

## JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

### III. Using Scripture Well Under Stressful Trials

(James 1:19-27)

#### 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. Having discussed the issue of trials (James 1:1-12) and the trials of temptations to sin (James 1:13-18), James turned his attention to the edifying use of Scripture to handle stressful trials in James 1:19-27.
- C. We view this passage for our insight and edification (as follows):

#### II. Using Scripture Well Under Stressful Trials, James 1:19-27.

- A. To use Scripture well under stressful trials, we must be **receptive** to Scripture, James 1:19-21:
  1. The first step in using Scripture well under stressful trials is to be receptive to Scripture instead of getting distracted from Scripture by the stress that one faces in such trials, James 1:19-20:
    - a. James thus called his readers to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry when the stress they face tempted them to be slow to listen, quick to speak and quick to become angry! (James 1:19)
    - b. The reason for this admonition is that man's anger does not work God's righteousness, James 1:20. In Ephesians 4:26, we are told to keep our anger from controlling us where James 1:20 calls us to be slow to become angry in the first place, both being complementary ideas, Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. V, p. 421.
- B. To use Scripture well under stressful trials, we must then **apply Scripture to life**, James 1:22-25:
  1. Having become receptive to what Scripture says by focusing on it above the stress of our trials that tempt us to react in angry verbal outbursts, we must apply Scripture to life to receive God's blessing under trial.
  2. To achieve this, we must remove all "moral filth, 'shabbiness'" (*hruparia*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 823; Moulton & Milligan, The Vocab. of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 565) and all abundance of evil and in "meekness, humility" (*prautes*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 705-706) receive the "implanted" (*emphutos*, Ibid., p. 257; Ibid., B. K. C., N. T.) Word of God which is able to save our souls, James 1:21. God's Word in Christ's Gospel powerfully saved us when we believed it, all the more reason to apply that powerful Word when we face stressful trials for God's nurture in such trials!
  3. In accepting God's Word, we need to apply it and not just hear it, for merely hearing the Word and not applying it to life is a form of self-deception that accomplishes nothing under trial, James 1:22-24.
  4. However, applying Scripture under stressful trials leads to blessing in the application process, James 1:25.
- C. To use Scripture well under stressful trials, we must then **consistently apply Scripture to life**, James 1:26-27:
  1. The word the KJV renders as "religious" in James 1:26 comes from the Greek adjective *threskos*, what refers to "external observances," or "outward ritualistic practices which a person may think are commendable." (Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 364; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.)
  2. However, such practices are "futile, fruitless, useless" (*mataios*, Ibid.) if there is no "tight rein on the tongue" when facing stress under trial, and one who fails here only deceives himself by thinking that his external practices are worth anything to God, James 1:26b.
  3. Pure "external observances" (*threskos*) and undefiled before God the Father is ministering to vulnerable people such as widows and orphans and keeping oneself unspotted from the sinful world system, Ibid.; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 781; James 1:27.

***Lesson:*** *To use Scripture well under stressful trials, (1) we must first be receptive to Scripture truth by being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry regardless of the duress we face. (2) Then, we must apply Scripture to life by removing all moral shabbiness and humbly receiving God's implanted Word for blessing under trial. (3) Third, we must consistently apply Scripture to life, coupling our outer actions of goodness with keeping a tight rein on our speech regardless of the temptation to do otherwise under trial, focusing on ministry to vulnerable people like widows and orphans and keeping ourselves unpolluted from the godless world around us.*

***Application:*** *(1) To use Scripture well under the duress of trials, may we shift our focus away from becoming emotionally upset and staying that way over the evil of the trials we face and instead focus on Scripture truth that settles and directs us unto God's blessing. (2) Then, may we humbly obey God's Word, (3) doing so consistently, what involves (a) keeping a tight rein on our speech from becoming unedifying, (b) backing up good actions with a true care for other vulnerable people and (c) keeping ourselves unpolluted by the ungodly world system around us.*