's life/ marriage/ kids – ARE PERFECT!

A) But James is challenging us to look at life from the right perspective

B) God who loves you and who is wanting to make you like Jesus

1) Allowing this to Build your spiritual Stamina

C) Build your endurance -

Note: Various trials – Various = Multi-Colored

A) 1 Peter 4:10 Peter mentions the Manifold grace of God.

B) Manifold = Many Colored – Awesome truth

1) Many colors of trials

C) There is a color of grace to match every trial – every situation – His Grace is sufficient

Now Sometimes in the mist of trials people say – I can't see any good thing coming out of this trial

A) But the Bible doesn't say: Seeing that the testing of ... produces patience

B) I usually can't see what the trial is producing at all:

1) Usually don't Realize or see it - until it is over – might not until glory

C) But doesn't say we will see it / Know it

D) It is a matter of faith: Not seeing but Knowing

1) Romans 8:28 "Knowing this that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes."

Like a Tapestry:

A) Many colors of Yarn – Messy on the one side – FLIP IT - Beautiful on the Other

B) In the midst of the storm – all we see is the messy side – DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

C) But God in His love is arranging the colors of His grace to the experiences of this life

1) The Final product is a beautiful thing of Glory

D) It is in the trial that – We see the beauty and the Power and the glory of HIS GRACE!

Note: God cannot build our character without our cooperation.

A) 2nd Directive: Embrace: ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

B) Because I know that the trial is working something in me – I am not going to bail.

C) The end result is going to be good!

1) Doctor and stitches – Stop the bleeding – heal the wound – not bail

C) Halfway through a root canal. – I am out of here

1) You endure – you know – the result is the same.

D) James says: Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Lean into it {That is how you let it} – Embrace it – co-operate in the process.

A) Bike ride – river trail – against the wind - Lean in- Beach –

B) And on The way home the wind is at our backs

C) Right now the wind might seem like it is against you – lean in – build muscles - Build faith

1) Pretty soon it is going to be at your back

Trials makes me aware of my need of God!

A) Everything is going great in my life – I get comfortable – lazy – prayer life can drop off.

B) Things are rough – trial – God help me !

C) 3rd Directive: Enquire – V.5

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Note Context is trial – Not forgot to study for my test – Wisdom

A) In the trial – Ask for wisdom – **Wisdom is knowledge applied**

B) Here is how you lean into the trial – by Asking – **Not** - **WHY IS THIS HAPPENING.....**

C) But by Asking – **What** are you trying to teach me – what do you want me to do?

D) Lord I want to learn, I want to grow – so what is the lesson?

1) **WAX ON WAX OFF!**

Here is the Beauty of this: **God says ask because I give liberally without reproach.**

A) Means **God gives wisdom freely: without reservation** "unconditionally and generously, without bargaining."

B) Gives it freely and He is not going to scold you

1) "Oh it is you again – how many times are we going to do this."

C) God declares I am giving w/out reservation – but I want you to receive w/out reservation

James not only explains *what* to ask for (**wisdom**), but he also describes *how* to ask. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,

A) Not doubting His heart – His love

B) Flower petals – he loves me – he loves me not!

C) You are my Child come to me and I will give you wisdom but don't stagger at the promise of God

D) Don't stagger at My love or at my ability to work in the midst of your circumstances or situation

Dd) Too many of us – Approach it this way: **I am only going to accept it – if I like the answer**

1) Don't like the answer – not following

E) **Doesn't work that way** - Faith doesn't get built that way!

James compares the doubting believer to the waves of the sea, up one minute and down the next.

...for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

A) Emotional mess – rollercoaster – Christian

B) God loves you – wants to build your faith muscle – Let Him –

Journey is about - **PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION**

A) In the Storm – **Evaluate** – See it correctly – Count it all Joy – **Knowing... Producing Maturity**

B) **Embrace** – Lean into it

C) Enquire – **What** is the purpose? – **What** is it teaching me?

1) **What's it** Doing in me?

Tell the Lord – I trust you - Faith Muscle grows

C) **Remembering - Our troubles may be many-coloured, but so is the grace of God;**

1) There is no color in the human situation which HIS grace DOES NOT – SUPERCEDE

AMEN -