

James 26-08-19a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 16th of August, 2026. We resume our study in the book of James, or more properly, Jacob.

I believe it was written by the older son of Zebedee, James and John, as they are named in our scriptures. I really wish they'd stuck with his name, Jacob. It is fraught with allusion and with meaning, but we will pick up our study this morning at verse 22 and move forward toward chapter two.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, we are so privileged to be held in your hands, to be supplied by your grace, to have our needs anticipated, our blessings orchestrated, our challenges carefully calibrated, to maximize our opportunities to develop our faith, to lay hold of righteousness through faith, to walk in the footsteps that the Lord Jesus Christ has left us as an example. We thank you for him.

We thank you for his incredible, unimaginably great work on our behalf on the cross to deliver us from sin, to liberate us from the power of the forces of darkness, both within and outside ourselves, to enter us into a new and living way, to give us the privilege of addressing you as we do this morning, to thank you, to praise you, and to ask your blessing on us as we look at your word together. We pray that the study this morning will be useful, that the Holy Spirit can minister it to each of our hearts, that we will grow in grace and knowledge of our Savior as a result, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Looking at our passage, let's begin at the and ensure that we have the context in mind. James chapter 1. Jacob, or James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. And you will remember, James is the first of the disciples to be martyred in the early days of the church age, and Paul has not come on the scene yet.

The expansion of the gospel ministry to the Gentiles has not yet been revealed, and the charge that the Lord Jesus gave his disciples in Acts chapter 1 was, as you go, make disciples, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, until the end of the age. So, James here is addressing the twelve tribes. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

James, in this first chapter, addresses three different conditions. One is challenge, which is a test of faith. The second one is going to be challenge, which is a product of our fallen nature.

And the third is going to be the challenge of hearing and heeding the word. Watch for the transition between these in this first chapter. The first is, I know you are facing trials.

You have a choice of your attitude as these trials occur. There is hardship. There is danger.

There is deprivation. There can be pain. There can be suffering.

There can be interpersonal relationship stresses and strains. These things are opportunities to deploy our faith, to review the promises, to think of the character of God and His love for us and His provision for us, and to exploit it, to mine it like treasure, to look for ways to express our identity in Christ under pressure in times of testing. That is the first subject that James introduces.

The second is going to be a different kind of testing, a different kind of challenge. And this will be from a darker source. And it does not come from God.

It is something that we have to remedy by His grace. But it is not designed to enhance our faith. It is designed to pull us away and neutralize us.

That will be second. And then the third, as you will remember, hearing the word and doing it. We will see that in verse 22 and following.

But here, this is the challenge for faith. My brothers, count it all joy. Account it.

You remember this verb, account it. You have to reckon it. You decide what your response is going to be looking at this time of challenge, of trial.

How do you choose to view it? Account it an occasion for joy. Why? Because there's something you know. We resort to what we know.

And knowledge is a theme that is going to recur in all three of these scenarios that James addresses here in the first chapter. What do you know? What we know and what we do with what we know determines our success or failure in each of these areas. So, count it all joy.

I don't want to be joyful. I don't feel joyful. I feel challenged.

I would like to go a different direction. I don't want to undergo this. You think of the Lord Jesus in the garden.

If it be thy will, let this cup pass from me. And you don't think of Jesus at Gethsemane counting it all joy. However, what does scripture tell us? Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

The Lord did account it joy. He may not have looked joyful, but he looked ahead to the joy. Our recent study in Revelation, especially the last two chapters, is a reminder of the joy that is set before us.

The objective, the goal toward which we are working, and the eternal state where we have the opportunity to dwell, be in the presence of God, and useful and functional in his service. We have to account. We have to look at what we know and apply what we know so that we are not

discouraged.

Knowing the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives. If you haven't already done so, you might underline or circle that word gives.

God gives. This concept is going to recur a bit later. Lacking wisdom, ask of God.

He gives to all, liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. He gives and it is given. There is an act of giving and there is a gift.

God gives and it's modified by adverbial concepts, you know, modifiers that change the way a verb is understood. How does God give? What is the nature of his act of giving? He gives freely, liberally, generously, and without rebuke, without reproach. That is the nature of his giving.

Put a little note out there, at least mentally, James 1 talks about God's way of giving, the verbal action of giving, and wisdom is the gift. This is the content of what is given. But let him ask in faith, verse 6, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Notice he doesn't say the one who fails to ask. This is someone who asks but then doesn't rely on God's grace and God's hearing and responding with divine wisdom and divine knowledge, divine purpose. So you're asking but then you fall away from faith that God will do what is best and respond in accordance with his promises.

So this isn't stuck on negative, this is positive, negative, positive, negative. I ask but I don't believe. Well, I'll ask again but I'm not confident.

This is why James says such a person is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. James was a fisherman, as was his brother John and his associates Peter and Andrew. They spent a lot of time by the Sea of Galilee and they watched the waves crash against the shore.

They seemed to retreat and then they come back again. They come and they go. There's a cycle there and this is not the way we should be, driven and tossed by the wind.

You think of the storms on the sea. You wonder if James is thinking back to that tremendous storm that Jesus stilled with a word. The word from the Lord Jesus stilled the storm and there was no longer the turbulence and the danger and the concern.

Lord save us, we perish. Don't be like a wave tossed in the sea or like a disciple in a boat tossed on the sea. Have confidence.

Let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord. Notice you can ask and not receive for a number of reasons. There's another passage that says the Lord Jesus says you ask

and you do not receive because you ask amiss.

You ask for the wrong things because you're trying to get God to fulfill your desires. You ask amiss that you may consume it upon your lusts. Epithumia, a word that is going to occur in this chapter.

A few verses hence. Prayer is such a privilege but there is a right way to do it, one right way and there are a number of wrong ways. One is to pray for the wrong thing, to pray the will of ourselves instead of the will of God.

The Lord Jesus gave us an example both in the example prayer, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, and in the garden. If thou wilt let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but thine be done. From beginning to end Jesus prayed in accordance with the will of the Father.

That is the only way prayer succeeds. So we have to ask in faith and have confidence that our Heavenly Father loves us, listens to us, and will answer in a way that is our benefit and His glory. Have confidence.

We don't have to pester Him. We don't have to repeat our prayers like a mantra. If you have faith you can ask God for something once and let it rest.

If that subject comes back to mind, well I've laid that before the Father. I have cast my cares upon Him because I know He cares for me. A good parent has a child come to them and say, I'm hungry, I'm thirsty, I skin my knee.

A good and loving parent doesn't have to be pestered by the child. The child can say it once. That parent is going to address the need in accordance with mature wisdom.

It's not always time to feed a child. It's not always time to love and try to be buddies with a child. The parent knows what is best in a given situation, interacting with that child.

And it is the same with God. So let not that man who doubts suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. We ask in faith supposing that we will receive from the Lord, right? But the method, if we are wishy-washy, if we are back and forth, if we don't have confidence that God knows what He's doing, that He hears and answers, then you shouldn't suppose that you're going to receive anything from the Lord.

You've disqualified. It is a conditional promise. He's double-minded, unstable in all His ways.

Notice prayer life is a reflection of all of our ways. If we are steady, if we're consistent, if we are faithful and obedient, it will reflect in our prayer life. What we communicate in our conversations with the Father reflects who we are.

This is true in the human realm. We know a lot about people by conversing with them. And we

could quickly find out if they're scatterbrained, if they're steady, if they're focused, if they're distractible, if they're emotional, if they don't use what they know and think and act accordingly.

We find this out in conversation. Verse 9, let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. God has made us a little lower than the angels, but He is going to promote us.

And we see our representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, seated at the Father's right hand. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you. When? In due time.

The lowly brother exalts in future exaltation. We rejoice in what God is going to do. Our faith makes that promise real.

What a wonderful expectation if we are endeavoring and working to be overcomers, exercising our faith, listening to the words of the book. And expecting the promised blessing. That exaltation is something we can rejoice in now.

Count our trials, our humbling, lowly, sometimes experience of suffering. How can we count it all joy? Look at this verse, glory in the coming exaltation. The last shall be first, the first shall be last.

God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, your patience of hope, your labor of love. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. Instead of saying, I'm not going to get depressed, I'm not going to let this get me down looking at a trial, we turn our attention elsewhere.

Instead of internal, subjective thinking, we focus on external, outward looking, future looking thinking, based on the word of God. How real is our hope? How confident are we of the fulfillment of God's promises to those who hear and heed? Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation. Because as a flower of the field, he will pass away.

The rich should remember that what they have is a stewardship, and that stewardship can and often does pass away. If nothing else, at the end of life, whatever you've accumulated stays in the bank when you leave. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes.

So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. Materialism in general, and material acquisition in particular, is doomed to loss at the end. Solomon spends time talking about this back in Kohelet.

Ecclesiastes 12. This is where we're running up now to our context for this morning. Blessed is the man who endures testing temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.

James is here giving an example of glorying in future exaltation. And counting it all joy, falling into trial or temptation. We think, I am going to do this in a way that is approved.

As Paul says, I will be diligent, I will study to show myself approved unto God. And we know what it takes to be approved by God. We know what God is looking for.

When he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. This is a reality. The promise of God is real to us, to those who love him.

And notice, the endurance is an expression of love. Look at this synonym here. Enduring temptation is motivated by love for God.

Not by an outright expectation of reward alone. The reward is an expression of God's love. We love God, we love because he first loved us.

But it is not a matter of what is my coping mechanism, what philosophy, what thought process can I use to get through this difficulty. The motivation is love for God. It is synonymous here.

The one who endures temptation is the one who loves God. And you can't help but think back to John 14, 21 through 24. John 14, 21 through 24, I've quoted it innumerable times.

It is a central passage in our thinking. The Lord Jesus says, talking about the word, and this is the subject of James 1 in many ways, he who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

The quality of that promise depends on how much you love the Lord Jesus. Do you love the Lord Jesus so that if he reveals himself and makes an appearance, manifests himself, this is a blessing, this is a good thing? This is better than anything else we can think of? Well, for that to happen, we have to have his commandments and keep them. Saw this in the Revelation, beginning and end.

Blessed is the one who has the words of this book and keeps them, hears the words, absorbs the words, and lives in the light of those words. The one who has my commandments and keeps them, that is the one who loves me. Blessed is the one who endures temptation.

When he is approved, he will receive the crown of life. That's what God gives to those who love him. All of these concepts are combined.

Look how the Lord Jesus continues. Judas says, Lord, how will you manifest yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My father will love him.

We will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word which you hear is not mine, but the father's who sent me.

We've seen this in our recent studies, haven't we? So, how important is the word to

accomplishing what James is describing here in chapter one? So, James continues. No sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat, verse 11, than it withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

This is the apparent glory that is above the surface. The grass withers, the flower fades, Isaiah says. What is it that endures? The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will abide forever.

Isaiah 40, verse 8. Verse 12, blessed is the man who endures testing, temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. Now we're in that second area of challenge.

The first was testing, that gives us the opportunity to express and develop our faith. This now is challenge that wants to draw us away from faith, wants to take us out of walking in the light, wants to divert and deflect us, neutralize us, rob us of that confident expectation of approval. Where does this come from? Where does this darkness come from? God doesn't tempt anyone by evil, nor does he himself tempt.

He is not tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. Each one, verse 14, is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. This is a very interesting word in Greek that means to be dragged, to be, and it's preceded by ek.

Ek means out or out from. You're trying to dwell in the house of the Lord and you're dragged out. It's like the bouncer in the reverse sense.

If you malfunction inside a venue, there is a bouncer that will come and drag you out and kick you out of the venue. Well, our own desires try to drag us out of God's house, out of the place where the Father and the Son and the Spirit dwell with us. So, dragged out by his own desires and enticed.

This is to be allured, to be enticed, to be entrapped, or to be deluded. This word that says enticed has the intrinsic element of deception. You're fooled.

It goes back to those 10 chapters in Proverbs that we studied where the crafty harlot is seductive and enticing and alluring and makes false promises. The ends thereof are the ways of death. It goes back to the very first sin where there was a promise of what would happen when the fruit was plucked and eaten.

It was a lie from the father of lies, who has been a liar from the will justify, will vindicate, will tell us that this is the best way and it's not. We have seen in previous studies the role of our conscience. If our conscience is not imbued with God's word and the power of God's Holy Spirit, it is untrustworthy.

Our conscience will accuse or excuse us on the basis of subjectivity. How right we feel is no measure of how right we are. Look at the debates, the fierce, acrimonious opposition between those who adopt one political position or the other, one social position or another.

There is bitterness. There is hostility to the point of people wishing harm on those who disagree with them. This is upcoming in our context as well.

You're so opposed to the views, the opinions, the positions that someone else holds that you wish them ill, you wish them physical harm. It may not actually be carried out. There are a few people that actually try to carry it out, but there are many more who approve.

You look at an individual in the news that shot down an insurance executive in cold blood, tracked him down for no good reason, shot him in the back, orphaned his children, widowed his wife, and he's got a fan club. People donated a million and a half dollars to his defense. At the judgment, those people will be guilty of murder just as much as the guy who actually pulled the trigger, who, by the way, just confessed openly to it this past week, admitted it, talked about how he planned it.

There is no excuse, but murders can happen in the heart. It is this acrimonious opposition that is so certain of being right, and it isn't. Think about how right you feel about certain things.

Somebody else feels just as certain that they are right and they are exactly opposite. You can't trust that feeling. We need an external reference.

We need something objective, something eternal, something unchanging, something that casts light with no shadow, which we're about to see. Because when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. That's verse 15.

Verse 16, do not be deceived. Do not be deceived. You can skip down to our future context here, verse 22, being a doer of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

This idea of being deceived, of being deluded, of being seduced and enticed with an element of deception, permeates the negative side of things. It's not true and it's not truth. So, dragged out by our desires and deceived, enticed.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren, every good gift and every perfect gift. Remember back in verse 5, I said, notice that there are two concepts. One is the act of giving by God and the other is the nature of the gift.

The way God gives is generously, liberally, and without reproach. The gift that he gives is wisdom, the truth of his word. Two different things.

Now look at verse 17. When it says every good gift, that's not what it says in Greek. It says every good act of giving.

It's a verbal idea. It's not a noun. Every good giving would be an accurate but awkward translation.

Every good giving act and every perfect gift. Perfect here is from *telaiois*, which means to have come to an end, to have completed a process, to be mature. And every good giving and every complete fulsome gift is from above, comes down from the father of lights.

What does he mean by the father of lights? What is the father of lights? This goes all the way back to the Genesis account where God created the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. And he gave them for signs and seasons, for days and years, to know where you are in geography, to know where you are in time. That is what light does.

It helps us see what is real, what is true. And this giving of wisdom, the good and perfect gift, goes back to verse 5. It is the wisdom that God gives. His act of giving and the nature of the it is exactly what we need.

It is full. It is perfect for our situation. With whom there is no shadow of turning.

The illumination is such that there is no evil involved. There is no lack of understanding of what we need to know. It is unchanging.

It is not like the fickleness of our heart. What did he talk about earlier? The wind that blows someone, unstable individual, double-minded, like a wave of the sea. What is the contrast? God never changes.

It is fixed. It is immovable. It is perfect.

And it is reliable. It is a foundation on solid ground, on the solid rock, not the waves of the sea blown by the wind. Of his own will, he brought us forth.

There are so many interconnections. I would love to make a diagram of this and show the interconnections, which I actually have done. If you can see this, it is full of circles and lines because the vocabulary that is used here is so interwoven.

But just as an example, notice brought us forth by the word of truth. Look at verse 15. Our desire conceives iniquity and brings forth sin.

Our nature leads us astray and drags us out of the place of blessing. God's will, His own will, births us through the word of truth, not deception, not fallenness, not what fades and what vanishes. The sun rising with a burning heat in verse 11, withering the grass, the flower falling, its beautiful appearance perishing.

God's light never changes and never fades. And He brings us forth by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creation, of His creatures. What a wonderful privilege.

Well, He turns the corner here in verse 19. So then my beloved brethren, actually the better text here in verse 19 is an imperative. And it says, it's the difference between iste and hoste, his day or hoste, which is it? Hoste is so then, which you have in your text, his day is in the better text and says, it's an imperative from the word to know.

Know this, it's a command. Know this, my beloved brethren and let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. The word swift there is one we have seen recently, takus, T-A-C-H-U-S, takus, behold, I come, takus, quickly, swiftly.

It's not a long drawn out process. Be quick to hear, to hear what? Oh, I should sit and be a listener and let people ramble on with subjectivity and rambling discourse and self-involvement and navel gazing and so on. What is it that we should be swift to hear? What is the context? The wisdom of God, the word of truth, the light that God shines on our path.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Thy word, if I hid in my heart, I might not sin against thee. It is the word we should be quick to hear and slow.

This is bradus. You get Brady from this. Bradycardia is slow heartbeat.

You have tachycardia, that's takus. You have bradycardia, that's bradus. Is your heart racing or is it slowing down to a stop? Takus, tachy, or bradus, brady, slow to speak.

He's going to go on to talk about disciplining the tongue, being slow to speak and slow to anger. Well, this is a good place to pause and take our break because this now is the turning point from the background that James has laid in the first 18 verses, which we've now reviewed and got loaded up in our background, our context. So what is he going to do with these concepts, this foundation that he has laid? We'll see that when we come back from the break.