

JAMES - LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

TURNING TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS

1. INTRODUCTION

A. HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY OF JAMES.

1. FIRST, IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT WE HAVE BEEN BORN AGAIN.

a. APART FROM SPIRITUAL BIRTH THERE CAN BE NO SPIRITUAL MATURITY/GROWTH.

2. SECOND, WE MUST HONESTLY EXAMINE OUR LIVES IN LIGHT OF GOD'S WORD.

a. JAMES COMPARES THE BIBLE TO A MIRROR, AND AS WE STUDY THE BIBLE WE ARE LOOKING INTO THE DIVINE MIRROR AND SEEING OURSELVES AS WE REALLY ARE.

b. James 1:22-25 (NASB) But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 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; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But 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.

a. GOD USES SCRIPTURE AS THE TAPE MEASURE FOR THE CHRIST-FORMATION PROCESS.

3. THIRD, WE MUST OBEY WHAT GOD'S WORD TEACHES US = SURRENDERING OUR WILL TO HIS WILL.

a. THE BLESSING DOES NOT COME IN STUDYING GOD'S WORD, BUT IN DOING THE WORD.

b. James 1:25 (NASB) But 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.

4. FOURTH, WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR SOME TRIALS AND TESTINGS.

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- a. WHENEVER WE GET **SERIOUS** ABOUT **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**, THE **ENEMY** GETS **SERIOUS** ABOUT **OPPOSING US**.
 - 1) THE **REAL EXAMINATIONS** IN **BIBLE STUDY** COME IN THE **SCHOOL OF LIFE**, NOT IN THE **CLASSROOM**.
 - i. **REMEMBER** "IN JESUS' NAME, I GIVE NO CONSENT TO THAT THOUGHT."
 - 2) **SPIRITUAL GROWTH** IS **NOT EASY**... WE MUST **WORK AT IT**.
- 5. **FIFTH**, WE MUST **MEASURE OUR SPIRITUAL MATURITY BY THE WORD OF GOD** (= HIS MEASURING TAPE).
 - a. **NOTE** WE SHOULD **NOT MEASURE OURSELVES BY OTHER CHRISTIANS**, **BUT** BY THE **WORD OF GOD** AND BY THE **SON OF GOD**.
 - 1) **REMEMBER** **NOT EVERYONE WHO GROWS OLD GROWS UP!**
- B. **MATURE CHRISTIANS ARE:**
 - 1. **HAPPY** CHRISTIANS.
 - 2. **USEFUL** CHRISTIANS.
 - 3. CHRISTIANS WHO **ENCOURAGE OTHERS**.
- 2. **James 1:1 (NASB)** James, a **bond-servant of God** and of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, To the **twelve tribes** who are **dispersed abroad**: Greetings.
 - A. "JAMES"
 - 1. LAST WEEK WE WENT OVER SOME OF THE **REASONS** THIS BOOK IS **ATTRIBUTED** TO JAMES, THE **HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS CHRIST**.
 - 2. **WHO** THE AUTHOR WAS IS IMPORTANT... **BUT, WHAT** HE HAS TO **SAY** IS **INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT**.
 - B. "A BOND SERVANT OF GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST"
 - 1. **NOT**... "THE **BROTHER OF JESUS CHRIST**".
 - a. ONE **REASON** JAMES DIDN'T IDENTIFY HIMSELF AS THE **BROTHER OF JESUS** IS THAT WHAT **QUALIFIED** JAMES TO WRITE SUCH A LETTER WAS **NOT** HIS **PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP** TO JESUS **BUT** HIS **SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP**.

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2. **NOTE** JAMES' VIEW OF JESUS HAS UNDERGONE QUITE A **TRANSFORMATION** SINCE THE DAYS WHEN THEY **GREW UP TOGETHER** IN THE **SAME HOME**!
 - a. **John 7:2-5 (NASB)** Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." **For not even His brothers were believing in Him.**
3. **"BOND SERVANTS"** PLEDGED THEMSELVES TO THEIR **MASTERS** FOR **LIFE... AND THE WORD IMPLIES ABSOLUTE**:
 - a. OBEDIENCE.
 - b. HUMILITY.
 - c. LOYALTY.
 - d. ... FOR LIFE!

C. "TO THE TWELVE TRIBES"

1. THE **"TWELVE TRIBES"** IS A **REFERENCE TO THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL**.
 - a. **Genesis 35:22-26 (NASB)** Now there were **twelve** sons of Jacob—²³ the sons of Leah: **Reuben**, Jacob's firstborn, then **Simeon** and **Levi** and **Judah** and **Issachar** and **Zebulun**; the sons of Rachel: **Joseph** and **Benjamin**; and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: **Dan** and **Naphtali**; and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: **Gad** and **Asher**. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

D. "DISPERSED/SCATTERED ABROAD"

1. **"DISPORA/DISPERSION" ... THE JEWS HAVE BEEN DISPERSED** SEVERAL TIMES IN HISTORY.
 - a. **JAMES IS REFERING TO THE MOST RECENT DISPERSEMENT FOLLOWING THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN JEWS IN JERUSALEM BEGINNING WITH THE STONING OF STEPHEN AND THE ARRESTS AND PERSECUTIONS LED BY SAUL/PAUL.**
2. **Acts 8:1,4 (NASB)** Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him (Stephen) to death. And on that day a **great persecution** began against the **church in Jerusalem**, and **they were all scattered** throughout the

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regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

- a. **NOTE** OF COURSE, GOD DIDN'T CAUSE THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH... BUT IT IS APPARENT THAT HE ALLOWED IT AND HE USED IT TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL.

3. **QUOTE** BY WILLIAM BARCLAY: "THE JEWISH DISPORA EXTENDED TO THE FARTHEST LIMITS OF THE WORLD, AND THERE WAS NO GREATER FACTOR IN THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY".

4. Acts 1:6-8 (NASB) So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

5. **NOTE** AS THE DISCIPLES FLED... THE GOSPEL SPREAD!

- a. **REMEMBER** GOD IS IN THE BUSINESS OF TURNING TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS

- 1) Genesis 50:20 (NASB) "As for you, **you meant evil against me**, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

- 2) **DISCUSS** WHERE GOD HAS TURNED TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS IN YOUR LIFE.

3. **"ENDURING"**... TRIALS BRINGS SPIRITUAL MATURITY

- A. **SONG** "I ASKED THE LORD THAT I MIGHT GROW"

- B. James 1:2-4 (NASB) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- C. **CAVEAT** IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT GOD DOES NOT CAUSE TRIALS IN OUR LIVES... BUT HE DOES ALLOW THEM AND HE USES THEM FOR HIS PURPOSES... BUT, HE DOES NOT CAUSE THEM.

1. **FACT** GOD IS A GOOD FATHER.

- a. GOOD FATHERS DO NOT CAUSE PROBLEMS/TRIALS FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

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- b. **BUT**... THEY **USE** THEM TO HELP MAKE THEIR CHILDREN MORE **MATURE** AND **TEACH** THEM **HOW** TO **TURN TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS**.
- D. **"TRIALS"** ARE **NOT** MEANT TO MAKE US **FALL**, THEY **ARE** MEANT TO MAKE US **SOAR**,
 - 1. THEY ARE **NOT** MEANT TO **DEFEAT** US, THEY **ARE** MEANT TO **BE DEFEATED**,
 - 2. THEY ARE **NOT** MEANT TO MAKE US **WEAKER**, THEY **ARE** MEANT TO MAKE US **STRONGER**,
 - 3. **THEREFORE**, JAMES SAYS... WE SHOULD **NOT COMPLAIN** ABOUT THEM... WE SHOULD **"REJOICE" THROUGH THEM**.
- E. THROUGHOUT THE **BIBLE** THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO TURNED **DEFEAT INTO VICTORY** AND **TRIAL INTO TRIUMPH**.
 - 1. THE **RESULT** OF THIS **VICTORY** IS **SPIRITUAL MATURITY**.
- F. JAMES TELLS US **TWO THINGS** ABOUT **"TRIALS"**:
 - 1. **FIRST**, HE TELLS US THAT THEY ARE **INEVITABLE** FOR **CHRISTIANS**.
 - a. HE USES THE WORD **"WHEN"** NOT **"IF"**.
 - 1) **FEW** THINGS ARE **CERTAIN** IN THIS WORLD... **BUT CHALLENGES TO OUR FAITH** (**"TRIALS"**) ARE **INESCAPABLE** AND **UNAVOIDABLE**.
 - 2. **SECOND**, JAMES SAYS THAT THESE **"TRIALS"** ARE **"VARIOUS"**.
 - a. WHILE WE SHOULD **EXPECT "TRIALS"** TO **COME**... WE HAVE **NO IDEA** WHAT **FORM** THEY WILL TAKE.
 - 1) **"TRIALS"** MAY BE **FREQUENT** AND **FRUSTRATING**... OR, **EPIC** AND **LIFE CHANGING**.
 - i. WE CAN **NEVER** PREDICT!
- G. **IF** YOU AND I ARE GOING TO TURN **TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS** THERE ARE **THREE ESSENTIALS** FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS**.
- H. **IMMEDIATELY** AFTER HIS INTRODUCTION **JAMES** TELLS HIS READERS THAT **GOD ALLOWS DIFFICULTIES** INTO **BELIEVER'S LIVES** **FOR A PURPOSE**.
 - 1. **AND**... THAT **HIS PURPOSE** CAN **ONLY** BE **ACCOMPLISHED** **IF** THEY **RESPOND** IN THE **RIGHT WAY** TO THEIR **PROBLEMS**.
 - a. **THREE ESSENTIALS** FOR **VICTORY IN TRIALS**

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