

James

Lesson #4, Chapter 1:9-18

As you read Chapter 1 before beginning this lesson, ask the Lord for insight, understanding, and a teachable heart.

1. Summarize the contents of verses 1-8. Be sure to explain the subject jump from *trials* to *wisdom* to asking in *faith* and how those thoughts connect.

2. When we come across a difficult or puzzling section of Scripture, one of the first Bible study principles to employ is that of studying the *context* surrounding a verse or verses. A quick look at verses 9-11 may seem like James introduces a new topic, yet even a brief look at the surrounding context helps us determine the heart of what James communicates here. Let's *briefly* establish the context of chapter 1.
 - a. Verses 1-8 contain practical wisdom in how to live when something happens to us. What is that?

 - b. Now, jump down to verse 12. What is the basic subject of that verse?

 - c. Though verses 9-11 appear to introduce a new subject, the near preceding and following context provides the lens through which we view verses 9-11. What lens should guide how we see the instruction of verses 9-11?

3. What two groups of people does James address in verses 9-11?

4. In verse 9 James introduces us to the poor man. What does James mean by *humble circumstances* (ESV and NKJV *lowly brother*)? See Proverbs 18:23; 1 Corinthians 4:11-13; Philippians 4:12; Hebrews 10:32-34; James 2:1-6.

5. James tells us the poor man is to *rejoice* in his humble circumstances. What is it about his circumstances that allows the poor man to rejoice? See Jeremiah 9:23-24; Romans 8:16-18; James 1:2-4.

6. In contrast to the poor man, what do you learn about the rich man from verses 10-11?

7. What does James mean by telling the rich man to *glory* in his humiliation? Why is that important? See also 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 4:13-14; 1 Peter 1:22-25.

8. What were some of the situations these believers faced that contributed to their trials? See James 1:1; 2:1-7, 15-16; 4:1, 11.

9. No matter what our earthly station or status, what is the great equalizer? For a hint, see verses 2-4 and 12.

10. Whether we're rich or poor or somewhere in between, how would maintaining the attitudes we discovered in questions 5 and 7 help us persevere in our trials?

11. According to Jesus, what attitudes must the rich and the poor possess to be pleasing to the Lord? Make some observations from Luke 12:13-34.

12. Let's spend some time looking at verse 12. What observations can you make about the man referred to in verse 12?

13. What does *perseverance* reveal about our spiritual state according to verse 12? See also Matthew 24:13; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 John 5:4-5.

14. What do you discover about the word *trial* in verse 12 [Strong's #3986 (NKJV *temptation*)] and *tempted* used in verse 13 [Strong's #3985]?

15. James encourages the beleaguered believers with certain truths about God in verse 13. What do we learn?

Eager Beaver: How does that insight help explain why the translators used *trial* in verse 12 (except for the NKJV) and *tempted* in verse 13? Remember, context ultimately determines a word's definition.

16. James then gives a little lesson on the nature of temptation. What do you learn from verses 14-15?

17. In verse 16, James tells them not to be deceived. What weren't they to be deceived about? See verses 12-15.

18. Why do we need this admonition about temptation and sin when we find ourselves in the midst of trials?

19. How is that promise of perseverance from verse 12 an encouragement when we find ourselves tested and tried and doubting our own faith because of the trials we face?

20. How do the truths contained in 1 Corinthians 10:13 lend substance and support to this passage?

21. What do you learn about God's gifts from verse 17? See also verses 2-4 and verse 12.
 - a. How should that understanding shape our response to the trials and troubles we face?

22. Why does James wrap up this section on trials and temptations with a reminder about God's gifts? See also Job 2:10; Lamentations 3:19-33; Romans 8:28; James 1:2-4.

23. Again, how should that understanding shape our response to the trials and troubles we face?

24. What good gift does James put on display for any believers under trial to consider? See verse 18. Also, see the following verses to help explain the meaning of the verse: Romans 8:23, 29-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:23.

All events are under the control of Providence; consequently, all the trials of our outward life are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance the armies of trial march forth in array, clad in their iron armor, and armed with weapons of war. All providences are doors to trial. Even our mercies, like roses, have their thorns. Men may be drowned in seas of prosperity as well as in rivers of affliction. Our mountains are not too high, and our valleys are not too low for temptations: trials lurk on all roads. Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Yet no shower falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every drop has its order ere it hastens to the earth. The trials which come from God are sent to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord in his infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon his people's faith that he will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant grace. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valor, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut; affliction does this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Thus, it is well that Jehovah tries the righteous, for it causes them to grow rich towards God.¹ ~ Charles H. Spurgeon

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*, Complete and unabridged; New modern edition. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), Evening, September 3.

Discovering the Treasures of the Word

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek, more earnestly, His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer!
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request;
And by His love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue Thy worm to death?
'Tis in this way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,
From self, and pride, to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st find thy all in Me.²

John Newton

² John Newton, "I Asked the Lord that I Might Grow,"
<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/i/a/s/iaskedtl.htm>