

# Handling Trials

Harmony M.B.C., July 10, 2016

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

I. **James 1:2** My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

- ◆ Joy!?? We will see why James instructs this further in this message.
  - This may be one of the most difficult things a Christian has to do in his/her life. We do not bear up under troubles or trials...tribulation well.
- ◆ “fall into” – to suddenly be surrounded by...to be in midst of different temptations – does not mean to give in to. Does not mean to be overpowered by.
- ◆ Temptations: there are two different aspects of this word and some bible students and scholars try to make those two different aspects to be two different words. One word is supposed to be what we would read this verse to be talking about: testing to prove one’s faith. The other word is supposed to mean to try to seduce to sin. But, as I said, these should be viewed as two different aspects, or as two different outcomes possible when these challenges come to us.
- ◆ Now, this is not a semantics lesson on a word, but I need to spend a few minutes talking about the fact that this word in the bible has one Greek root (to help you understand the concept of a root in grammar, let’s think about a carrot – a carrot has one big root with some rootlets growing off it. This is the same idea for words in a grammar discussion. The word “build” in the English language could be said to be a root for such “rootlet” words as built, building, builder). That root word (Gr. *peira*) that produces words that are verbs or nouns, or whatever, refers generally to the same language concept in all its uses in the Greek. That is, it means some kind of testing to prove, or trying of a person’s position on something. Now back to my point. Wherever that temptation comes from, I dare to say that it is a trying of our stand...our convictions, and in that trying there is, as part of the experience we go through, a place where choice of what we will do comes into play. There is a place in our temptations where we will either stand on what we claim to believe or we will give in to the alternatives that may be presented to us. Let’s illustrate:
  - There is a hard-frozen pond in this scene. In the middle of the pond is a little chest with a valuable gift inside. A man walks out on the pond and as he goes he believes the ice will hold his weight. When he gets out there a few feet, he hears a small “crack” on the pond. He has just been challenged with a temptation. The temptation goes like this, “Do I still believe the ice will hold me, or is that cracking sound a warning that the ice is going to break and I will go through?”
  - If the man interprets that cracking sound as a flaw in the ice, he is at a point to make a choice. He believes it is a warning, so he turns and goes back. He has made a statement. He has said, “I don’t trust the ice.”
  - Another man steps out on the ice and heads for the center to get that gift. Let’s say at the time of that cracking sound the man believed deep in his understanding that the pond was frozen over solid from top to bottom. When the ice cracked, he also was facing temptation; he was at a point of making a choice about what he would do. Would he do differently, truly believing that the ice was solid underneath? I think we all know he would. What is the difference? It is, that he is certain of something that ice cracking cannot shake, and he is willing and ready to go on in order to prove his confidence.

- ◆ I have just drawn you a word picture of two kinds of attitudes among people who claim to be believers. One looks like a person who has faith until the ice cracks. The other looks like a person who has faith, and when the ice cracks he has confidence in something outside himself.
- ◆ In both these cases, temptation came in the form of a cracking sound. In both cases, each man had choices he could make. In both cases each man made a choice based on what he believed.
- ◆ I drew out this whole illustration so that we could see that the temptation represented by the crack of the ice was the same in both circumstances. But in one instance, a man yielded to an act related to self-preservation, It was what he viewed as self-gain. The other man went on because he had faith in the ice.
- ◆ You might say that the temptation for the first man was one that seemed to be enticing to sin...something that invited him to drop his confidence in something outside himself and do some act that he could depend on himself about. In the other case, you could say the temptation was a challenge to the man to prove the confidence he had in the ice. This is how we should look at the biblical word for tempt.
- ◆ I do want to pause right here and say that a true believer can look like either one of these men in this illustration at various points in their lives. We should remember that at Jesus' arrest, all his apostles forsook him and fled. Now, while we know John and Peter wandered back to the trial site, they at first forsook him and fled.
- ◆ Let's go on now to look at why James would exhort the readers to have joy in times of temptation

## II. **James 1:3** Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

- ◆ I preached last week about patience and its blessing when connected with the comfort to be found in scriptures. So, I want say much here about the patience, but I do want us to focus on the fact that knowing the trying of our faith works patience is the reason he gives for us to have joy in those temptations. Why is that? Let's go to Rom 5:3-5 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.
- ◆ Patience works experience...what kind of experience did the man who turned back on the ice have about going on out to the chest with the gift in it?
- ◆ Experience works hope – the more we patiently put our trust in the Lord, stand our ground or go forward, and wait for His outcome, the more confidence (hope) in Him we gain
- ◆ And hope (confidence) maketh not ashamed – what kind of loss of self-esteem or respect from others did the man lose who turned around on the ice – was their shame?
  - The confidence of the man who went on to take the gift put him in a place where he had zero shame
  - When we go forward strictly by faith in our Lord we will not have some experience that makes us ashamed of how we acted. But when we halt or turn back in our commitment we will soon get to a place where we will have something to be ashamed of
- ◆ Now on to the next admonition:

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

- ◆ Do you know what the perfect work of patience is? It is the finished product that is completed when we patiently wait on the Lord as He does things. Let's illustrate:
  - Use three or four people in the audience and have them write "The Lord is my Shepherd." Ask one of them to stop writing in one second after starting regardless of what letters they have written. Ask the second to write for four seconds and stop, the third to write for 6 seconds and stop. The fourth (or last person whatever the number) to write for 15 seconds and

stop. Collect the writings and show that none are complete except the 15-second one. Demonstrate that the others represent us giving up on waiting patiently on the Lord and the result is an imperfect or incomplete product.

IV. **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.

- ◆ We usually use this verse to teach on our need of wisdom and to point people to the source for the kind of wisdom we need. But, in the context of this writing by James there is another very important aspect. So let's think about it.
- ◆ James has just admonished readers to get a proper attitude and view about temptation, and to not bail out on the Lord when we decide that it doesn't fit with our idea of the proper timetable for things (i.e. let patience have her perfect work). Then, he comes up with this advice in **v. 5**. How does it fit?
  - As humans we are rash. As humans we are too often guilty of deciding in behalf of the Lord that it's time for something to be over with or something to have come to fruition, or something to have changed. Deciding that, we may take things into our own hands and implement our own strategy. This is foolishness and it insults God. So, James has this advice (allow me to paraphrase), "Do you bail out on the Lord? Do you set up your own plan, decide on your own solutions, launch your own program to get the kind of results that you imagine are the right ones? You lack wisdom. You need wisdom. Ask God for that wisdom. He will not turn you down."

V. **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.

- ◆ We now come to the part that may be the most trying of all; to ask for the wisdom of the Lord without getting cold feet. To ask without thinking in the back of our minds that we may not really want the wisdom of God placed in our laps because it will probably demand some really big changes in the way we do things or the way we think...that's wavering
- ◆ Notice the warning he gives about this wavering – as soon as we begin to get shaky about our trust and willingness to receive and follow the Lord's wisdom, we will begin to be knocked about by doubt, uncertainty, confusion ("he that wavereth is like," etc.).

VI. **James 1:7** For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

- ◆ With self-reliance and independence in spiritual things comes a kind of presumption by people that they can just make demands on the Lord and order him around. But they are wrong.
- ◆ Let's remember that James is writing about receiving spiritual blessings here..."not receive anything of the Lord" does not mean that the Lord won't rebuke or give a cold shoulder to someone who has launched on a trip of wavering. And verse 8 tells us why the Lord will not bless people in such circumstances:

VII. **James 1:8** A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

- ◆ When people seem to depend on the Lord when things are going their way, but launch their own solutions when He doesn't meet their expectations, they will drift into unstable behavior in everything they do.
- ◆ This is because double-mindedness is a condition where people are victims of a whim and dupes to their own ideas about what is the right way.
- ◆ Or they are dupes to every trickery of the devil to lead them into a path of uselessness and conflict, often opposing themselves in the bargain.