



01 An Introduction James 1:1-4

James is straightforward. If he were here today with us, he probably wouldn't be accepted by the church. They would be offended. He calls us things like adulterers. He was seriously concerned about the condition of the Body of Christ in his day. He speaks in a brutally honest way that brings conviction to all believers. The book of James is probably the most "Jewish" book in the New Testament. James says the shocking things that we all need to hear, such as: poor believers should take pride in their high position and rich believers should take pride in their humility. Faith without works is dead. It is meaningless. Those who think they're religious but can't shut their mouths don't realize their religion is worthless. James points out all of our hypocrisies when he says we worship Jesus on one hand while on the other hand running after the things of the world.

¹James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:1-4, NASB).

Let me first clear up some details about James' life. He is not the James who was beheaded by Herod. This was James who was the half-brother of Jesus. He grew up in a Hebrew home. Mary and Joseph were his mom and dad. Paul identifies him as the "brother of the Lord" (Galatians 1:19). Interestingly, while he was growing up in the home of Jesus, He was NOT a believer in Jesus. He became a believer after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to him.

He was a great prayer warrior. We begin to get a deep understanding of the spiritual depth of James from the text itself. He starts the letter referring to himself as a servant, a *doulos* (δουλος / a bond-slave). He never brought up his pedigree of being the brother of Jesus. I think that most of us would have started out the letter something like this, "James, brother of the Lord Jesus, who grew up in the most amazing household of faith probably in human history." Instead, he simply refers to himself as the "doulos" of God and of the Lord Jesus.

Let's talk for a minute about what this word "doulos" means. When a person loved another so much, that person would decide that they wanted to serve another for the rest of their lives. They would willingly become a "bond slave" of the person they wanted to be their master. They would have an earring put in their ear, signifying that they had made the free choice to serve someone for the rest of their life. James refers himself as a bond-servant of

Christ. He's saying, I've given myself willingly to be a servant of God in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a servant of the "Cristos", "the Anointed One." In this statement he was declaring that he recognized his brother Jesus as the Messiah of God who had been prophesied of throughout the entire Old Testament.

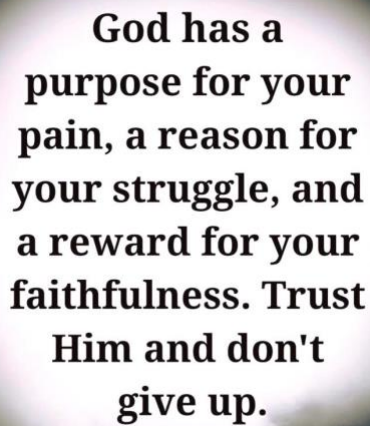
I've never had a human brother, but I've watched brothers compete with one another. Frankly, I've seen it get ugly. Having a brother that can do everything better than you is hard to swallow. Having parents that perhaps favor one brother over another is destructive; and when your older brother is God, He can do ANYTHING, and EVERYTHING, better than you can. Also, we know from scripture, that Jesus was perfect in every way. So, whatever James could do, Jesus could do better. I am sure that Mary said more than once, "James, why can't you be more like your older brother Jesus?" It's hard for a brother to put up with that kind of pressure, and here in the text we see this precious man, this humble servant of God, submitting to his older brother and acknowledging Him as his Messiah and his God. James had seen Jesus up close and personal and he knew there was nothing inconsistent or fake in the life of Jesus. It wasn't always that way.

James didn't accept Jesus as Lord until AFTER Jesus appeared to him after the crucifixion and resurrection. So, when did James change his mind about Jesus? In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul lists James among those to whom Jesus made a personal appearance after His resurrection and before His ascension (1 Corinthians 15:7). It must have happened after Jesus' appearance to him.

Tradition tells us that James was a very devout Jew. He was, in fact, a Nazarite (meaning a 'separated one'). In devotion to YHVH, he took a vow to not consume any type of grape product (see Numbers 6:1-21). Because of his exemplary life, he was greatly respected among traditional Jews at the temple as well as among the Christian brothers. In later years he became known as "old camel knees." What an interesting nickname that was. It was because he spent so much time praying for the salvation of the Jews that his calloused knees resembled those of a camel's. In the year 49 AD, James, as head of the church in Jerusalem, was the wise leader of a conference determining that Gentiles needed not follow Jewish practices in order to become Christians (Acts 15:13-29). When Jews falsely accused Paul of teaching Christian Jews not to follow God's Laws, James, along with the elders, advised Paul to take a religious vow to show that he was not against Judaism (Acts 21:15-26). He was a very important and powerful early church leader.

James starts the letter telling "those of the 12 tribes who are spread abroad" that we are to think of hardships in our lives as something that is beneficial. James is telling us that we should consider it "pure joy" when we encounter various trials knowing that there is a greater purpose in those trials. Sometimes our hardships make us so miserable that we need to experience them in order to come to terms with what God wants to do in our lives. We get so miserable that we're willing to listen. I can think of some of the great hardships I've experienced in my own life, and the spiritual growth I experienced during those times is unparalleled. It seems that I've grown the most when I've suffered the most. I wish that it

were not so, but I've grown the most when I've passed through trials. James is telling us that we should patiently endure (as an active thing) when we go through various trials and troubles.



God has a purpose for your pain, a reason for your struggle, and a reward for your faithfulness. Trust Him and don't give up.

Enduring is like PUSHING ON THROUGH A MARATHON. It is an active thing. You are weary. You want to give up. You truly feel like quitting, but you JUST KEEP ON KEEPING ON. It is not a matter of just passively taking it on the chin and somehow managing and muddling through.

Just because you're going through a hard time doesn't mean that you're automatically going to grow through it either. The text says, "let endurance have its perfect result." You can have hardship, and instead of growing up, you can just grow bitter. So what is this perfect result that James is saying comes through perseverance? It means

that you must allow this work to be done in your life. This week, I want to talk about practical ways that we can let perseverance have its way to produce endurance in our lives. What should we do when we encounter trials that seem impossible?

6 Practical Ways We Let "Endurance Have its Perfect Result:"

- 1 Allow God to use challenging events as training. Usually we just try to escape events that are adversarial. We know logically that we don't get rid of our problems by smoking dope or drinking our problems away. Still though, some engage in such fruitless destructive behavior. We must come to the point where we say, "God, I give you these problems and I believe you're trying to let me learn something. Lord, help me to see what you're trying to do in my life. I want to say that God doesn't have to bring bad stuff into our lives. It's not His will that bad stuff comes into our lives. Things come into our lives because we're in a broken world.
- 2 Don't give way to discouragement or bitterness. Don't give in! Don't give up! Discouragement is the button Satan pushes to make us GIVE UP totally, and then we can be convinced of anything. Then we're susceptible to believe any negative things that comes along. When we don't get an understanding of all the why's that we question God about, we can become bitter.
- 3 Don't give way to self-pity. Self-pity is a HUGE TRAP. Don't fall into it. Don't feel sorry for yourself. Don't have a pity party. When we engage in self-pity, we will never be overcomers. Self-pity is the ultimate expression of the flesh. Self-pity makes it all about me. When we get our minds off of ourselves and we direct them to the Word of God and to other people, we climb out of our self-pity. Jesus said, "I didn't come to be served, but to serve." When we serve others whether we feel like it or not, we see beyond ourselves.

- 4 Be responsive when you're confronted with your sin and shortcomings. When we're in difficulty, God will begin speaking to us through the Holy Spirit about changes that need to be made in our lives. We have to face our anger, our frustration, our bitterness. When we feel we're being attacked, we are quick to defend ourselves. It is a time to ask God to help you see what changes are needed in your life. We need to be willing to say, "Yes Lord, I confess this sin in my life and I ask you to make a change in me."



- 5 Stay connected with Jesus throughout the hardship. You must spend time in the Word. You must spend time in prayer. Often when people go through hard times, they pull back. They have some difficulty with another church member, so they pull away from the fellowship. I posted a wonderful meme this week on facebook that says, "Don't let anyone be the cause why you leave CHURCH. They are not the reason why you go to church in the first place." Think for a minute about what happens in a herd of animals when an animal pulls back? They get eaten. If you allow a trial and a difficulty to pull you away from the family of God, you are susceptible to being spiritually eaten up. Stay connected to the Body of Christ. Go to the throne with your problems, but you can also go to the phone for the prayer support you need.
- 6 Continue to trust God even when you don't see a way out. As I used to tell my kids, "Never give up. Never surrender." Continue to trust that God loves you and He wants what is best for you. Choose to believe that God is good. The enemy wants to whisper lies into your soul, like, "God doesn't answer your prayers. The enemy will even say there IS NO God listening to your prayers." Don't fall for that. It is a trap. Never give up. Never surrender.

Much of our suffering is self-induced. We do things that bring suffering and hardship into our lives. However, we usually can't recognize that we're making the choices that bring so much turmoil and chaos into our lives. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can move away from those things into a lifestyle that is more Christ-centered, more peaceful, more abundant. In these cases it takes intent listening to figure out where we've gone amiss.



The suffering that is not self-induced is difficult. It makes us question how a good God who loves us could allow such things to happen. In those circumstances it doesn't help to ask "why." It is best to just believe in faith that God is good, and that He loves His children. We live in a broken world that is riddled with disease and destruction. In times of unexplainable suffering, it is best to claim the promises of God.

³ We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴ endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. ⁵ This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us. (Romans 5:3-5, GNT).

⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. ⁷ And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7, GNT).

"cast.. all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7, NASB).

*⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.*

*⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6, NASB).*

¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12, NASB).

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11, NKJV).

We will learn much from this great humble genuine true Christian father. James was a pillar of the early church and he is a pillar to us today. Dare to let your heart be challenged and changed along with me and let God do a work in your heart through this precious letter that we have received down through history from "old camel knees."

"Let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." James

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.