

Trials and tribulations in james 1:12-18



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Trials and Tribulations in James 1: 2-18 The Epistle of James is one of the books of the New Testament that deals with the Christian character and how to deal with daily Christian life. The author of James identifies himself in the opening verse as “ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”. Many speculated that the author was attributed to the apostle James, brother of John and the son of Zebedee. The text refers to present persecutions and the time of writing is consistent with the persecution in Jerusalem during which the apostle James was martyred and put to death by Herod (Acts 12).

There seems to be evidence that the author was the other James, the son of Alphaeus and the half-brother of Christ. He was also one of the twelve apostles. I will in this paper attempt to expound on the trials and tribulations in James 1: 2-18. After research and study, I have found that in the first eighteen verses James is teaching Christians how to conduct themselves when under the cross. He is giving comfort to Christians who are under the oppression of temptation and trials. He pronounces that blessings and rewards are assured to those who endure their trials and afflictions as they walk throughout this Christian life.

James also points out that all of those sins that bring sufferings and the temptations that men endure are not created by God. God cannot be the author of sin; he is the author of all that is good. James is allowing us to understand in these verses that we will endure trials and we will endure tribulations. As Christians our trials and tribulations work for a purpose and not just as a punishment in our life. This concept should help us even today to know that our suffering is purposeful and that God rewards us for bearing

our own cross as Christ bears his cross. As we break down these verses let us look at who James was writing to.

This will give us an understanding of the message. In the first verse James mentions the condition of those to whom he writes: The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. The greatest part of, ten of the twelve tribes, were lost in captivity; but yet some of every tribe were preserved and they are still honored with the ancient style of twelve tribes. These however were scattered and dispersed. They were dispersed in mercy. Having the scriptures of the Old Testament, the providence of God so ordered it that they were scattered in several countries for the diffusing of the light of divine revelation.

They began now to be scattered in wrath. The Jewish nation was crumbling into parties and factions, and many were forced to leave their own country. Even good people among them shared in the common calamity. These Jews of the dispersion were those who had embraced the Christian faith. They were persecuted and forced to seek for shelter in other countries, the Gentiles being more merciful to Christians than the Jews were. Now let us breakdown each verse from verse 2 through 18. The overall breakdown of verse 2 through 12 shows us the suffering of the Christians in this world is that of an instructive manner.

As we can see from the original Greek language, that James uses imperative commands that is illustrated through this Epistle. James is implying that troubles and afflictions may be the result of being mature Christians, even those Christians who have been serving well and being faithful unto the Lord.

The devil embodies faithful Christians in trials and tribulations in order to cause separation between Christians and God. The devil expects that temptations and trials will result in sin which will cause further separation from God.

It is the duty of Satan to cause doubt in the mind of the Christian so that they will believe that God is incapable of delivering us from those situations. James is instructing us not to look at our trials and tribulations as hopeless but hopeful because we know that we are fulfilling a greater purpose by enduring those trials and tribulations in our life. As we, as Christians, go through our storms in our life it causes us to understand and gain a greater trust in the Lord because we are yet spared by his grace and we are made advocates of his mercy.

The twelve tribes that James is writing to have been dispersed from their land and are going through difficult hardships and persecution. James is reassuring them not to give up but to rejoice because their persecutions and hardships are working a greater purpose in their lives. These temptations, as James points out, are “divers” temptations. The word “divers”, in the Greek, means that it is varied or of different kinds. James lets us know that the temptations that you may endure, the afflictions you may endure, will be of different nature, stature, size and makeup.

They may be more than one or more of the same. Since our trials may be of many and different kinds we have to put on the Armor of God as Paul states in Galatians. In the second verse of James he tells us to “Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations”. In order for us to count in all joy we

must not fall into a pitiful state of mind which would make us vulnerable while we are in our trials. The world would have you to believe that you should just throw in the towel when you have endured pain and suffering. The world is not set up as a vehicle for grace.

When in despair, the world presses down even further in order that hope is a mere distant idea. The world would have you to believe that weakness is a disease that should be cured. But God lets us know that we should not be conformed to the world or that of the world but we should live knowing that He is there for us. In the third verse, James says that when you endure your trials and tribulations you must know that the testing of your faith produces patience. In other translations it mentions that the testing of your faith produces endurance or perseverance.

The word produces lets us know that it is brought forth or manufactured. James is saying that every time your faith is tested – it will cause you to increase your patience, endurance or perseverance. The faith that is spoken of here as tried by afflictions consists in a belief of the power, and word, and promise of God. Many readers of the New Testament feel as though Paul and James contradict each other on the issue of faith. They have differences in the emphasis on faith but the fundamentals are the same. Both Paul and James agree that both faith and works are essential parts of the Christian life.

They each have different roles. They also agree that salvation comes from God and it is not based on works. We cannot do anything to earn salvation. The difference is that Paul and James are writing to different audiences so

their letters have different interpretations. Paul needed to deal with the fact that people thought that Gentiles needed to be circumcised and adhere to other works of the law in order to be converted to Christianity. James on the other hand had to deal with the fact that people thought the faith in God is enough for salvation and he wanted to stress that we have to put that faith into action. As Christians, we have to possess patience, endurance and perseverance. Too often we believe that those adjectives are not popular in our daily lives. Once again, as Christians, subscribe to the concept that we have to humble ourselves and not allow pride to be visible in our lives. When we are tried, we are tried of our grace but that trying of our grace produces another grace that we give. Christian patience is an active process in the life of the believer. That patience should outweigh our passion.

We should not allow the indulging of our passions to hinder the operation and effects of patience. When we allow patience, endurance and perseverance to have its perfect work, we train ourselves to increase our handling of future situations. As a football player I can remember in practice running plays over and over again. My coach said that we will run the play until it is perfect. As the coach, his job was to prepare us for the battle, team vs. team. He was perfecting us so that when we get into the battle we can execute without having to think about the fundamentals.

When we go through the testing of our faith, it is allowing us to mature and grow our faith so that the more we are tested; the better we should be able to handle the situation. When we bear all that God appoints, and as long as he appoints, and with a humble obedient eye to him, and when we not only bear troubles, but rejoice in them, then patience hath its perfect work. After

the work of patience is complete is will allow the Christian to want for nothing. The Christian will be endure and possess all that is needed to get through and persevere through the end.

In verse 5 James tells us that if we lack wisdom all we have to do is ask God and He will give it to us liberally and generously. When the child of God has to endure trials and tribulations they do not have to endure it alone or confused. James imperatively tells us that we can ask God for the wisdom to understand what we are going through and why we are going through it. Like the Christians in James' time they had the opportunity to ask God for the wisdom that they lacked. This was different because before Christ they did not have direct access unto God.

Because of Christ we now have direct access unto the father and now we can go to God and ask Him for the things that we lack. The key is that we ask for the understanding and not ask for the removal. Like Paul states in 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10, he had a thorn in the flesh and he did ask God to remove it but God's answer to him was that he wasn't going to remove it but He will supply Paul with enough grace to see him through his thorn. In this way we don't have to solely desire to be delivered, we can embrace our presence in the trial and tribulation which gives us a greater understanding of the purpose of God in our lives.

I believethat going through the storms and coming out of the storms gives us a better advantage in our Christian walk than if we just went in our storms and was pulled out immediately. God does not want to keep anything from us. He will reveal to us the “ Mystery of the Kingdom of God”. This word

mystery is not our human interpretation of the word but divinely it is what is not known but will be revealed. If you ask God for understanding he will give it to you without reproach. God doesn't get tired of us asking nor does he limit us to our asking.

I can see how we as humans can get irritated at children who continuously ask over and over for things. God is the opposite. He wants us to ask and be totally dependent on Him. As we look at verse 6, James lets us know that there is a requirement to us asking God for wisdom. He states that we have to ask God in faith and not waver. This is critical in our approach to God for wisdom. The children of Israel went back and forth with God, in one instance they believe after God has done something for them, in the next instance they are doubting God and worshipping other idols.

The children of Israel exemplified a wavering attitude. This is critical for us today. James is once again imperatively telling us that when you approach God you must have faith in God and have faith in the wisdom that God will provide through the trials and tribulations. James is telling us that as a Christian when we approach and pray to God for wisdom we have to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God has the power to do whatever He wants to do and we must not waver in God's word. The additional idea of that verse is that a man that wavereth is like a wave of the sea that the wind will toss to and fro.

As Christians we cannot be like a wave from the sea that depending on which way the wind blows that is the way we go. James gives us more insight on the path of the man who is wavering in his faith unto the Lord. James lets

us know that the man that wavereth will receive nothing from the Lord because a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. This is crucial because the proclamation is that the man is unstable in all aspects of his life. If you are not strong in your faith unto the Lord, He will not give unto you the wisdom that you need to live a strong Christian life.

Such a distrustful, shifting, unsettled person is not likely to value favour from God as he should do, and therefore cannot expect to receive it. In asking for divine and heavenly wisdom we are never likely to prevail if we have not a heart to prize it above rubies, and the greatest things in this world. As we journey into the latter verses of this passage we start to see similarities of language with the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the sermon on the plain in Luke. In verse 9 James gives a comforting insight that the people who is of a low degree can rejoice in that he will be exalted.

This is prophetic language in that James is assuring exaltation after being in a low degree. Once again James is giving assurance that those who are weak, those who are humble will be lifted up by God. It is not a hypothetical uplifting but a commanding promise that those who are low, are weak, and endure through their trials and tribulations will be lifted up by God. Not only does James point out the lifting of those who are humble but he also personalizes them by calling them our brothers.

The term “our brothers” allows us to embrace those who are low and in despair and not to cast them away. As James speaks to the twelve tribes of Israel he is letting them know that all, even those who are not like them, are their brothers and that Christ will raise them up and exalt them. In

comparison to the Sermon on the Mount, James gives us confidence and then warns of despair. In the 9th verse he tells those that are rich, in that they will be low, will pass away like the flower that is within the grass will pass away.

Take a look at what reason rich people have, notwithstanding their riches, to be humble and low in their own eyes, because both they and their riches are passing away: As the flower of the grass he shall pass away, he and his wealth with him. Trials serve to remind the rich and the high that though they are comfortable in this life, it is still only this life, which fades as the grass grows brown and the flowers fade away. The riches of this world will certainly fade away - but James says that the rich man also will fade away. If we put our life and our identity into things that fade away, we will fade away also. How much better to put our life and our identity into things that will never fade? If a man is only rich in this world, when he dies, he leaves his riches. But if a man is rich before God, when he dies he goes to his riches. In verse 12, James again resembles the Sermon on the Mount language and gives a blessing for those who endure temptation. In those great statements of blessing, Jesus wasn't finished telling us how we can be blessed. Here, we learn we can be blessed as we endure temptation.

Temptation is one of the various trials (James 1: 2) we face. As we persevere through temptation, we are approved, and will be rewarded as the work of God in us is evident through our resistance of temptation. The crown of life which the Lord has promised reminds us that it really is worth it to endure under the temptations we face. Our steadfastness will be rewarded as we demonstrate our love for Jesus, to those who love Him, by resisting

temptation. At the end of the passage let's look at verse 13 - 16. Temptation does not come from God.

Though He allows it, He Himself does not entice us to evil, though God may test our faith without a solicitation to evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. James knew that most people have an evil tendency to blame God when they find themselves in trials. By His very nature, God is unable to be tempted in the sense we are tempted, nor can He Himself tempt anyone. God doesn't tempt us. Instead, temptation comes when we are drawn away by our own fleshly desires and enticed - with the world and the devil providing the enticement. James warns us that when the flesh begins to produce and give birth, it brings forth sin.

That sin then will produce death. Springing forth from corrupt desire is sin. Springing forth from sin is death. This progression to death is an inevitable result that Satan always tries to hide from us, but we should never be deceived about. Satan's great strategy in temptation is to convince us that the pursuit of our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us. If we remember that Satan only comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (John 10: 10), then we would resist the deceptions of temptation more easily.

James imperatively warns us not to make a mistake and err. In the last two verses in this passage, we see that every good and perfect gift comes from God. From our own fallen natures and from those who would entice us, we expect no true goodness. But every good and every perfect gift comes from God the Father in heaven. Let us also observe that God is the Father of the

Lights. The visible light of the sun and the heavenly bodies is from him. He said, let there be light, and there was light.

Thus God is at once represented as the Creator of the sun and in some respects compared to it. What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, glory and infinitely more. Every good gift is from him. As the Father of lights, he gives the light of reason. God's goodness is constant. There is no variation with Him. This means that God never changes. His word is the same yesterday, today and will be tomorrow. God never sways nor is he swayed. He is unlike the wavering man that James spoke of before. He will not change his word to justify our lives. God's word is there for us.

We can see God's goodness in our salvation, as He initiated our salvation of His own will, and brought us forth to spiritual life by His word of truth, that we might be to His glory as firstfruits of His harvest. James may be speaking of his own generation of believers when he calls them firstfruits. Some have speculated on this even more, saying that James has in mind a wider redemption among unknown creatures of God, of which we are the firstfruits of that wider redemption. In brief summation, James has given us the recipe to deal and embrace the trials and tribulations that come in our life.

We as Christians must realize that trials and tribulations will come and we must be ready to count it all joy and to be prepared for God to exalt us even from low places. Bibliography The Bible, King James Version Believer's Bible Commentary. William MacDonald and Art Farstad. Nashville; Atlanta; London; Vancouver : Thomas Nelson Publishers. Tyndale Bible Dictionary. Walter A. Elwell, Ph. D. and Philip W. Comfort, Ph. D. Tyndale House Publishers, 2001.

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