

Exegetical Notes, James 1:1-12

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“When Things Get Tough”

VERSE 1

¹James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

- James, the brother of Jesus, offers a standard greeting, similar to the other beginnings of letters in the New Testament. He reminds the reader that he is submissive to God and Christ, literally a slave to the Lord.
- This letter is either addressed to the Jews dispersed through the nations, or to all the believers in the world. Either way this was a general letter, no specific church was addressed.

VERSES 2-4

²Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- James gives us some hard advice, telling us that no matter what happens to us, even trials, we should consider it joy. Notice James uses the word “when” not “if” these trials will come.
- The reason we can do so, is because trials show us what we are made of, to see where we put our trust, and they lead to endurance, the strength to finish the race.
- The perfect result of endurance is found in the fulfillment of our salvation, when we finally complete the race and are made perfect.

VERSES 5-8

⁵But 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. ⁶But 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. ⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- When we ask God for wisdom, which we are called to do, because we should lack in nothing, we must not have any doubt in our mind that God can provide for us.
- When we doubt, we leave ourselves open to be swayed by other people, and even Satan. We can begin to question if God can do what he promised, and may even put our trust in something else.
- This is what James refers to as being double-minded, we are not just believing in God, but trying to put our trust in other things, and that will

make us unstable and unable to receive anything from God. Even the everyday blessings that God bestows, we will not recognize.

VERSES 9-11

⁹But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹For 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.

- James gives people of all walks of life a reason to be happy. Those of us who have little should be happy with what we have, salvation, and those of us who are rich should be happy that God has humbled us enough to see that money is not as important as trusting in God.
- Money is not the problem, the problem is trusting in money, and being prideful. James tells us there is no reason to trust in money, because it will one day fade away. We can't take it with us.

VERSE 12

¹²Blessed 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

- James tells us that we will be blessed if we continue to trust in the Lord and persevere when we are faced with trials.
- The phrase "once he has been approved" refers to the completion of our trials, the end of our lives on earth.
- The result of this, once our work is complete is the crown of life, eternal life and salvation, because we have trusted in God and have loved him.