

MAJOR THEMES IN THE CHAPTER:

- a. Finding Joy in Trial
- b. Praying in Faith
- c. The Rich and the Poor in the Kingdom of Heaven
- d. God's Goodness vs. Temptations Lure
- e. Hearing AND Doing God's Word

HOW THIS CHAPTER FITS INTO THE LARGER MESSAGE OF THE BOOK:

James appears to be using this first section of his letter to introduce some themes he wants to discuss in greater detail in the rest of the book. In chapters 2-5, James will return to all of the concepts he discussed in chapter 1 and expound on them.

APPLICATIONS:

There are so many good applications from this chapter but let's focus on two.

1. A disciple's faith shouldn't be evaluated on how many Bible verses he has memorized, how eloquently he prays, or how precisely he can regurgitate church doctrine/tradition. Pure religion, according to the Holy Spirit, is observable in how a person applies the words of God in their actions. It's like Jesus said, "You will recognize them by their fruits."

2. Trials are to our faith what exercise is to our bodies. When we go to the gym, we force our bodies to do difficult things and lift heavy weights. The experience isn't enjoyable in the moment, but the effect is a stronger body. Going through periods of trial, persecution, or difficulty isn't enjoyable as we are enduring, but the result is a stronger, more mature, faith.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

- James 1:22 -

James¹

CHAPTER OUTLINE:

+ INTRODUCTION (1:1):

- James introduced himself to his readers.
- His letter was addressed to the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion."

+ THE BENEFIT OF ENDURING HARD TIMES (1:2-4):

- James encouraged the disciples to find joy in their trials.
- Trusting God through difficult times was good for their faith, and through their steadfastness, they would become "perfect and complete" (mature) in Christ.

+ PRAYING FOR WISDOM WITH CONFIDENCE (1:5-8):

- If any of the Christians felt they lacked wisdom, they were supposed to ask God to give them some.
- God gives "generously to all without reproach."
- But the one who asks must ask in "in faith" (believing God will answer).
- Anyone who doubts God is called a "double-minded man" and compared to an ocean wave driven around by the wind.

+ THE POOR AND THE RICH IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (1:9-11):

- James told poor Christians they had a reason to rejoice, because Christ exalted them.
- He told the rich they should rejoice in the fact that Christ humbled them.
- We shouldn't allow riches to make us prideful, because riches disappear just as quickly as a flower's beauty disappears after blooming.

+ SIN'S DESTRUCTION VS. GOD'S GOODNESS (1:12-18):

- James commended those who remained steadfast in the midst of trials.
- He told them they would receive a crown of life from God.
- Those who encountered temptations were not to blame God for tempting them.
- Temptation is not from God.
- It is a work of evil that tries to lure us through our desires.
- If disciples allow temptation to take root in their hearts it will eventually kill them (spiritually).
- In contrast to the evil of temptation, God gives us "every good gift."
- He is always good and never changes.

+ "BE DOERS OF THE WORD AND NOT HEARERS ONLY (1:19-27):

- James encouraged the Christians to be "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger."
- They were to remove wickedness from their lives and replace it with the words of God.
- But they were warned to be careful. They needed to hear God's words AND put them into practice.
- Those who hear God's words but don't practice them are compared to a man who looks at himself in the mirror, but then walks away and forgets what he looks like.
- Unbridled (unchecked) speech can spoil a man's religion.
- Pure religion is observable through a person's actions.
- James described pure religion as visiting "orphans and widows in their affliction" and keeping "oneself unstained from the world."