

Series: James
Title: Survey of James' Epistle
Scripture: Overview of James
Date: November 11, 2009
Place: Teleford, PA

Proposition: What the Spirit of God moved James to write in the opening exhortation is the theme of the whole letter. The rest of the letter expounds upon the first 10 verses or so of the letter. The subject is how brethren are to wait on the Lord as we deal with fellow brethren who have erred in the truth. I hope that this overview will help to open up the epistle for you so that we see that James is dealing with one subject throughout the whole letter.

THE SALUTATION

James 1: 1: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

This is James, the brother of our Lord, the son of Alphaeus. He is the minister of the gospel to Jewish brethren at Jerusalem.

He is writing to Jewish believers scattered abroad who have and are suffering various kinds of trials.

One, they have been persecuted--"scattered" abroad—rejected by their own kinsman after the flesh and pushed away because they believed on Christ. Secondly, they were enduring another kind of trial as they were being taught through the gospel to leave the old covenant law behind and simply trust Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness. They were zealous for the law. So to be told that Christ is the end of the law presented a trial to them. Thirdly, many were enduring another kind of trial as they heard that the Lord had an elect people among the Gentiles.

In Acts 21, Paul went to Jerusalem and met with James and other elders from the various churches. They told Paul of these great trials that the Jewish believers were under—they sought carefully how to instruct the Jews rather than by force.

Acts 21: 20:..Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

The point to see is that these Jewish brethren were suffering many kinds of trials amongst their various churches where they were scattered.

In these various kinds of trials, because the old man is still with us, in our desire for our brethren to hear, to grow, to walk in the truth of Christ, our sinful lusts is to exalt ourselves, to condemn our erring, weaker brethren, and to deal harshly with brethren who are out of the way. James letter is great instruction to God's preachers, as well as to brethren.

THE EXHORTATION

James 1: 2: My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials]; 3: Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

Count it all joy-Everything about the trial that God the Father sends is worthy of rejoicing over. God's trials are the means to an end for the believer. God always makes the believer more persuaded that we can never be separated from his love for us in Christ Jesus, that he is indeed teaching all his children through his gospel and able to save us, to grow us and to do what is necessary for us and our brethren.

Remember when God first began a work of grace in us? We suffered a trial because the gospel was tearing away our refuge of flesh. The gospel declared nothing good in my flesh but that my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Christ is the righteousness of God. In Christ, God justified every one for whom he died and made those he represented the righteousness which God requires of them. God's grace has no respect of persons. He chose to save a people out of every kind of people—Jew and Gentile. And because each chosen child of God is totally dead in trespasses and in sins in our first birth, we must be born of the Spirit of God. He must give us life and grant us repentance and faith or you and I can not believe on Christ. But once he does, we can not do otherwise.

But in those early days of his visitation, by his grace the love of God for his Son and his love for us in Christ was shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. It made us rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We began by God's will by the word of God through the Spirit.

Romans 5: 1: Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

In every trial since, that same love has been shed abroad in our hearts more and more the same way. Through God's will, by his word, through trials, God grows us, persuading us more and more that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Every trial results in growth and rejoicing in the believer.

Romans 5: 3: And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4: And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

All trials which God gives brings us to this same end. Through trials God separates us from the legal, corrupt old man of the flesh to Christ Jesus in whom every believer is complete.

Illustration: When a fellow brother experiences a trial and errs in the truth it is as much a trial for his pastor as it is for the brother. If you see one of your brethren out of the way, it is as much a trial for you (sometimes more so) than it is for that brother who is out of the way. Count these trials joy. They work patience in you. They mature you. They make you to see that you shall never be ashamed of waiting on the glory of God.

James 1: 4: But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire [complete], wanting nothing.

Use the patience God has already given you and believe on God, wait on God to use this trial to show you that because his people are accepted in Christ Jesus he will see to it that his children are fed and grow. We will get the full benefit of the trial and miss nothing as we wait for God to make it clear once again to us that he alone is able to save us out of every trial, in every situation.

THE PLACE OF HELP.

James 1: 5: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

This is the chief purpose of the trial. God makes the believer to realize our lack of wisdom and God draws us to Christ our Wisdom. And God giveth abundantly to all who come to him. He will not revile one of his brethren for coming to him for wisdom.

Hebrews 4: 15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. 16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

CHAPTER 3

James 3: 1: My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2: For in many things we offend all.

James is declaring what the Lord Jesus Christ declared. Be not as the Pharisees who love to be called Rabbi, Master, Father, who love the uppermost seats, who attempt to sit in God's seat imagining they can accomplish by force, what only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can accomplish in sinners.

He goes on in this chapter to say that the heart of flesh bitterly envies the power and glory of God. It is a heart of strife; it is earthly, sensual devilish. No man can bridle this tongue of flesh, only God can do so. No fountain can produce salt water and fresh water—God MUST create a new heart in the beginning and just like he begins this work, God must renew us, create a right spirit within us, when we are out of the way. (Read this chapter.)

Illustration: During trials, when the fleshly man attempts to draw away a brother, it is a greater offense for you and me to deal harshly, in the judgment so commonly, so erroneously practiced by so many in our day. We may seem religious, but such an unbridled tongue betrays the carnal heart which desires to be God.

Zechariah 4: 6: This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Believers have experienced the Power and Wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit. They have a new heart.

James 3: 17: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

First, this is a description of Christ our Wisdom—Pure Wisdom. By his wisdom, God righeou

Isaiah 53:11: He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his KNOWLEDGE shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

1 Corinthians 1:24: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

He dealt in a peaceable manner. He was gentle, easily intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. The only ones that Christ dealt harshly with were those self-righteous men who dealt harshly with sinners. Paul dealt tenderly toward the erring Corinthians. He rebuked with all authority those self-promoting false prophets who were attempting to bring the brethren under their oppressive yoke.

When you are in this trial, beholding your brother who is out of the way and begin to feel the sin of your own flesh being puffed up to correct him...he exhorts us to ask God for Wisdom, and God will make Christ unto you Wisdom. Only when we are renewed to remember how Christ sowed peace into our own heart in peace will we do the same for our brethren. The inner man is renewed in these trials to behold that grace is not based on a respect of persons, but is free, so we deal graciously. Judgment fell on Christ that mercy might fall on us...so we delight to restore brethren in mercy, reminding them of the mercy of God toward us.

James exhorts us to ask God. But how do we approach God?

James 1: 6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7: For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8: A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

CHAPTER 4

James 4: 1: From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members? 2: Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3: Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

James expounds upon this double-mind. Do you really want Christ to have all Preeminence? Do you really want the brother to be restored to Christ? Or do you merely want Christ to grant you the lust of your flesh so you can usurp authority over your brother? Ye receive not the peace of Christ in your hearts, the wisdom to deal with your brethren, because ye ask amiss.

James 4: 11: Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12: There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Then James finishes out the 4th chapter and goes into the 5th comparing this pride and self-righteousness of the fleshly man to a rich man. All his religion is about doing what he wills rather than saying if the Lord will. The self-righteous man is like the rich man who is a robber of his servants. He is laying up treasure for the last days—Lord didn't we do many wonderful works and cast out devils—iniquity!

James 5: 13: Is any among you afflicted? let him pray....

James has not changed the subject. He is still dealing with these trails, with the sickness of our old man of self-righteousness and sin, he is still instructing us to ask God for Christ to be made unto us Wisdom.

James 5: 13:...Is any merry? Is there any that has already been converted to trust Christ alone as Peter was after his trial? Then let him feed the sheep. **Let him sing psalms.** Restore your erring brethren with songs of God's grace. Refresh your erring brethren with songs of Christ's person and finished work. Refresh your erring brethren with the holy things, not casting the pearls as stones, but carefully placing them about his neck, adorning the inner man of your brother.

James 5: 14: Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; . And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

This is a word to the preacher. Instead of respecting his persons or exalting ourselves in judgment, condemning him, yoking him and whipping him. Let them go into their closet and pray over the whole matter. Asking God to restore a brother through the Holy Spirit is the only way you and I can anoint our erring brother with the oil, the Spirit of gladness.

James 5: 15: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

This is the whole of what God requires of you and me. Would you save those who are sick in sin? Would you raise them up? Would you forgive them of their sin? Then petition God. Depend upon God. And the Lord shall raise him up. And the Lord shall forgive him.

James 5: 16: Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

This is the summation of what James is teaching. Just as Peter said in his first epistle, instead of being exalted in self-righteousness, let all submit themselves unto one another, casting all our care on Christ for he careth for you.

THE EFFECTUAL END GOD WORKS IN HIS CHILDREN THROUGH TRIAL.

James 1: 9: Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: 10: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11: For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

There is no doubt that through trials, the same end is accomplished in each child, whether rich or poor. But we will get more from this if we see that the brother and the rich man are both describing one believer.

Scripture speaks of the believer as being two men. The new man, created in righteousness and true holiness, is the brother of low degree, the true brother in each of us (described in the beatitudes in Mt 5.) The rich man is the old fleshly man of Adam—he is haughty, lifted up, full of pride. Rejoice because through trial, God exalts the inner man. That is, God renews the inner man day by day—crowns him with Christ our King and our Life. But the rich man, the outward man of flesh, is brought low. Rejoice in this because our fleshly man is grass--**10:...because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11: For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.**

The trial of the elders and of the fellow brethren who ministered to these young Jewish converts was that they could not work this in their brethren by force of hand. We have to be patient. We have to wait on the Lord to do this in us and in our brethren. Wherefore, put off the old man and put on the new.

James 1: 19: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. 21: Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22: But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves...James 2: 12: So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13: For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

James 1: 12: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.