

JAMES, RIGHTLY DIVIDED & VERSE-BY-VERSE

SESSION 2 | JAMES 1:3-11

JAMES 1:2-4 | PATIENCE THROUGH TRIAL

Verse 2 – see session 1

VERSE 3 –

The word **trying** is a different word than **temptations** (v. 1). It is not **diverse temptations** (v. 1) that **worketh patience**, but the **trying of your faith**. The **trying** is the *proving of your faith*. As the Jewish faith is *proven*, then **patience** (endurance) is finished.

When these words are rushed over, it appears to be something that would be compatible to our dispensation, for surely trials produce patience and endurance. But when the words and grammar are considered closely, the test of faith is *needed* because **patience** (which is endurance) is necessary to the proving of righteousness.

VERSE 4 –

The *proving* of the faith results in *endurance*, and this in turn will have its **perfect work**, so that **ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing**. Notice that it would be disastrous to apply this to our Christian lives today. To do so we would have to make this passage say something other than what it says. But when we apply this passage to the Jewish faith, it fits 'like hand in glove.' The Jew who who will **endure unto the end, the same shall be saved** (Matt. 24:13).

In the Christian life under the Pauline dispensation, how does endurance of **divers temptations** (v. 2) lead us to being **perfect and entire, wanting nothing**? What is taught here is a *works-based perfection*. What is taught by Paul is a *grace-based perfection*. In fact, *works-based perfection* is found throughout the Hebraic epistles and *grace-based perfection* is found throughout the Pauline epistles. On *works*, consider Matthew 5:48, 1 John 2:5, James 2:22, etc. On *grace*, consider passages such as Colossians 2:10, Philippians 3:15, etc.

JAMES 1:5-8 | THE CONTINGENCIES OF KINGDOM PRAYER

VERSE 5 –

This verse is most often quoted without its full context, and thus the *contingency* is ignored.

The promise is that God would give **wisdom** to any who lacks and asks. God would do this **liberally, and upbraideth not** (that is, He would not mock the one who asks).

Prayer promises for Israel were vast in the New Testament, but always came with "fine print." Like in the context of James 1:5-8, Matthew 21:21-22 give the requirement of asking in belief without doubt.

VERSE 6 –

The contingency for this prayer promise is to **ask in faith, nothing wavering**. This is reminiscent of Mark 11:24.

We are saved **by grace** and **through faith** (Eph. 2:8). Fortunately, we are not saved by *asking in faith*, because we are people of wavering faith. If our salvation was dependent upon what we **ask in faith**, we simply could not be saved. Furthermore, we are *saved* once and for all time, so the future wavering of our faith does not affect our salvation status.

VERSE 7 –

This warning is stern and clear. **He that wavereth** (v. 6) should not **think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord**. James will give a similar warning in James 4:3.

VERSE 8 –

James concludes this instruction with a warning about a **double minded man**. He uses the word διψυχος [dipsychos]. This verse is without a verb and thus cannot stand on its own. It is best viewed as part of verse 7, completing the description of **that man**.

A note on verses 5-8: Since almost all evangelical preachers and commentaries ignore verse 1 and apply verses 2 and onward to the church, they invariably put the body of Christ on a guilt trip for having such wavering faith. While none of us want to have a wavering faith, we can rejoice that God is not measuring out blessings to us by the measure of our faith. We must understand this in its original context, as written to Jews who were being offered the kingdom under its kingdom regulations and requirements, which were all stated in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the words of Jesus. For the body of Christ, we were given an amazing *grace* offer beginning with the mystery revealed unto Paul. Let us not mix the kingdom offer to Israel with the grace offer to all.

JAMES 1:9-12 | THE LOW AND THE RICH IN THE KINGDOM OFFER

VERSE 9 –

This instruction seems to echo the words of Mary to Gabriel after the announcement of the Messiah's pending arrival, and her words are an echo of prophetic passages about the Kingdom. For example, Mary rejoiced that God **hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden** (Lk. 1:48). A few sentences later she rejoices with the words of Ezekiel, saying, **He hath put down the mighty from their seats, And exalted them of low degree** (Lk. 1:52).

VERSE 10 –

The rich man is to **rejoice** (the verb is borrowed from v. 10) **in that he is made low**. This would continue to echo Mary's words (themselves echoing Ezekiel's), in that Mary says, **He hath put down the mighty** (Lk. 1:52) and **the rich he hath sent empty away** (Lk. 1:53). The rich man is to rejoice in this because **a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven** (Mt. 19:23), and by being **made low** God is granting him grace, before **as the flower of the grass he shall pass away**.

VERSE 11 –

James gives an illustration from nature (adapting Is. 40:7) to show how **the rich man will fade away in his ways**.

A note on verses 9-11: Due to the attempt to make these verses apply to the body of Christ, the application toward humility is given, minimizing the meaning of the word **rich**. However, the word **rich** and, even more so, the phrase **rich man** is never used to describe *pride*. Further, James will often speak against the rich in this epistle. The body of Christ must either take his warnings literally, and thus renounce riches, or it must take verse 1 literally and recognize James as a *kingdom* book. Later, James will say that **God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised...** (James 2:5). As for me, I will take verse 1 literally and use that as the interpretive key to the book. Israel was to sell everything to follow her King, who would repay everything. Compare Matthew 13:44, 46, Matthew 19:23-24, 29, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32, etc. There is no such instruction for the body of Christ, nor should such instruction be creatively wrangled from this verse to the twelve tribes.

