

Faith Without Works is Useless

An Expository “Journey” Through the Epistle of James

3-Trials; Faith; Endurance; Joy; Wisdom; Humility; and the Crown of Life

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James 1:2-12

- 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.
7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,
8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;
10 and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.
11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.
12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

To the Glory of God

Now there are a lot of people, who genuinely think that the **Epistle of James** is a collection of disjointed statements that, while true- are random and have no general Purpose. And so, they usually go through the various statements one at a time and try to glean as much information about them as they can. For example, they see verses 2-4 as being about Trials and Endurance. Then verse 5 is about Wisdom. Verses 6-8 is about how to pray; verses 9-11 is pertaining to rich and poor people; and verse 12 is about Trials again.

Now the reason we know this is true- is because people will quote these verses- but they will only quote them separately- one at a time. So, for example, they will quote verse 5 that says,

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

... and then they will talk about Wisdom. And that is great. We all need more Wisdom. But most of the time- they will leave out the very *first* word of verse 5- which clearly indicates that what James is saying about Wisdom in verse 5 is a *continuation* of a *larger* point that he began in verse 2 about Trials; and Joy; and the testing of our Faith; and Endurance; and lacking nothing.

So, even though it may *appear* that these Statements are all disjointed and unrelated- the Reality is that verse 12 is a summary statement that is connected to what James wrote in verses 2-11. So, verses 2-11 is a single, connected thought about how we may persevere through our various Trials and gain God's Approval- so we may receive a Crown of Life. And verse 12 ties everything back together.

One problem in understanding that these seemingly unconnected verses are all connected- lies in the fact that we read this Epistle in English and we don't see the context that the Greek offers. And I say that- not to shame us- but to show us the importance of going back to the original languages. Now I fully understand that most people are simply NOT going to do that. And I agree that reading the **Epistle of James** in the English is infinitely better than not reading **James** at all.

But I will also say that SOMEBODY needs to do the hard work- and take the various verses back to the original Greek. And SOMEBODY needs to conjugate the verbs. And SOMEBODY needs to diagram the sentences. And SOMEBODY needs to do whatever needs to be done to make sure that what we say that James said- is indeed what James said.

Because there is a reason, dear friends, that the average person; who sits on the average pew; of the average Church; is so ill-informed about the Bible in our day. And *part* of that reason is that getting up; and getting dressed; and driving to Church; and sitting on the pew for a few hours on Sunday is having to compete with the god of sports (that has made the Lord's Day the biggest sports day) and high-tech video games; and other forms of Technology- has allowed many to think that sitting at the kitchen table in your pajamas and watching a Sermon on YouTube- is what God the Holy Spirit had in mind when He moved on the writer of **Hebrews** to say,

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love

and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-25)

... but it isn't.

And, part of the reason is that- because making enough money to live on has become harder and harder- and thus we are forced to work longer and longer- the Argument as to why we need to sit in Church and “waste two hours on the only day we have off”- becomes more tempting.

So, as believers- we must understand that the notion that “whatever is the easiest is the best”- is not always true. And so, we must make sure that our Goal is NOT to attend the Church that is the nearest to our Home- but rather to attend the Church that is the nearest to the Scriptures.

But part of the reason why so many in the Church don't know the Bible- is that it is a lot of work; and it takes a lot of time to do what needs to be done- in order to “get the Gospel Right” and most people in the Ministry are reluctant to expend that much labor when most people wouldn't notice it anyway.

So, if it isn't because it is more convenient; and it isn't because it is easier; and it isn't because it is simpler; then why should we go through all this trouble? Well, the Apostle Peter put it this way:

2Peter 3:13&14

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

If we are earnestly looking for a new Heaven and a new Earth- there is only one way we will respond to that. We will be diligent- to be found by Jesus, when He bursts the clouds and comes back- He will find us “in Peace” with God and we will be spotless and blameless. In other words, because God has graciously unveiled our eyes and minds; and because He has opened our eyes to behold the Glory of God in the Person of Jesus; because we have been mercifully granted with the ability to see Jesus as being the Treasure of the Universe- we diligently desire to magnify Him in the Beauty of Holiness; and we diligently desire to be found by Him when He comes back- Faithful; Fruitful; and Busy in the Work of the Lord.

Another way of understanding this- is that we have judged God to be worth the Struggle. Everything we read; and everything we ponder; everything we contemplate; and meditate; and think about- when we think about Jesus tells us that Jesus is better than anything this world can give to us; and He is better than

anything this world can take away from us. And so, we respond to that Reality by struggling against the lusts of our flesh (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to live our lives in humble and joyful Submission to the Authority of Scripture- in our daily lives- all to the Glory of God. And part of that is to study- *hard*; and to pray- *hard*; and to preach and teach- *hard*; and to listen- *hard*; and to live- *hard*- with purpose and meaning- so that Jesus will be known and loved and feared and adored and treasured and obeyed above all else.

But another way we should look at the Epistle of **James** is to see this Book as being very similar to **1John** where the various Statements by the half-brother of Jesus are different “Tests” or “Proofs” that show us what being saved looks like. And **James** has 14 of these “Tests” or “Proofs”:

1. The Test of Perseverance in Suffering (1:2-12)
2. The Test of Confronting Temptation (1:13-18)
3. The Test of Speaking and Doing According to the Word (1:19-27)
4. The Test of Impartial Love (2:1-13)
5. The Test of Godly Works (2:14-26)
6. The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)
7. The Test of Godly Wisdom (3:13-18)
8. The Test of Worldliness (4:1-12)
9. The Test of Boasting (4:13-17)
10. The Test of Wealth (5:1-6)
11. The Test of Enduring Patience (5:7-11)
12. The Test of Making Oaths (5:12)
13. The Test of Prayer (5:13-18)
14. The Test of Pursuing the Brethren (5:19&20)

So, today, we are looking at verses 2-12 and the first Test of what Salvation looks like:

Salvation Looks Like “Perseverance in Suffering”

In a nutshell- what James is telling us in this Passage is that if our Salvation is genuine- if it is real; if we have truly experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and have repented of Sin; and have trusted in Jesus and in His finished Work- we will NOT fall apart during seasons of Suffering and we will persevere and receive a Crown of Life!

Now that doesn't mean we won't hurt or even become discouraged or temporarily lose sight of what Suffering is all about. But what it does mean is that we won't STAY discouraged. We won't REMAIN blinded about why a Good and

Gracious Savior allows His Own children to be treated terribly by evil men; or why He allows us to go through any number of various Trials.

Now, I have been faithful to teach you that Sufferings- in all their various forms- are part and parcel to Salvation. And there are several ways to approach the Issue of Suffering- but suffice it to say that in **2 Timothy 3:12**- God the Holy Spirit gave every single genuinely saved person a Promise when He moved on the Apostle Paul to say,

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Now I realize that Paul was speaking primarily here of believers suffering Persecution- but as we have studied many times before- Suffering takes on many forms from evil people attacking us verbally or even physically- to struggling with disease. From legal trouble- to satan attacking us supernaturally. And there are numerous examples all through the Bible of the most- godly people on earth going through horrific pain; agony; and afflictions from physical handicaps to disease to wicked rulers- even from satan himself. So, Suffering is a very broad heading.

The point is that, even though most of the time- we don't know the specific reason why we are suffering- we *do* know that our Suffering is NOT random or meaningless. Our Trials always; always; always have Purpose and Meaning. And that Purpose and that Meaning is always; always; always designed for the ultimate "Good" of the Glory of God and so that our Joy may be made "full". And that is true because the God, Who controls our Suffering has become our Father by His Choice and Actions; and we have become His children by Adoption.

So, as James begins this inspired Letter- he echoes all the other biblical writers in reminding us about the connection between our Trials and our ultimate Joy. Now, on the surface that sounds ridiculous. Because the only Joy that most people have- is when their Trial is over; or if they don't go through a Trial to begin with. But James uses what the Puritans called, the "Logic of Scripture" in telling us that the Joy that the Bible talks about is NOT like the carnal; fleshly; shallow Joy that the world gives.

James tells us that this Joy is made full- NOT by us *avoiding* Trials- but by us going through our Trials. So, as the Trial comes to us- we understand that whatever particular point the Trial is attacking- what is *really* being tested is our Faith. And so, James tells us that as our Faith is being tested in the Trial- the Fire of that testing produces "Endurance". And as this kind of Endurance manifests itself in us- it has a "perfect Result"- meaning that the fruit or the result of this Endurance is in accord with God's Will and Word (Scripture).

Now I want you to look again at how God the Spirit dealt with the writer of **Hebrews** to teach this very same Truth in **Hebrews 12:11**:

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Now pay close attention to the last phrase of that verse,

... yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

... this corresponds to what James said in verse 12 about the “Crown of Life”. Now every genuine believer wants the “Fruit of Righteousness”. Why? Well, partly because that Fruit is “Peaceable”. But evidently, everyone doesn’t have the “Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness”. Why not? Because the “Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness” comes to us as the result of something else. The writer of Hebrews was moved by God the Holy Spirit to infallibly teach that the “Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness” is “yielded” to us; it comes to us- because we have been “trained” by something that he called the “Discipline of the Lord” and that we know is our Sufferings.

Now to be “trained” by something (Gr. *gumnazoe*; Strongs #1128) in the context of what the writer of **Hebrews** had in mind- has to do with *tough; hard; ongoing training for serious athletic events*. So, this is NOT talking about periodic; haphazard; weekend; meaningless; or amateur athletics. This is talking about the highest level of preparation and getting our bodies in shape- so we may win the prize.

So, as we first begin that training- we think we are going to die. Why? Because everything about us- has changed from our eating and sleeping habits to working out with strange equipment- to having a trainer- *relentlessly* keeping us focused and on schedule- while ignoring our complaining. Why so intensity? Because if we do not change- we will not win. So, changing is NOT “helpful”- it is *mandatory*- or we will lose. And the pain of changing is only diminished by the Joy of winning. So, the only reason we began the training in the first place- is because we see the Prize that is at stake to be of such great Value- that we are willing to endure whatever training is necessary.

So, the first step is NOT the training. The first step is seeing the Prize as being worthy of *whatever* it takes to win it. And without that Sight; without that Vision; without beholding God in His Glory - we will soon grow weary of the training and we will faint at the Cost of what it takes- or we will stop altogether

and go another route. And that is *exactly* what the writer of **Hebrews** had in mind when he said,

Hebrews 12:12&13

12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

So, the Purpose of the Trials is to change us so that we may receive a Crown of Life. And the Purpose behind why we need to change- is that in our current condition- without the Change- we will NOT win that Prize. And what motivate us to endure through the hardship of the Change- is the Value we place on the Prize. Yet it is NOT obtaining the Prize that trains us. It is the ongoing process of Changing us through various Trials that “trains” us and transforms us.

Now the way James talks here- gives us the idea that the Endurance- the “perfect Result” of the testing of our Faith (our Trials)- is “automatic”. In other words- as we focus on going through various Trials; as we concentrate to periodically go through the testing of our Faith- we WILL *automatically* manifest this godly Endurance- which, when we are trained to allow that Endurance to have its “perfect Result”- we will NOT lack *anything* that we need in our Walk with God. So, in those cases- the process of us having our Faith tested- automatically produces in us- certain spiritual Realities.

But that is NOT the way Wisdom works. It seems that Wisdom does NOT come to us automatically. And so, James instructs us to specifically pray for Wisdom. And the basis of our praying for Wisdom comes from what we see in ourselves (or what we DON'T see in ourselves) as we have our Faith tested in the various Trials that God allows to come our way.

So, evidently, Wisdom is NOT one of those Qualities that will *automatically* come to us as we strive to walk this world in white. God *requires* us to personally and specifically ask Him for Wisdom. Look again at what James said,

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

So, the way we are to understand what James is teaching here is to understand that as our Faith is tested (through the various Trials)- Endurance will *automatically* be given to us. And as we are “trained” (changed) by our Suffering (**Hebrews 12:11**)- Endurance will *automatically* be developed and it will have its

“perfect Result”. And the “perfect Result” of the Gift of Endurance will *automatically* cause us to not lack *anything*!

... except Wisdom.

So, if we are going to have Wisdom- we will have to humble ourselves and personally and specifically ask God for it. And that is why James began verse 5 with the word, “**But**”- which means: “*However*”. So, Wisdom is the *exception* to the “**anything**” that he just talked about in verse 4.

So, *part* of the reason for James telling us to personally and specifically ask God for Wisdom- is the Humiliation that comes to us by admitting that we are NOT wise to begin with- and we acknowledge that we *need* Wisdom. But how did we come to the conclusion that we lacked Wisdom? By and through the testing of our Faith. So, as Endurance brought forth it “perfect Result” that allows us to not lack anything- we saw a glaring lack in ourselves concerning Wisdom. In other words- we responded in some way to the testing of our Faith in a foolish manner or an “untrained” or unbiblical manner- and that allowed us to see that we lacked Wisdom. And we respond to seeing that- by personally and specifically asking God for a Wisdom that we do not already have.

And to encourage us to go ahead and ask for Wisdom- James give us a very precious insight into God’s Own Personal Perspective concerning us and Wisdom when He said:

... who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Now this is an amazing Statement by the half-brother of Jesus. Here, James is giving us a glimpse of a portion of God’s Character that I don’t think is found anywhere else in all the Bible. James tells us here that in humbling ourselves and admitting that we have acted foolishly about our Trials; or in us confessing that we have acted in an untrained way; or an unbiblical way about having our Faith tested- and we have seen that we have lacked Wisdom; and after we cry out to God- confessing that lack and asking God to give us the Wisdom that we lacked- James is promising us that God will NOT rebuke us; we will not be mocked or ridiculed or suffer reproach at God’s Hand- for acting foolishly or acting in an untrained manner or acting in an unbiblical way concerning our Trial! And then along with the Promise that God will not upbraid us for lacking Wisdom and asking for it- James then promises that God will give the Wisdom that we have asked for- and that God will give it to us- GENEROUSLY! So, first of all- James *guarantees* that God will answer that Prayer. But then James also promises that God will answer that Prayer- generously!

But James says there is one caveat to God answering that Prayer:

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

So, the way we need to understand what James is teaching here- is that he said,

... let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. [However] if [through the testing of our Faith we see that] any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. [However] he must ask in faith without any doubting...

Now it is important that we understand that the Wisdom that we lack and that we ask God for in this Passage- is NOT the normal, general lack of Wisdom that every human on earth has. All human beings have acted foolishly at some point in their lives and need Wisdom. James is NOT talking about that- which is why we need to make sure that verses 2-11- are all connected to each other and that they are NOT simply true Statements that have no context to them. The Wisdom that James is talking about here is connected to the Gift of Endurance having its “perfect Result” in our lives.

And that means that James is also NOT talking about the natural, earthly, human Wisdom that comes to all people simply by living on earth for a while. No, the Wisdom that James is talking about has to do specifically with the Gift of Endurance being able or not being able to have its perfect Result in us. And the only reason we see that we NEED that Wisdom- is because by, in, and through the various Trials God has allowed us to experience- we comprehend that we have not yet been “trained” by those Trials; and we are still responding to the testing of our Faith in a “foolish” or an “unbiblical” manner.

And it is also important to note that James doesn’t tell us to ask for MORE Wisdom- as though we already have *some* Wisdom and simply need more. No, this is all or nothing- which is why we must understand that James is NOT talking about the normal type of Wisdom that is available to both sinner and saint. This applies ONLY to saved people. And so, the Wisdom here is NOT going to help us make more money; or help us build a better bridge; or help us wage better warfare; or help us access more information on our smart phones. This Wisdom is what we need to help us yield to the ongoing training brought about by the testing of our Faith- so that we may bear the Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness.

Now the way verses 6-8 are normally taught- is that this is some kind of “super-duper special kind of unusual Faith” that never doubts; and that never has a hiccup; or that is never troubled. And those who teach that- simply made that kind of Teaching up- because James nor Jesus nor any other biblical writer taught it.

The fact is that every saved person- periodically doubts. And that isn’t because we are weak in our Faith- as much as it is- that we are human beings. No one on earth believes perfectly or has perfect Faith. No one. And those who *think* they do- suffer from a deep- seated and sinful Arrogance and Self-righteousness that is an infinitely *bigger* problem than doubting.

So, when we read verses that appear to suggest that saved people can reach some spiritual realm where we no longer doubt; or we no longer sin; or we no longer do or say or think or believe anything wrong- we must step back; and take a breath; and realize that this is NOT what God the Holy Spirit is teaching.

The Reality is that every saved person- who genuinely believes- wants to believe *more*. He desires to believe *better*. His cry is to believe *stronger*. Now analyze that for a moment. Why would anyone want to believe MORE; or BETTER; or STRONGER? Because there are areas where we DON’T believe as well; or as strongly; or as much as we would like. Well, what do you call that? The Bible calls it “doubting”. So, if you have ever asked God to allow you to trust in Him better or more or stronger; if you have ever cried out to God to help you to trust in what He says- the only reason you prayed like that- is because you are admitting that you do not already have perfect Faith and that you doubt to some degree.

One of the humbling aspects of the New Testament is that everyone who truly doubted- was a genuine believer. But for someone- anyone- to suggest that they believe- period- with no room to grow- is to suggest that they have arrived at sinless Perfection- at least concerning their ability to trust/believe. And when anyone even begins to think like that- he is deceived; and is demonstrating an amazing level of Pride and Arrogance. And the Bible says when we do that- God Himself fights against us.

But Brother Blair, James said,

... he must ask in faith without any doubting ...

Yes, he did. That is *exactly* what James said. So, isn’t that NO doubting- at all? No, it isn’t. That is what James said- but it is NOT what James meant by what he said. But how do you know that? Two reasons:

1. No human on earth has ever or will ever reach such a place
2. The way John spoke is even harder to grasp

... now all you have to do to understand #1- is to simply ask people if they have ever doubted since they were saved. Ever. One time. About anything. And if they say, “*Yes, of course*”- then ask the second Question: “*Has God ever answered any of your Prayers?*” Ever. At any time. And if they say, “*Yes, of course*”- then you say something like, “Yes!” or “Bingo!” or some other statement and then just read what James said,

... the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

So, you can't have it both ways. If what James said about not doubting “at all” in our asking is what he meant- then how did God answer ANY of your Prayers- when James also said that the man, who doubts, will not receive ANYTHING from the Lord?

The Answer is that what James meant about us “doubting” is what the Apostle John meant about us “sinning”. Look at what John wrote in **1John 3:6**

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Here, it sure looks like John is saying that whoever abides in Jesus doesn't sin- AT ALL! And by saying this same thing in two different ways- it sure looks like John was teaching that saved people can (and should) reach a spiritual realm of getting so close to Jesus that we completely stop sinning. In fact, it looks like John was teaching that if we sin after we are saved- we are proving that we have neither seen Jesus nor do we know Him.

And there are countless people alive on earth today that actually teach that very thing. I've met several of them. And all you have to do to defeat their false Teaching is to ask them two very simple Questions:

- 1) Are you saved?
- 2) Do you still sin?

... and, if they answer, “Yes” to Question 1- then they MUST answer, “No” to Question 2. But by their own Teaching- if they answer, “Yes” to Question: 2- then they cannot possibly be saved.

The Answer, of course, is the CONTEXT of what John wrote here. John was NOT talking about sinless Perfection here. However, he WAS talking about

ABIDING in either Sin or Jesus. So, if you ABIDE in Jesus- then you don't *continually* sin; you don't dwell *constantly* in sin; and you don't *abide* in sin. So, it is NOT, "Do you sin- AT ALL?" It is, "Do you sin LESS- the MORE you abide in Jesus?" So, it isn't the *absence* or *elimination* of ALL sin- but the *degree* or the *amount* of Sin in your life. So, we will NEVER be "sinless". How do we know that? Because to be sinless- is to be Deity. But saved people should sin- LESS. But how do we know that? Because all human beings- sin. Likewise, James is NOT teaching that we don't doubt- AT ALL- but that we believe- MORE!

Then James said,

**9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;
10 and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.**

11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

... again, the first word in verse 9 is "**But**"- meaning that verse 9 is a *continuation* of what came before it. So, the way we should understand what James was teaching is,

... the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position...

So, no, James is NOT teaching that it is okay to doubt. Doubting is bad. Doubting is distrusting what the only Being in the Universe Who CAN'T lie- has said. So, it is ridiculous to doubt God. Doubt someone else- but don't doubt God. Never doubt God. But when you do doubt God- repent and trust Him even more.

There is absolutely no reason to doubt God. God has done *nothing* except to prove Himself *worthy* of our Trust and Hope and Belief. So, the one, who will go against that- and doubt an all-Righteous Being, Who doesn't have the ability to lie- will be unstable in everything else he does.

But who illustrates "doubting" to the sinful world more than anyone else? Illiterate and poor people. Why is that? Because the world reasons that since illiterate people can't read what Scriptures teach about God- their Faith can't be built up. And since they have no money and no ability to go to school and learn what the Scriptures teach- they continue to doubt. Also, the sinful world reasons that if poor and uneducated people were right with God- then God would bless

them; and they wouldn't be poor or uneducated.

Yet, History teaches us that illiterate and poor people make up the overwhelming *majority* of believers on earth- not only in our day- but throughout the 2,000 history of the Church. The Apostle Paul said,

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

The lost, pagan world ALWAYS insults and denigrates the uneducated; the weak; the poor; and the common folk. They always have and they always will. To the “shakers and movers” of this Age- the poor are “in the way”. Examine what began all the social experimentations that resulted in the wicked ideology called, “Eugenics”. These people deemed certain groups and races to be “inferior” and unworthy of life.

The Organization that is now called, “Planned Parenthood” came forth from the twisted mind of Margaret Sanger, who didn't believe that poor and back people had a reason to pro-create and thus Abortion became the “fix”. And contrary to popular thinking- Hitler's evil program to develop a “superior” race of humans did NOT influence the Eugenics crowd. No, it was the American doctors and politicians and lawyers who believed in and who practiced Eugenics that influenced Hitler.

Thank God- that He sees things differently. And so, you simply can't read the Bible with any degree of honesty and not see that God commands those, who belong to Him- to pay close attention to those who *cannot* defend themselves.

So, in that vein- James is teaching us that those, whom the world looks down on- the poor and uneducated and the weak should “glory”; they should rejoice that God has chosen them to be in such a “high position.” And like everything else in this Passage- this Statement by James is NOT a “stand- alone” verse. And James is also NOT “switching gears” here to talk about something else. Verse 9 is the *continuation* of what James has been talking about since verse 2. So, as James just condemned doubting- he then uses a natural example of the main group of people that the lost world would normally think were “expendable” and where doubting would reside- the poor and the uneducated. Yet, unlike the world- James calls their status in life (or their lack of status) a “high Position”.

Now we must keep in mind that James wrote this Book just a few years after the Resurrection. And the world that James lived in- knew NOTHING about Capitalism or “Free Enterprise” or “Democracy” or a “Constitution” that said “all men are created equal” and that gave “human rights” to the poorest among us. Back in James’ day- if you were *born* poor- you would probably *remain* poor your entire life. There was no economic mechanism in place that allowed for people to migrate from one economic class to another.

So, James is encouraging his poor and weak and uneducated brethren by calling their status in life, a “high position”- even though the world would despise them and look down on them and either completely ignore them or abuse them. So, the group that had every natural excuse as to why they didn’t believe and trust in God- are the very group that God chose; and that God blessed; and that God used to bring Shame and Humility on the group that had everything in the natural.

So, the fact that James is making a spiritual distinction here between the rich and poor; and between those who had status with those who had none- is to show that Faith is a Gift from God; and that natural ability and natural humanly engineered status means NOTHING with God.

The amazing fact is that it was the poor and the uneducated who believed; and who put their Hope and Trust in Jesus- while those who had access to the schools and the money and the finer things in life- were, by and large those who *persecuted* the believers. Later James wrote,

James 2:6b&7

... Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

But now look again at what James called these poor people at the beginning of verse 9:

But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

... so, by using the word, “brother”, we know that James is speaking here of saved people, who are of “humble circumstances” or who are poor. So, James is actually encouraging these brothers by calling their poverty a “high position”.

But then look again at how the Church in Jerusalem’s first Pastor described the wealthy of his Church:

10 and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

So, by encouraging the poor and by reminding the wealthy to be humble; and to realize that God can take away their wealth as fast as He gave it to them- James was being a good Pastor and a good steward of the Mystery of Godliness. Because, contrary to popular American Christianity- the Holy Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches what James teaches here.

Financial and Material Wealth are Gifts from God; and they are wonderful tools that God can use for His Glory- mightily. However, these Commodities also come with frightening Warnings to those who possess them. The Apostle Paul wrote:

1 Timothy 3:2&3

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

1 Timothy 6:3-11

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

... and the writer of **Hebrews** said,

Hebrews 13:5&6

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

... and Jesus Himself said,

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Beloved, these dire Warnings are in the Bible for a reason. It is part of our fallen human nature for us to be enamored of both Financial Wealth and Material Possessions and to allow them to carry us away from our "First Love". And History teaches that many people- including Prophets and Kings; Bishops and Stewards; along with formerly humble servants of God- have all become corrupted and their Walk with God destroyed because they considered themselves *immune* from these Warnings about Money and Possessions.

And yet, nearly every time this subject is brought up- people respond by saying, "*But Brother Blair- God knows we NEED Money and even the Church NEEDS Money and so, you can't say it is all bad.*" And I would remind those who think like this- that I'm not the one who warned God's people about the Dangers associated with Money and Wealth. God the Son said this. And God the Holy Spirit infallibly

"breathed out" these Divine Warnings to several biblical writers- including James. And that means we simply can't ignore them.

But then, a large number of people in the modern church will simply shrug their shoulders and say, "*I don't love Money- so I'm okay*". And just like that- they dismiss some of the most frightening Warnings found anywhere in the Bible. Now why is that? I think we have only two choices:

1. Either they are correct and somehow (they never can tell me exactly how) the people of the modern Church have actually become *immune* to the temptation and danger that Wealth and Possessions bring
2. People today are so "neck-deep" in loving and serving Money and Wealth that they have no idea how to get out of it

... and I simply do NOT believe that #1 is true. And neither did James.

Don't you find it odd that people pray about all sorts of Issues all the time- and yet, you can go for many years without hearing even one saint cry out to God to help him navigate through the minefield of Money and Material Possessions and Wealth? And that tells me that, by and large, we are very uncomfortable with this Issue. And it also tells me that underneath it all people are afraid that God just might require of them what He required of people in the Bible. And that is why James faithfully warns those of his 1st Century congregation, who were wealthy and us- that

...the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

... but then usually another cry rises and says, "*So, what do you want us to do, Brother Blair- be poor?*" And my answer is that I don't want anyone to do anything other than be Faithful; Fruitful; and Busy in the great Work of the Christ the Lord. And if you can do that and have Money- great. But if the terrible Sins that the Bible warns us about concerning Money and Material Possessions and Wealth are true in your life- then I would tell you that your soul is in jeopardy and you should get rid of your Money and your Possessions as fast as you can- in order to preserve your eternal soul.

We must remember that we can go to Heaven- poor. But Jesus Himself said, **Mark 10:25**
It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

... and if your first inclination when hearing these inspired Words of Jesus is to protest, "*But I'm not rich!*"- we should consider that the average American- who struggles every day to pay his bills and provide for his family- is *infinitely* wealthier and has more material possessions than most of those who were considered to be wealthy in Jesus' day.

So, Yes, James is talking to us. Yes, Jesus meant what He said. And, yes, Paul's Warnings apply to us. So, we must take heed to ourselves and cry out to God that He will be merciful to us- to allow us to *escape* the Dangers and Destruction that the Holy Bible promises to those who love Money; and Material Possessions; and Wealth. And this is all part of how we can allow Endurance to have it's perfect Response in us- so we may lack nothing.

Finally, James ties all of this back together with this summary statement:

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Now normally, we would think that not having a Trial to begin with- is what allows us to be “Blessed”. Yet James tells us here that it is the, “**man who perseveres under trial**” who has really found Favor with God. Now why did James say that? Look at what he said next,

... for [because] once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

... so, it is us being “**approved**” in our persevering under Trial- that makes us to be “**blessed**”. Why? Because being approved is what allows us to receive the Crown of Life.

Now the word that was translated here as “**approved**” comes from a Greek word (*dokimos*; Strongs # 1384) that means: *accepted or proved*. It has to do with: *metal being tried by fire and thus purified*. So, James is teaching us that the Purpose of our Trials is that by us *persevering* in the fire of our Trials- we will be purified. Now to “persevere” is to: *endure; sustain; and to bear up under suffering*. To persevere refers to: *our response toward the situation that God has sovereignly brought into our lives*.

So, when the Trial comes- a believer begins to remind himself what the Scriptures teach as to why a Good and Sovereign God allows Suffering to come to those He loves and has saved. And with that Knowledge- that comes from trusting in what the infallible Word of God says about the Purpose for Suffering- we do not faint. We do not collapse under the weight of the Trial. We do not run away from God; or become angry with Him. That is what those who do not understand or believe what the Bible says- do.

But as someone who has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- we know that all of God’s Wrath has *forever* been removed from us and that God’s Purpose in our Trials- is that we may share in God’s Own Personal Holiness. **Hebrews 12:5b-10** says:

**5 ... "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;
6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."**

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

So, James wrote this Passage to his 1st Century audience and to us- to help us navigate through the various Trials that God sovereignly allows to come our way. And as we are trained by those Trails- we are able to allow Endurance to have its “perfect Result” in our lives. But if any of us lacks Wisdom in how to be trained by the Fire of our Trials- we may ask God, Who has promised to give to us generously. And as we ask for Wisdom and we notice that we are doubting- we should repent and go back and rehearse the Gospel in our minds- so we may see God as being the most trustworthy Being in the Universe.

And being trained by the Fires of our various Trials so that Endurance may have its perfect Result- so that we may lack nothing- affects both the rich believer as well as the poor. But it affects us all differently. For the poor man is to glory in his “high Position”; while the wealthy saint is to glory that, periodically, God humbles him by reminding him that God is the One, Who gave him his Wealth and God may take it away- as it may please God.

But the one who is blessed and favored by God- is NEITHER the rich nor the poor- but the one who perseveres under Trial. Why? Because...

... once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.