

JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

I. The Godly Way To Handle Trials

(James 1:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. James 1:1-12 explains the godly way to handle trials in the Christian life, so we view it for our insight:

II. The Godly Way To Handle Trials, James 1:1-12.

- A. The opening greeting is to Hebrew believers, "the twelve tribes" of the *diaspora* ("dispersion, those who are dispersed among the Gentiles," Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 187) because of the persecution they faced for the faith that began at Acts 8:1, leading to their being scattered abroad, James 1:1.
- B. James thus began his epistle with instruction on God's edifying program for believers in what were humanly difficult trials they were facing initially due to being scattered by persecutors, James 1:2-4:
 - 1. James asserted that we should consider it pure joy whenever we face trials of many kinds, James 1:2.
 - 2. This joy comes upon understanding God's edifying program in allowing us to face such trials, James 1:3-4:
 - a. Trials test our faith in God, and if we retain that trust, that sustained faith produces patience, James 1:3.
 - b. Patience in turn needs to be allowed to run its course over a period of time of facing trials, for prolonged patience produces spiritual maturity, James 1:4. The Greek word *teleioi*, often translated "perfect" or "finished" is joined by *holokleroi*, from *holos* meaning "whole" and *kleros* meaning "part" to "give the idea of perfected all over or fully developed in every part," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 821.
- C. However, we believers need balm to be able to handle such trials, so James wrote about it in James 1:5-12:
 - 1. First, if we lack wisdom in facing trials, we can ask God in prayer for that wisdom and He graciously, generously will provide it without reproaching us for lacking it, James 1:5. However, in asking God for wisdom, we must ask in faith that He will actually provide it, for doubting that God will provide it leaves us driven and tossed like a wave of the sea by the wind in instability and insecurity, James 1:6. A believer who thus doubts must not think he will receive anything from God, including wisdom, for such a believer is double-minded, "a man of divided allegiance" between God and something else that he uses as an idolatrous crutch in place of God, James 1:7-8; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to James 1:8.
 - 2. Second, we must adopt God's eternal value system to handle our trials well, James 1:9-11:
 - a. The believer of humble circumstances in this earthly life can face the trials of this life, rejoicing in his high spiritual standing in Christ that will become evident when he reaches the eternal state, James 1:9.
 - b. However, the believer of lofty circumstances in this life must face trials by rejoicing in his human frailty that such trials expose, for just as the flower of the grass of the field in this life soon passes away, one's lofty position in this life will also pass away at the advent of the eternal state, James 1:9-11.
 - c. In other words, we must realize that God allows trials to teach us the futility of living for this life so that we live instead for the glory that is to occur for us believers when we reach the eternal state.
 - 3. Third, we must recall that in eternity, God will reward the believer who endures life's trials with the crown of life, what the Lord promises to those who love Him, James 1:12. This crown is an eternal crown that lasts forever, so it far surpasses in value what the trials of this life cost us. Indeed, the value of what God is spiritually producing in us through trials is so great that our sufferings in our current trials are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us in eternity, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Lesson: *In facing trials in the Christian life, we believers in Christ should (1) consider it pure joy that we even face such trials, for God uses them to build our faith and increase our patience in order to mature us spiritually for His glory. (2) For the balm we need to handle such trials, (a) we must ask God for wisdom that He graciously provides for the proper mental orientation to the trials, asking with an unwavering faith that He demands as a condition for giving us that wisdom. (b) May we also adopt God's eternal value system in our trials, looking for the eternal glory in what He is accomplishing in us through our trials regardless what the trials cost us in this life. (c) May we recall that in eternity, God will reward us with the everlasting crown of life for overcoming temptation to sin in our trials, realizing that God's great glory will be eternally revealed in us for our overcoming temptations by His power.*

Application: *May we count it pure joy if we believers face trials, knowing that God uses them to produce great glory in us that will be revealed in us throughout eternity. Meanwhile, may we use God's balm to handle them.*