

JAMES 1

Greetings

1 James, of God and the Lord Jesus Messiah a slave (δοῦλος), to the twelve tribes [Jewish believers] who are in the Diaspora (τῆ διασπορᾷ):¹ Greetings.

Joyful Endurance in Trials

2 Consider (aor.) it all joy, my brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί μου), when you (pl.) encounter (aor.) various trials (πειρασμός),² 3 because you know (γινώσκω, pres.) that the testing (δοκίμιον)³ of your [phase two] faith produces patient endurance (ὕπομονή).⁴ 4 And let patient endurance show itself perfectly (τέλειος)⁵ in practice, so that you may be perfect (τέλειοι) and complete (ὀλόκληροι),⁶ lacking in nothing.

Prayer for Wisdom

5 Now if any of you lacks wisdom (σοφία), let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting (διακρίνω, pres.),⁷ for the one who doubts (pres.) is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 [because he is] a double-minded (δίψυχος)⁸ man, unstable (ἀκατάστατος)⁹ in all his ways.

¹ **Jn 7:35** 35 Where does this man [Jesus] intend to go that we will not find him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion (διασπορά) among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, is he? **1 Pe 1:1** 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Messiah, to those who reside as aliens, scattered (διασπορά)....

² “[A]n attempt to learn the nature or character of someth., *test, trial*” (BDAG, 793).

³ “[T]he process or means of determining the genuineness of someth., *testing, means of testing*” (BDAG, 256). **1 Pe 1:7** 7 ...So that the proof (δοκίμιον) of your faith, more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Messiah.

⁴ “[T]he capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, *patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance*” (BDAG, 1039). **Ro 5:3** 3 We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about patient endurance (ὕπομονή).

⁵ “[B]eing fully developed in a moral sense...of humans perfect, fully developed” (BDAG, 996). **Col 4:12** 12 Epaphras, ...a slave of Jesus Messiah, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect (τέλειος) and fully assured in all the desire of God.

⁶ “[B]eing complete and meeting all expectations, with integrity, whole, complete, undamaged, intact, blameless” (BDAG, 703). **1 Th 5:23** 23 May your spirit, soul, and body be preserved complete (ὀλόκληρος), without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Messiah.

⁷ “[T]o be uncertain, be at odds w. oneself, doubt, waver” (BDAG, 231). **Ro 4:20** 20 With respect to the promise of God [Abraham] did not waver (διακρίνω) in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God. **Lk 17:5** 5 The apostles said to the Lord [Jesus]: Increase our faith!

⁸ “[B]eing uncertain about the truth of someth., *doubting, hesitating*, lit. *double-minded*” (BDAG, 253).

⁹ “[U]nstable, restless, of vacillating persons” (BDAG, 35).

Self-Perspective of the Poor and Rich

9 Now the brother [believer] of humble circumstances is to boast in his high position, 10 but the rich man [unbeliever] [is to “boast”] in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For 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.¹⁰

Approved for the Crown of Life

12 Blessed (μακάριος) is the man who patiently endures (ύπομένω) a trial [or temptation] (πειρασμός). For once he has been approved (δόκιμος),¹¹ he will receive the crown of life which [the Lord] has promised to those who [continue to] love (άγαπάω) him.¹²

Two Genealogies

13 Let no one say when he is tempted (πειράζω):

I am being tempted (πειράζω) by God.

For God cannot be tempted (πειράζω) by evil, and he himself does not tempt (πειράζω) anyone. 14 But each one is tempted (πειράζω) when he is carried away and enticed by his own evil desire. 15 Then when evil desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.¹³ 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,¹⁴ with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of his desire he brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among his creatures.

Doers of the Word

19 This you know, my beloved brothers and sisters. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. 20 For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of

¹⁰ **Ps 37:1-2** 1 Do not fret because of evildoers. Be not envious toward wrongdoers. 2 For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb.

¹¹ “[B]eing genuine on the basis of testing, *approved (by test), tried and true, genuine*” (BDAG, 256). **Ro 16:10** Greet Apelles, the approved (δόκιμος) in Messiah. **2 Ti 2:15** 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved (δόκιμος) to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

¹² **Lk 8:13-15** 13 Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy. But these have no root. They believe for a while, but in time of testing (πειρασμός) fall away. 14 The seed that fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries, riches, and pleasures of this life (βίος) and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, hold it fast, and bear fruit by patient endurance (ύπομονή).

¹³ **Ro 6:23** 23 The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Jesus our Lord.

¹⁴ **1 Jn 1:5** 5 God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and what remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls [in phase two].

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, [the law] of liberty, and abides¹⁵ by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed (μακάριος) in what he does.

Pure Religion

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious (θρησκός), and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religious worship (θρησκεία) is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion (θρησκεία) in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress (θλιψις), and to keep oneself unstained by [Satan's] world [system] (κόσμος).¹⁶

¹⁵ **1 Jn 2:28** 28 Now, little children, abide in [the Son], so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from him in shame at his coming.

¹⁶ **1 Jn 2:15** 15 If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Discussion Questions — James 1:1-11

1. James Overview.

- a. Who is the author of James, and what do we know about him (“James at a Glance”)?
- b. Who are the recipients of James, and what do we know about them?
- c. When was James written in relation to the rest of the New Testament?
- d. What is the book theme of James?
- e. What is the purpose of James?
- f. What are the key words of James?
- g. What is the chapter theme of James 1?
- h. Into how many sections should James 1 be divided?
- i. What did the Spirit show you personally from completing your James 1 observation worksheet (p. 8, 4)?
- j. What questions do you have about completing an observation worksheet?

2. James 1:1.

- a. What is the section theme for v. 1?
- b. What stands out to you in v. 1?
- c. Sophia: What does it mean to be a bondservant (p. 7)?

3. James 1:2-4.

- a. What is the section theme for vv. 2-4?
- b. What are the key words in this section?
- c. Sophia: Why do Christians have trials (p. 11)?
- d. How do trials relate to one’s faith (p. 8, 2b1)?
- e. What are trials meant to produce in a believer’s life (p. 9, 2b2)?
- f. What is the believer’s responsibility (p. 9, 2b3)?
- g. What will happen if a believer does not handle a trial well (p. 9, 2b4)?
- h. What have you faced, or are you facing, that has tested your faith (p. 9, 2b5)?
- i. What do “trials,” “testing,” “endurance,” “perfect,” and “complete” mean (p. 9-10, 3)?
(1) Use <https://www.blueletterbible.org> for Hebrew and Greek word studies?
- j. How do the cross-references relate?
(1) Ro 5:3-5 (p. 11, 4a).
(2) 1 Pe 1:6-9 (p. 11, 4b).

4. James 1:5-8.

- a. What is the section theme for vv. 5-8?
- b. What is the relationship of vv. 5-8 to vv. 2-4 (p. 11, 1)?
- c. Sophia: What do we discover in v. 5 (p. 16)?
- d. Who do you usually turn to in a time of testing (p. 12, 2b)?
- e. What stood out to you from the cross-references (p. 12, 3)?
- f. What conditions must be fulfilled when we go to God for wisdom (p. 13, 4b)?
- g. Sophia: What picture does James give us of a doubter (p. 20)?
- h. How are you doing in the area of faith?

5. James 1:9-11.

- a. What is the section theme for vv. 9-11?
- b. Sophia: What does James say to the brother of humble circumstances? To the rich man (p. 24)?
- c. What is contrasted in these verses (15, c)?
- d. What is the “high position” of the brother of humble circumstances (15, d)?
- e. How can we apply these verses?
- f. What did you learn from reading any commentaries (16, 2)?

6. Recap.

- a. What is the chapter theme for James 1?
- b. What are the section themes for the four sections in James 1:1-11?

James 1:1-11 — Joyful Endurance in Testing

1. Greetings (Jas 1:1).

Jas 1:1 1 James, of God and the Lord Jesus Messiah a slave (δοῦλος), to the twelve tribes [Jewish believers] who are in the Diaspora: Greetings.

- a. James immediately describes Jesus as Lord and Messiah. James doesn't have to establish Jesus is the Messiah. Both he and his audience already believe that.
- b. James doesn't mention he is the brother of Jesus or the leader of the Jerusalem church. He wants his readers focusing on the instructions he is about to give.
 - (1) **Mt 13:55** 55 Is not this [Jesus] the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas?
 - (2) **Ga 2:9** 9 ...James, Cephas, and John, who were reputed to be pillars....
- c. James believed in his brother Jesus only after Jesus' resurrection. James once ridiculed his brother Jesus, but now he views him as equal to God.
 - (1) **Jn 7:5** 5 Not even [Jesus'] brothers [including James] were believing in him.
 - (2) **1 Co 15:7** 7 Then [Jesus] appeared to James, then to all the apostles.
- d. Like Paul and Peter, James views himself as a slave (δοῦλος) of God and Messiah Jesus.
 - (1) **Ga 1:10** 10 For am I [Paul] now seeking the favor of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a slave (δοῦλος) of Messiah.
 - (2) **2 Pe 1:1** 1 Simon Peter, a slave (δοῦλος) and apostle of Jesus Messiah....

2. Joyful Endurance in Testing (Jas 1:2-4).

Jas 1:2-4 2 Consider (aor.) it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you (pl.) encounter (περιπίπτω, aor.) various trials (πειρασμός), 3 because you [continue to] know (γινώσκω, pres.) that the testing (δοκιμίων) of your [phase two] faith produces patient endurance (ὑπομονή).¹⁷ 4 And let patient endurance show itself perfectly (τέλειος) in practice, so that you may be [spiritually] mature (τέλειοι) and complete (όλόκληροι), lacking in nothing.

Trials → Knowledge → Joy + Patient endurance → Spiritual maturity → Crown of life

- a. When we encounter a trial, we must decide to consider it all joy. This decision involves human responsibility and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) **Ga 5:22** 22 The fruit of the Spirit is...joy....
- b. Trials are a test of our phase two faith, not our phase one faith. James' audience consists of believers. He refers to them as "brothers and sisters" 19 times.
- c. Trials come in many forms and varieties.
 - (1) See list of sources of suffering from R. B. Thieme, Jr.

¹⁷ "[T]he capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, *patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance*" (BDAG, 1039). **Ro 5:3** 3 We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance (ὑπομονή).

- d. We do not joy at the trials themselves, for the trials are not good. It is the encountering of trials that is good. This is an important distinction.
- e. We consider the encountering of trials to be all joy because we know they are necessary for spiritual maturity and approval at the judgment seat of Messiah.
 - (1) **Jas 1:12** 12 Blessed is a man who patiently endures (ὑπομένω) under trial (πειρασμός), for once he has been approved (δόκιμος), he will receive the crown of life that [the Lord] has promised to those who continue to love (ἀγαπάω, pres.) him.
- f. The testing of our phase two faith is designed to produce the character quality of patient endurance. A lifetime of exercising patient endurance in trials leads to spiritual maturity and the crown of life.
- g. Spiritual maturity is possible in this life, and it is something every believer should be striving for. τέλειος and ὀλόκληρος refer to spiritual maturity, not sinless perfection.
 - (1) τέλειος:
 - (a) “[B]eing fully developed in a moral sense...of humans perfect, fully developed” (*BDAG*, 996).
 - (b) **Col 4:12** 12 Epaphras, ...a slave of Jesus Messiah, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect (τέλειος) and fully assured in all the desire of God.
 - (2) ὀλόκληρος:
 - (a) “[B]eing complete and meeting all expectations, with integrity, whole, complete, undamaged, intact, blameless” (*BDAG*, 703).
 - (b) **1 Th 5:23** 23 Now may the God of peace himself set you (pl.) apart entirely, and may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved complete (ὀλόκληρος), without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Messiah.

3. Single-Minded Prayer for Wisdom (Jas 1:5-8).

Jas 1:5-8 5 Now (δέ) if (εἰ) any of you (pl.) lacks wisdom (σοφία), let him ask of God, who gives [wisdom] to all [believers] generously and without reluctance (ὀνειδίζω, pres.), and it will be given to him. 6 But he [the believer] must ask in faith without any doubting (διακρίνω, pres.), for the one who goes on doubting (διακρίνω, pres.) is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man [believer] ought not to expect that he will receive anything [especially wisdom] from the Lord 8 [because he is] a double-minded (δίψυχος) man, unstable (ἀκατάστατος) in all his ways.

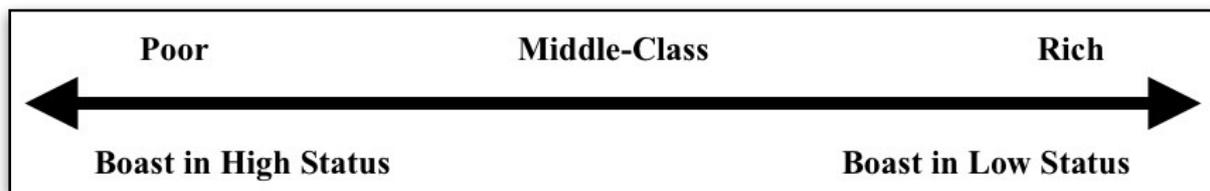
Confident faith + Request for wisdom = Wisdom for our circumstances

- a. We need God’s wisdom, particularly when we encounter trials.
 - (1) **2 Co 4:8-9** 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not despairing....
- b. We often rely on human wisdom instead of God’s wisdom.
 - (1) **1 Co 1:20** 20 Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

- c. Because it is always God’s desire to give us wisdom, we may request wisdom with confidence.
 - (1) **2 Ch 1:11-12** 11 God said to Solomon: Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, 12 wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you.
 - (2) **Heb 4:16** 16 Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- d. There is a condition, however. We must ask for wisdom with confidence. God is not obligated to give us wisdom if we are doubtful and double-minded
 - (1) **1 Ki 18:21** 21 How long will you [Israel] hesitate between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.
 - (2) **Mt 6:24** 24 No one can serve two masters.
 - (3) **Mt 16:23** 23 You are not setting your mind on the things of God but the things of men.
- e. We overcome doubt through the four fundamentals: (1) daily Bible study; (2) daily prayer; (3) local church involvement; and (4) sharing our faith.

4. Self-Perception of the Poor and Rich (Jas 1:9-11).

Jas 1:9-11 9 Now the brother [believer] of a low social status (ταπεινός) is to keep boasting (καυχάομαι, pres.) in his high status (ὑψος) [in Messiah Jesus]. 10 But the rich man [believer or unbeliever] is to “boast” in his humiliation (ταπεινώσις), because like flowering grass he [his present life] will pass away. 11 For 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 [his present life] will wither away (μαραίνω, fut.).¹⁸



- a. Poor believers are to take pride in their high position in Messiah Jesus.
 - (1) **Ga 3:26-28** 26 You are all sons of God through faith in Messiah Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Messiah Jesus.
 - (2) **Eph 2:5-6** 5 [God] made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved), 6 raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Messiah Jesus.
 - (3) See Thieme’s “Forty Things.”

¹⁸ **Ps 37:1-2** 1 Do not fret because of evildoers. Be not envious toward wrongdoers. 2 For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb.

- b. “Rich” believers are to take pride in their low position in Messiah Jesus, for their riches will pass away.
 - (1) **Ro 12:16** 16 Do not be haughty in mind but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.
- c. Rich believers are expected to provide financial help to poor believers.
 - (1) **Lk 18:22** 22 One thing you still lack. Sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.
 - (2) **Lk 19:8–9** 8 Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord [Jesus]: Look, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much. 9 And Jesus said to him: Today salvation has come to this house.
 - (3) **Ac 4:34-35** 34 There was not a needy person among [the believers in Jerusalem], for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sales, 35 and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

Biblical Theology

Theology Proper

1. God allows but never causes inward temptation. God allows and sometimes causes outward testing.
 - a. **1 Pe 4:19** 19 Those also who suffer according to the desire of God will entrust their [physical] lives (ψυχῆ) to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Bibliology

1. Knowing and understanding God's word is not doing God's word.
 - a. **Jas 1:22** 22 Prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
 - b. **Lk 8:21** 21 My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.
2. Doing God's word results in blessing.
 - a. **Jas 1:25** 25 One who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Anthropology

Hamartiology

1. The terms πειράζω and πειρασμός may refer to outward trials or inward temptations.
 - a. **Jas 1:2-3** 2 Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various [outward] trials (πειρασμός), 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
 - b. **Jas 1:12-14** 12 Blessed is a man who patiently endures an [outward] trial (πειρασμός), for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life that [the Lord] has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is [inwardly] tempted (πειράζω): I am being tempted (πειράζω) by God. For God cannot be [inwardly] tempted (πειράζω) by evil, and he himself does not [inwardly] tempt (πειράζω) anyone. 14 But each one is [inwardly] tempted (πειράζω) when he is carried away and enticed by his own [evil] desire (ἐπιθυμία).
2. Temptations are never from God and rarely from Satan. They usually derive from our own evil desires.
 - a. **Jas 1:14** 14 Each one is [inwardly] tempted (πειράζω) when he is carried away and enticed by his own [evil] desire (ἐπιθυμία).
 - b. **Ga 5:16** 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the [evil] desire (ἐπιθυμία) of the flesh.
 - c. **1 Pe 1:14-16** 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former [evil] desires (ἐπιθυμία) that were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all behavior.

Sanctification

1. Lack of phase two faith results in doubt, double-mindedness, and instability.
 - a. **Lk 8:25** 25 Where is your faith?

2. Phase two requires ongoing salvation from outward testings and inward temptations (Jas 1:21).
 - a. **Jas 1:21** 21 In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls [from outward testings and inward temptations].
3. God expects members of his family to be doers of the word and not just hearers.
 - a. **Jas 1:22** 22 Prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
 - b. **Lk 6:46-49** 46 Why do you call me [Jesus], Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? 47 Everyone who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock. And when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.
 - c. **Lk 8:21** 21 My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.
4. Doing God's word results in blessing.
 - a. **Jas 1:25** 25 One who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Ecclesiology

1. Visiting and caring for the vulnerable lies at the very heart of God (Jas 1:27).
 - a. **Jas 1:27** 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Notes