

THE BOOK OF JAMES – CHAPTER 1

TRIALS

- Trials will come - (v. 2-4) and through them we have the opportunity to mature
- We must accept them - “consider it a pure joy”... v. 2
- God will grant us wisdom through trials, but we must be confident in His response to the wisdom he gives. Not having confidence in God’s response will cause his response to be withheld. (v. 5-8)
- God blesses us when we persevere through the trials

TEMPTATIONS

- God doesn’t tempt us (v 13), but gives us good, and the perfect gift of His Word.
- Temptations are blend of our sinful nature and Satan’s desire to pull us away.
- Temptation ultimately leads to sin.

BREAKDOWN OF JAMES 1:2-19

As Christians we can expect to face both trials and temptations, because they are a part of the Christian faith. Here are some key things about the two:

- Trials are external, while temptations are internal.
- God does allow trials to happen. Look at Job. He allowed the devil to strip him of everything so that God could be glorified through Job’s faith.
- However temptations are brought upon us through our weaknesses. God doesn’t allow temptations but rather commands us to avoid them.
- The way we handle both are a reflection to God on where our heart is at. Perseverance through the trials and temptations in a manner that honors God.

Example: Josh Radcliffe

RICH & POOR (V. 9-11)

James uses the contrast of the rich vs. poor numerous times throughout the book. In verses 9-11, he speaks to the trial that is poverty. God has promised blessing upon those who are poor numerous times throughout the Bible.

What is a “high” and “low” position? Poverty allows people to be in a place where they are able to see their need for God, where the rich are often unable because of their wealth.

(We will talk more about riches later.)

LISTENING & DOING (V. 19 – 26)

James is calling us out right here.

- 1) We must learn to listen. Our desire to speak is not healthy. Our tongues will get us in trouble.
- 2) We must learn His commands, but more importantly, we must walk the walk.

THE BOOK OF JAMES – CHAPTER 2

FAVORITISM

James spends time writing about the effects of favoritism and further discusses the effects of the poor and the rich. Here we have 3 basic principles of why favoritism is negative:

- 1) The rich exploit the poor.
- 2) Showing favor towards one group in the church violates the law.
- 3) And it causes us to place judgement.

The scriptures say that those of who judge, will be judged.

DISCUSSION: FAVORITISM

Why is favoritism such a big deal? Favoritism is an issue because is a social divide on status. The church body is all one, and all equal. The rich aren't able to hold any higher status in God's eyes than the poor.

James is writing to a people where there is obviously a social divide between rich and poor. I think there is many other ways we become divide as people today that would fall into this same category (i.e. denomination, materialism, education).

DISCUSSION: "RICH" CHRISTIANS

Can we be "rich" and still have faith?

Some scholars believe that during the 1st century, 90% of the people lived below the poverty line. And that the 10% that were in the upper class, they were unable to see their need for god, and therefore lacked faith.

God asks us to store up our treasures in heaven! When we realized that all that we have is His, I believe we can be "rich".

God doesn't say that we can't have nice things, but He does say we should be a people that gives and takes care of others. Some might argue that if we are buying nice & unnecessary things, then we are missing the opportunity to give to others who might be in need.

I read this quote and it has been challenging me lately:

"Giving isn't really giving, until it interrupts your lifestyle." – Jim & Casper Go to Church

I might add to that though, that giving should be our lifestyle.

FAITH & DEEDS

This is one of the most common passages in James. As well as common discussion point with our faith.

- Faith w/o Deeds is dead!
- However, Faith is an action or response to what we believe.

When we hear God's call, we ultimately have to come to point of action, either to join Him or not to. The action will ultimately determine our faith and trust in God.

V 22 – (On Abraham) You see his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did.

Hebrews 11 – The Hall of Faith. All these guys are attributed for having a great faith because of the way they responded to God's call.

THE BOOK OF JAMES – CHAPTER 3

THE BLOODY TONGUE!

James begins this chapter with more commentary of what he start in chapter 1:19-27 regarding listening vs. speaking.

James make it clear that our tongue is one of the most powerful parts of our body's and that we must learn to control it.

- If a man is able to keep his tongue in check, he will be able to keep in check his whole body. (v.2)
- The tongue has the ability to be full or evil (v. 7,8)
- James' words might seem more definite, however it seems to me that if we are able to control are tongues, then we can potentially speak good things as well.
- In Continuation.... James tells us that out of the same we should not have both praising and cursing (evil). V. 9-12

⁴⁵*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. – Luke 6:45*

James also tells that teachers will be judge more strictly (v.1)

WISDOM

- 1) What does wisdom look like?
 - a. Humbleness
 - b. Purity
 - c. Peace-Loving
 - d. Considerate
 - e. Submissive
 - f. Full of mercy and good fruit
 - g. Impartial
 - h. sincere
- 2) Wisdom is seen in our actions
 - a. When we are caught up in wordly things, it is visible.
 - b. Envy and Selfish ambition hinder our ability to make wise decisions (signs of evil in out hearts).
- 3) Wisdom will bring peace and not discord.

WISDOM REQUIRES ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

I think of the story of Joseph & Potiphar's Wife (Genesis 39). Joseph's ability to make wise decisions (and costly (he ultimately lost his job)) was due to the fact he had eternal perspective. He knew that not only would sleeping with Potiphar's wife be a sin against his master, but God as well.

Our wise decisions may be of benefit to us, but those benefits must be secondary to how those decisions will impact God's kingdom.

THE BOOK OF JAMES – CHAPTER 4

SUBMIT OURSELVES TO GOD

James opens up chapter 4 with a section about the good and evil warring inside of us. In v.1 he's asking "What causes us to fight?", immediately followed-up with the notion that the reason is that we have this bigger desire within in causing us covet and kill. We are selfish people, living a selfish world!

One of Chelsey's pet peeves is when people praise God for when they don't get speeding tickets. Why is God any better because that copy didn't pull us over for breaking the law? We have to move away from this attitude that God is Good, when he fit's into "our world." No, God is good, because He's given us the opportunity to live in His World.

So, in v. 4 we have the statement that "Friendship with the world is hatred toward God." Let dig into this:

- Does God hate the world?
 - **NO!** God so loved the world, he gave his son, so that we may have eternal life – John 3:16
 - God loves the people of this world. – 2 Timothy 3:4
- So how do we, as Christians, interact with the world and the worldly things in yet?
 - We Love People!
 - We must fight the temptations to do worldly things. v.5 says that the spirits inside of us by their very nature "envies intensely" for the world!
- Let's define worldly things (i.e. Things not of God).
 - Here's my definition:
God's people are able to do Godly things in this world, however we are unable to do worldly things in the spiritual world (heaven), and therefore are commanded by God to live in the same manner here that we will be for eternity.

So how do we protect ourselves from the worldly influences?

- V.6 – We realize that we need God's help/strength to make it through the world, and ask Him for it! He gives grace to the humble.
- V.7 – Resist the devil
- V.8 – Draw near to God. Cleanse ourselves
- V.9 – Repent
- V.10 – Be Humble

JUDGING OTHERS

This is interesting placement of this passage, because of the section above it.

It is commonly known that Jesus commanded us to not to judge one another (Matthew 7:1), for we too will be judged. We must remember here that James is writing to the church, and teaching us to interact with one another. By judging each other, we become divide, as well as take on a role (the JUDGE) that we weren't asked to take on!

Can we judge those outside the church? Again, placing judgment on someone is not going to show God's first command, which is to love our neighbor as yourself. However, we need to learn to place judgment/boundaries on the things in this world, so they don't fall into our lives.

BOASTING ABOUT TOMMORROW

- Make the most of today!
- Riches and possessions are temporary.
- Riches are stored in heaven!