

TRIALS = JOY, WISDOM AND THE CROWN OF LIFE!
JAMES CH1:2-12

INTRODUCTION

How many verses are there in the Book of James? 108! With **55 of them being direct, not watered down, clear “imperatives or commands”**, James had plenty of instructions to pass on to his generation of born again Christians, which are still applicable now!

1. Ch1:2 – Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds ...
2. v4 – Let steadfastness have its full effect ...
3. v5 – Let him ask God who gives generously ...
4. v6 – Let him ask in faith, with no doubting ...
5. v7 – That person must not suppose that he will receive anything ...
6. v9 – Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation ...
7. v13 – Let no-one say when he is tempted ...
8. v16 – Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers ... **12 in Ch1**
9. v19 – Know this, my beloved brothers let ...
- 10.v21 – Put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness ...
- 11.v10 – Receive with meekness the implanted word ...
- 12.v22 – Be doers of the word and not hearers only ...
13. Ch2:1 – Show no partiality as you hold the faith ...
- 14.v5 – Listen my beloved brothers, has not God ...
- 15.v12 – Speak and so ... **5 in Ch2**
- 16.v12 – Act as those who are to be judged ...
- 17.v18 – Show me your faith apart from your works ...
18. Ch3:1 – Not many of you should become teachers ...
- 19.v4 Look at the ships also: although they are so large ...
- 20.v13 – Let him show his works in the meekness ... **5 in Ch3**
- 21.v14 – Do not boast ...
- 22.v14 – Do not be false to the truth ...
23. Ch4:7 – Submit yourselves therefore to God ...
- 24.v7 – Resist the devil and he will flee ...
- 25.v8 – Draw near to God and he will draw near to you ...
- 26.v8 – Cleanse your hands ...
- 27.v8 – Purify your hearts ...
- 28.v9 – Mourn ...
- 29.v9 – Weep ... **12 in Ch4**
- 30.v9 – Let your laughter ...
- 31.v9 – Let your joy ...
- 32.v10 – Humble yourselves before the Lord ...
- 33.v11 – Do not speak evil against one another ...
- 34.v13 – Come now you who say ...
35. Ch5:1 – Come now, you rich ...
- 36.v1 – Weep ...
- 37.v1 – Howl ...
- 38.v4 – Behold the wages of the labourers ...
- 39.v7 – Be patient therefore brothers, before the coming of the Lord ...
- 40.v7 – See how the farmer waits ...
- 41.v8 – Be patient ...
- 42.v8 – Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord ...
- 43.v9 – Do not grumble against one another ...
- 44.v9 – Behold the judge is standing ...

- 45.v10 – Take the prophets ...
- 46.v11 – Behold we consider those blessed ...
- 47.v12 – Do not swear ...
- 48.v12 – Let your “yes” be yes ...
- 49.v13 – Let him pray ...
- 50.v13 – Let him sing praise ...
- 51.v14 – Let him call for the elders ...
- 52.v14 – Let them pray ...
- 53.v16 – Confess your sins ...
- 54.v16 – Pray for one another ...
- 55.v20 – Let him know ...

21 in Ch5

“For these reasons, James has been called **“the proverbs of the New Testament”** (Proverbs being – a brief saying that conveys a lesson about how to live wisely and well, usually drawn from observations about nature and life. The Book of Proverbs contains the vast majority of biblical proverbs, but they occur in other Books of the Bible as well).

James is therefore highly relevant to the Christian life. Unlike many of the other Books of the New Testament, James's aim is not to give a theological presentation of the gospel. Rather, **he writes his book to those who already believe the gospel, and his goal is to help them live faithfully as followers of Jesus.** There are many different and seemingly disconnected themes in James – perseverance under trial, riches and poverty, wisdom, the danger of the tongue, prayer, and faith and works. But what ties them all together is James's desire to take the teaching of Jesus and apply it to the Christians personal life” (Cited in James by Greg Gilbert, pg 7+8).

REJOICE IN THE TRIAL! V2-4

If James, the younger brother of Jesus, the born again Christian, the apostle, pillar of the Church and servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, has so many “imperatives or commands” to give to the 12 tribes of the dispersion, the precious “Saints” who had once lived so peacefully amongst their fellow Israelites in Israel, but were now persecuted by the very ones that they used to share so much with, how will James do it, so that what he has to say to a people now “on the run”, will be willing to receive what he has to say so well?

He uses a term over and over again filled with warmth, care and intent, revealing the vital relationship between preacher and congregation - **“adelphoi mou” - my brothers and sisters, or the variant “adelphoi mou agapetoi - my beloved brothers and sisters,** which comes through the lips straight from the heart (Ch1:2, 16, 19; Ch2:1, 5, 14; Ch3:1; Ch5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19 = 12 times in total).

V2 - The 1st of 55 imperatives or commands that should not be ignored, “Consider it all joy” when you face trials of various kinds! Joy! James wants the Saints that he cares for to “Rejoice” as they encounter trials! James is not saying that when Christians face trials it is wrong to feel saddened, or confused, or other thoughts and feelings that may occur, but rather trials should be an occasion fit for rejoicing!

V3-4 - Why should the Christian consider it all joy when facing trials? Verses 3-4 have the answer! When a Christians' faith in Jesus, is tested, it is for a very specific reason! Trials = testing of faith = steadfastness (perseverance) = complete, lacking in nothing! This answer, is meant to help Christians, then and now, understand the specific purpose behind “various kinds”.

God will give the Christian the ability to produce “steadfastness”, but we cannot be “part-time” Christians, we must be willing to grow in our obedience to God, faithfully continuing in the same direction, - HIS WILL!

V2 - What were some of the “various kinds” of trials? Poverty must have been one! James' letter is filled with references to poverty and wealth (1:9-11; 2:1-7, 15-17; 4:13 – 5:11). James Ch2:6-7 makes it pretty clear that religious persecution was one of the causes of the poverty the Christians were experiencing. In Ch5:1-6, James accuses rich people of “murdering” the righteous by withholding their wages. In addition to this, these saints are in exile, foreign lands, dealing with all kinds of trials, which would also include things like sickness, loneliness, grief and disappointment!

Why then, when going through all this, can Christians behave and act, so strangely? Now, through James, they and us, have the answer, Jesus wants us to be complete!

REQUESTS THROUGH THE TRIAL! V5-8

So how are we meant to live right now? The closest the Christian will come to Hell is right now – Explain! Global interconnectedness, national connectedness, regional connectedness, local connectedness, familial, relational, individual! Hell on earth – we have ruined the planet and continue to do so! So how are we meant to live!

We need wisdom! Knowing the right thing to do, in the right way, at the right time and for the right reasons! Wisdom plays such a large part in the Book of Proverbs (1:2-4; 2:10-15; 4:5-9). **It is the God-given understanding that enables a person to avoid the paths of wickedness and live a life of righteousness. In this context wisdom is understanding the nature and purpose of trials and knowing how to meet them victoriously. Such wisdom is available to the one who will “ask God” for it, not only once but repeatedly!**

The promise is, to give wisdom, and to give wisdom generously, without reproach (no fault finding)!

V5 - Asking God for specific help, **WISDOM**, when facing certain trials, is not to dismiss the problems of the trial with a simplistic solution, “I'll ask God!” **In asking God, it is facing the problems of the trial with the root solution, GOD!** God's Wisdom is available to all Christians, and the promise is, that God gives generously, without reproach, as often as you need it, we only need to ask!

James has so much confidence in the generous grace of God, knowing that God took him as a non-believer, making him a believer, commissioning him as a believer, becoming an apostle of Christ, a pillar of the Church and now a Pastor who writes to his dispersed congregation, who are suffering! He exclaims to his people, “just ask God when you are lacking what to do in a crisis and God will give generously, without reproach!

V6 - However! There is a clause! God cannot give, without seeing faith, James refers to faith 16 times in his letter – Ch1:3, v6, Ch2:1, v5, v14 x2, v17, v18 x3, v20, v22 x2, v24, v26, Ch5:15! This faith that James is talking about is **an acting quality, that exercises trust in God and produces fruit from and for God!** The typical condition of every human soul is to have both faith v unbelief (here doubt), constantly in conflict. **God cannot and will not, reward unbelief! Here, there is a clause, don't come asking with unbelief, be a Christian of faith, exercise that faith, be rewarded for that faith and**

ASK!

Look at James' definition of God given Wisdom – Ch3:17-18! ***But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*** Why wouldn't you want this!

REWARD AFTER THE TRIAL! V9-12

V9 - As James is preaching to the dispersed saints, living in exile, experiencing trials, he leads them through the purpose of the trials, how to ask God for wisdom to help with certain trials, and finishes, revealing, that you cannot trust in materials to get you through a God-given trial!

James exhorts the Christian brother and sister to “boast” despite their lowly position on earth, being poor, to boast in their exaltation! ***Jeremiah 9:23-24 says:***

Thus says the Lord “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts, boast in this that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For these things I delight, declares the Lord.”

James' point, then, is that believers must look beyond the world's evaluation of them, to understand who they are and look to God's view of them, ***as the Lord has chosen the poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the Kingdom He promised to those who love Him (Ch2:5).***

V10-11 - All wealth is transitory (not permanent)! The rich, here, are not born again Christians, and although they may be having a great time because of their wealth, James uses both a metaphor (***a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable***) and a “Prophetic Word” that judgement is coming!!!! (Luke Ch6:24; Ch16:19-31)

V12 - Remember - “trial - test of faith - steadfastness - steadfastness' full effect”, well now add to that “crown of life”. James promises for the Christian facing trials of faith, by remaining steadfast, Jesus will crown you with the crown of life! **THIS IS THE REWARD!**

But what is the crown of life? It is the new state the believer experiences “in becoming a born again Christian” (John Ch5:24) and the final destiny of “eternal life” (John Ch5:29; Gal Ch6:8)!

APPLICATION

What various kinds of trials are you facing?

How do you view them?

How has this passage helped you to understand the purpose of trials?

How is this changing you?

How would you define poor in this world?

Where do you see yourself?