

Testing of Your Faith

Introduction and Review

- The letter of James was written to primarily Jewish Christians that were suffering because of their faith in Jesus = trials (v. 1).
- They were encouraged to think about the outcome of their trials, be patient & get the full benefit of their trials = develop the complete holy character of God. Thinking this way would bring joy & steadfastness (v. 2-4).
- Suffering Christians were also encouraged to pray: ask God for wisdom to apply what you know; ask in humility, honesty & faith (v. 5-8).

I. Financial Circumstances in Trials (v. 9-11)

A. Perspective for poor Christians (v. 9)

*Some Christians will suffer financially during times of trials affecting their economic & social status in the world (lowly). Poverty does not affect our relationship with God – “lowly brother”. The poor Christian is encouraged to consider his spiritual wealth now & in the future – **exaltation** or high position in the Lord (Jas. 2:5)!*

B. Perspective for wealthy unbelievers (v. 10-11)

In James the term “the rich” refers to unbelievers who are typically oppressing poor Christians (2:6); he is not called a brother. He only identifies with & takes pride in his wealth; therefore he is poor & humiliated spiritually. His wealth & social status is temporary & for this life only (v. 10b-11).

In this life the poor Christian has the lowly position & the rich unbeliever has the exalted position. But in the next life & for all eternity, it will be just the opposite!

II. Temptations in Trials (v. 12-15)

A. The reward of steadfastness (v. 12)

*Steadfastness is the capacity to hold out/bear up in the face of difficulty. Christians are looking forward & moving thru trials. God has promised the **reward** of eternal life to all who love Him = hope, joy & blessedness in this life. Our greatest blessings/rewards are in the future (Mt. 5:11-12).*

B. The reality of temptations (v. 13-15)

*Temptation to sin is a certainty for everyone – “when he is tempted”. **Everyone is tempted, but temptation alone is not sin.** In times of trials, the believer must not **blame** God for his internal temptation & sin – “Let no one say”. God may bring the external test, but He is never the cause of internal temptation & sin (Gen. 22:1; Deu. 13:3). Every believer must accept responsibility for his/her own sin & the consequences (v. 14-15). **God promises a reward for steadfastness & tragic consequences for sin = motivation!***

III. God’s Goodness in Trials (v. 16-18)

A. God’s goodness in general (v. 16-17)

Intense & prolonged trials may affect our perception of God’s care – He’s the source of harm or failure. But James reminds us that even during times of difficult trials, God is still the source of anything & everything good in our lives!

B. God’s goodness in salvation (v. 18)

One of the most graphic portrayals of God’s goodness is the redemption of an unworthy, ungrateful & unholy sinner (Rom. 5:6-8). The powerful message of the gospel saves sinners & reveals the love of God (Rom. 1:16; 1Jn. 4:10).

ILL: A 12,000-pound whale killed its trainer last year at SeaWorld; lions, tigers, elephants, camels, etc., even dogs turn on their owners & trainers at times to attack them. This happens sometimes after years of care & protection of the animals. Many people have attempted to answer the question of why this happens. Something causes animals to think radically different about their owners.

APPL: The same may be true with us spiritually. Financial difficulties, serious illness, tragedy or even the death of a loved one may tempt us to blame God because He could have prevented it. Or it may tempt us to question God’s love & care for us. Our actions & motivations are always affected by our thinking. But thank God we are not animals & as a Christian we have a new mind & new way of thinking. The word of God & the HS help us when we are tempted to think wrongly about God, His love, ways or actions toward us.

CONCLUSION

My brothers & sisters God has clearly demonstrated His love for us in that He gave Jesus (His precious, unique & only Son) to live a righteous life and die a substitutionary death for us. Jesus has already demonstrated His love for us in willingly humbling himself to meet every holy demand of God in order to remove the death sentence from our lives. The HS has already proven His love for us by making us a new creation in Christ Jesus. So you & I can truly say, "Yes Jesus love me, Yes Jesus loves me..." He loves me in the good times & bad, health & sick, wealthy or poor, married or single, 3-bedrooms or homeless, etc. Jesus loves me and no circumstance in life or death can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Do not give up, don't give in; persevere for we will finish this race together!

If you are not a Christian, you do not & cannot know this unconditional love that I am speaking of. But if you will only believe in Jesus today, He will lavish you with His everlasting love. Will you ask Him to save you today? Will you believe that Jesus died for you & your sin are forgiven in Him? Look to Him; call upon Him...

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[Prepared by Willie D. Woodmore](#)