



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Kerang

FAITH AND DEEDS

A BIBLE STUDY FROM JAMES

TRIALS AND THEIR PURPOSE

READ JAMES 1:2-18

Overview

It sometimes helps to have an overview of the contents of a book or a letter. It helps us to see the context and to read the lines within the context. Remember: *text without context becomes pretext.*

We have already determined who the author is:

- the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ
- a very prominent pastor in the Church of Jerusalem, consisting of thousands of members

We have already determined who the recipients of this letter were:

- members of his church who were scattered all over the world where they faced all sorts of trials and tribulations after the stoning of Stephen
- those who were from Jewish background who become Christians, now living amongst a very hostile world
- those who found it difficult to mix with “gentile” Christians, who had no knowledge of the ceremonial practices of Jews

The first major section in the first chapter of James 1 – the section of verses 2-18 – seems as if can be divided in two headings, which can be further sub-divided into smaller sections:

1. The testing of our faith (verses 2-12)
 - a. What testing produces – maturity and joy (verses 2-4)
 - b. How to be victorious in times of testing – faithful prayer (verses 5-8)
 - c. Testing and material things – rich in God (verses 9-11)
 - d. The outcome of victorious testing – the crown of life (verse 12)
2. Where the testing comes from (verses 13-18)
 - a. The devil – evil desires which lead to death (verses 13-15)
 - b. God – He gave us eternal life (verse 16-18)

Study

READ JAMES 1:2

The word “consider” or “count” in this verse is to hold a view or have an opinion with regard to something. The word is also used for people who lead others. One might say that our mental attitude and understanding lead every part of our body to follow it.

READ ROMANS 12:2 What is the “pattern” of this world?

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From the same verse: Why does the apostle stress the “renewal of the mind”?

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READ PHIL 3:7-8. (The same word used in James 1:2 is used here twice.)

What is the mind of Paul in relation to Christ and how did it change the way he lived and ministered?

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READ JAMES 1:2. The NIV translates “*pure*” joy, while others translate “all” joy.

(We also have an expression to help us understand this: “He was all ears when he listened ...”)

The “trials” of this verse is in essence the same word used in verse 12 and 13. It may be translated as “trials” and “temptations”. Some saw the use in the first instance as external trials (external hardships), while the other was understood to have moral (inward) implications. The context does not allow for two different meanings of the same word.

READ MATTHEW 4:1-3. Who was Jesus “tempted” or “tested” by?

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According to this verse, did the trial of Jesus consist of external hardships or was it aimed at moral implications (sin)? Can we make a distinction?

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The testing, trials and temptations the Christ is exposed to are not something he should be looking for. But the reality is that the enemy of the Kingdom of God always attempts to distract the Christian and to trap him into disobedience of God.

READ MATTHEW 6:13. What is the essence of this petition in the Lord’s Prayer?

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The paragraph below is a lengthy quote from the Larger Catechism. You might decide to read it later, but please study it!

What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

“... acknowledging, that the most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just ends, may so order things, that we may be assaulted, foiled, and for a time led captive by temptations; (2 Chron. 32:31) that Satan, (1 Chron. 21:1) the world, (Luke 21:34, Mark 4:19) and the flesh, are ready powerfully to draw us aside, and ensnare us; (James 1:14) and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, (Gal. 5:17) weakness, and want of watchfulness, (Matt. 26:41) are not only subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations, (Matt. 26:69–72, Gal. 2:11–14, 2 Chron. 18:3, 2 Chron. 19:2) but also of ourselves unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them; (Rom. 7:23–24, 1 Chron. 21:1–4, 2 Chron. 16:7–10) and worthy to be left under the power of them: (Ps. 81:11–12) we pray, that God would so over-rule the world and all in it, (John 17:15) subdue the flesh, (Ps. 51:10, Ps. 119:133) and restrain Satan, (2 Cor. 12:7–8) order all things, (1 Cor. 10:12–13) bestow and bless all means of grace, (Heb. 13:20–21) and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all his

people may by his providence be kept from being tempted to sin; (Matt. 26:41, Ps. 19:13) or, if tempted, the hour of temptation; (Eph. 3:14–17, 1 Thess. 3:13, Jude 24) or when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, (Ps. 51:12) and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof: (1 Pet. 5:8–10) that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, (2 Cor. 13:7,9) Satan trodden under our feet, (Rom. 16:20, Zech. 3:2, Luke 22:31–32) and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil, for ever. (John 17:15, 1 Thess. 5:23)

The quote above makes mention of the fact that “most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just ends” might test us.

READ GENESIS 22:1-2, 12. How did God test Abraham and what was the outcome?

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READ 1PETER 1:3-7. According to verses 6-7 what is the purpose and outcome of “all kinds of trails”?

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READ DEUTERONOMY 8:2-5. The Lord disciplined (tested) his people in the desert. Why?

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According to these verses, what was this discipline a sign of? (Also READ HEBREWS 7:11.)

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READ MATTHEW 5:11-12, and also JOHN 15:20-21 and JOHN 16:33. Why are trials and temptations part of the normal Christian life?

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With the above text in mind, READ 1PETER 4:12-19. What should the Christian do in times of persecution and trial (verse 13)?

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According to Peter what should the attitude of the Christian be when sufferings and trials come his way? (verses 14, 16)

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READ 1CORINTHIANS 10:13. What is the promise in the verse? (see also 2Peter 2:9)

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Read James 1:3-4. What is the outcome of trials in the life of a Christian?

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To be mature (perfect) is used to describe “grown-up” Christians. The “complete” and “lacking in nothing” describes the process of refinement through trials as a process of sanctification.

When James then wrote to the members of his congregation who were scattered among the nations (James 1:1) he wanted them to know that they are there with a purpose: God is control and He wanted to use them to his glory. James wanted them to know that God is with them to protect and keep them in the hollow of his hand.

For this reason they must “get their heads around” the fact that trials are a source of joy!