

James 1:1-8

Commentary: Consider It All Joy (James 1:1-4)

James addresses his letter to “twelve tribes of Israel” (v1). James’ audience refers to the Jewish Christians who were dispersed throughout the regions of Mesopotamia and Mediterranean as far back as the eighth century BC as a result of conquest (Assyria 722BC) exile (Babylon 605-586BC) and those more recently scattered due to the intense persecution of Christians living in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1).

Many of these dispersed Jews had come to faith in Jesus as their promised Messiah and were now facing severe trials from unbelieving Jews as a direct consequence of placing their faith in Him. James uses his opening statement to these persecuted Jewish Christians to point out the value of trials in order to: encourage his readers to adopt a positive attitude toward these experiences, to endure them, and to view them as God's tool for refinement. God uses trials to shape believers into people who will glorify Him. Christians today who take a stand for the Lord continue to have to deal with such trials, therefore, James' inspired words are just as relevant to believers today as they were to his original audience 2000 years ago.

Instructions:

Carefully read through James 1:1-8 and then attempt to answer the questions which follow.

James, the author of this letter, had impeccable credentials. Not only was he the respected leader of the first century church in Jerusalem, but he was also intimately close with Jesus.

- 1) How does he choose to identify himself to his readers (v1)?

- 2) What is James communicating to his readers by identifying himself in this way?

- 3) Identify which word in v2 indicates the inevitability of suffering for believers.

- 4) What advice does James give to his Jewish brethren facing extreme trials and persecution (v2)?

The Greek word translated as ‘perfect’ (v4) does not refer to sinlessness but rather, to a “perfect result” - which in this case refers to spiritual maturity.

- 5) What is James saying about the purpose of trials?

Commentary: Wisdom – The Help Needed to Grow in Spiritual Maturity (James 1:5-8)

James recognises that none of his readers will have achieved a state of spiritual maturity in which they are 'lacking nothing' (v4). James points out that wisdom is necessary to deal with various trials appropriately. It is often a lack of wisdom that exposes our own deficiencies amidst trials.

6) What does James highlight as the first step to gaining wisdom (v5)?

7) What promise is given to those who desire to receive such thing from God (v5)?

The word that James uses for 'wisdom' (v5) refers to an understanding of God's ways, while the word he uses for 'faith' (v6) refers to a commitment to act on those ways.

8) What happens when a person hesitates or 'doubts' in making that commitment (v6-7)?

9) What characteristics make up the man or woman who are not fully committed to act on God's ways (v6-8)?

Summary:

God will help us take His view of trials (v3-4), if we petition Him in prayer. We can 'consider it all joy' (v2) while experiencing trials because we know that, if we remain faithful to God, He will use these trials to produce what is glorifying to Him and what is good for us, namely, our spiritual maturity.