

The General Epistle of James

The Call to Endurance

James 1:1-27

I. THE AUTHOR'S GREETING (James 1:1)

A. The Author's Introduction

1. By name—"James"
2. By position—"a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (see Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1); Note: The opening statements serve a purpose greater than a mere introduction.
 - a. Consider Paul's introduction in Galatians 1:1.
 - b. Consider Paul's introduction in Philemon 1:1.
 - c. Consider the Lord's introductions to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; Revelation 3:1, 7, 14).
 - d. Obviously, James wanted to present himself, not necessarily as an authority figure, but as a fellow servant of God. Throughout this epistle one can readily recognize this tone is set forth.

B. The Author's Intended Audience

1. By name—"to the twelve tribes"
 - a. This phrase appears only ten times in scripture, five of which appear in the New Testament.
 - b. Every time, it references the nation of Israel. This is important to note that it was not necessarily addressed to believers only.
2. By circumstances—"which are scattered abroad"
 - a. The nature of the phrase
 - (1) This phrase is found thirteen times in two forms: "scattered abroad" or "scattereth abroad."
 - (2) The majority of references plainly depicts a people scattered because of judgment or persecution (Exodus 5:12; Esther 3:8; Isaiah 24:1; Matthew 9:36; Acts 8:1, 4; Acts 11:19).
 - b. The likely time of this specific scattering
 - (1) Some might argue that this scattering refers to the promise given of the Saviour regarding the scattering of the sheep (Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27-28; John 16:32). Perhaps they would suggest this because of the Jews who came to Pentecost from various nations (Acts 2:5-11).
 - (2) It seems more likely this references the same event which is referenced every other time this phrase is found since the inception of the church: a scattering that came due to persecution (Acts 8:1, 4; Acts 11:19).

C. The Author's Simplistic Greeting

1. As here contained—"greeting"
2. As compared to others
 - a. Paul's (Romans 1:7; Galatians 1:3; Colossians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2)
 - b. Peter's (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2)
 - c. John's (2 John 1:3)
 - d. Jude's (Jude 1:2)

II. THE PATH AND PURPOSE OF PATIENCE (James 1:2-4)

A. The Path to Patience (James 1:2-3)

1. The joy of temptations (James 1:2)
 - a. The extent of the joy—"count it **all** joy."
 - b. The source of the joy—"when ye fall into divers temptations"
 - (1) Temptations can be defined in various ways, but specifically in this passage, they involve "the trying of your faith" (James 1:3).
 - (2) This passage does not suggest that we can have no tears or humility of mind in the midst of our temptations (Acts 20:19).
2. The cause of this joy—"Knowing this" (James 1:3)
 - a. The joy of temptations comes in knowing the outcome of temptations, results coming from temptations, and the future absence of temptations (1 Peter 1:6; see also 2 Corinthians 12:9).
 - b. In many ways, it pictures the character which was present in Christ involving the cross (Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 4:12-14).
3. The process of patience (James 1:3)
 - a. The word *patience* is historically connected to the word *passion* which is biblically defined as suffering (Acts 1:3). True to its association, the word *patience* means *to suffer or endure some time of trial*. No wonder doctors and hospitals refer to a person suffering from health issues as a *patient*.
 - (1) The Bible bears further testimony to these truths by associating patience with waiting (James 5:7) and enduring (2 Thessalonians 1:4; James 5:11).
 - (2) The Bible also combines *patience* with the word *longsuffering* (Colossians 1:11). These words may appear the same, but they are not. *Longsuffering* has to do with the *quantity* (or length of time) of endurance, while *patience* has to do with the *quality* of endurance.
 - b. The trying of your faith worketh patience (see Hebrews 10:36; Romans 12:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:4).
 - c. This matches the process set forth by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans (Romans 5:3-5; see also Romans 15:4).
 - (1) Tribulation(s) *worketh* patience (Romans 5:3).
 - (2) Patience *worketh* experience (Romans 5:4).
 - (3) Experience *worketh* hope (Romans 5:4).
 - (4) Hope *maketh not* ashamed (Romans 5:5).
 - (5) This sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

d. It should be noted that, at best, patience is a mid-level virtue in the Christian's life (2 Peter 1:5-7).

B. The Purpose of Patience (James 1:4)

1. Patience, here personified as a woman, has a work with an end goal.
2. She desires to make the believer "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
3. She desires to bring about in the believer all the wonderful virtues mentioned in Romans 5:3-5.
4. The problem comes when the believer does not "let patience have her perfect work."

III. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH IN PRAYER (James 1:5-8)

A. A Specific Request (James 1:5)

1. The need presented—"If any of you lack wisdom"
 - a. A foundational understanding of wisdom
 - (1) Basic admonitions concerning wisdom
 - a) Know wisdom (Proverbs 1:2).
 - b) Receive the instruction of wisdom (Proverbs 1:3).
 - c) Incline your ear unto wisdom (Proverbs 2:2).
 - d) Keep sound wisdom (Proverbs 3:21).
 - e) Get wisdom (Proverbs 4:5, 7).
 - f) Attend unto wisdom (Proverbs 5:1).
 - g) Understand wisdom (Proverbs 8:5).
 - (2) Basic people comparisons of wisdom
 - a) The simple man is not wise (Proverbs 8:5).
 - b) The fool is not wise (Proverbs 10:21).
 - c) The scorner is not wise (Proverbs 14:6).
 - (3) Basic word associations of wisdom
 - a) Wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:2, 7)
 - b) Wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 1:2; Proverbs 2:2, 6; Proverbs 3:13, 19)
 - c) Wisdom and knowledge (Proverbs 2:6)
 - d) Wisdom and discretion (Proverbs 3:21)
 - e) Wisdom and prudence (Proverbs 8:12)
 - b. A timely reminder
 - (1) At first glance, it would seem this statement is out of place.
 - a) The people were admonished to "count it all joy" when they fell "into divers temptations" (James 1:2).
 - b) The people were instructed that patience would be the outcome of the trying of their faith (James 1:3).
 - c) The people were told that patience would cause them to be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4).
 - d) Then, the attention turned to an admonition to ask God for wisdom.

- (2) However, the statement is fittingly placed.
 - a) One of the great hindrances to men allowing patience to have her perfect work would be a lack of wisdom.
 - b) Basically put, wisdom takes in the available knowledge and instruction and uses those resources to make right decisions (Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 10:5).
 - c) The greatest indication of wisdom is when a man yields to the will of the Lord for his life (Ephesians 5:15-17; Colossians 1:9-11).
 - d) Suffering is a gift from God and is part of His will for our lives (Philippians 1:29).
 - e) Regardless, it is a sound biblical principle that the man who gets wisdom does so to the good of his own soul (Proverbs 19:8).
- (3) In conclusion
 - a) Believers are admonished to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations (James 1:2).
 - b) Believers are to yield to the will of the Lord and allow the temptations to produce patience (also experience and hope—Romans 5:3-5) without hindering that process.
 - c) Any believer struggling to hear and heed these truths does so because he is either simple or a fool and lacks wisdom.
 - d) As such, he ought to seek God for the wisdom necessary to obey the admonition given here.

2. The source presented
 - a. By name—“let him ask of God”
 - b. By character
 - (1) He “giveth to all men liberally.”
 - a) Note: The word *liberal* means to do something in an unrestricted manner. The idea is that God often answers the requests of His saints without restraint. This is especially true when we pray according to His will (1 John 5:14-15).
 - b) The request for wisdom to accept, endure, or bear temptation is very much a request according to God’s will (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - (2) He “upbraideth not.” Note: The word *upbraid* means to scold, rebuke, or correct.
 3. The promise of help—“and it shall be given him.”

B. A General Principle (James 1:5-8)

1. The request requested—“If any of you lack _____” (James 1:5).
 - a. Note: Three key components are necessary for prayer to be accomplished in a scriptural manner.
 - (1) The Godhead’s role in prayer ought to be recognized.
 - (2) Man ought to pray for things in accordance to God’s will.
 - (3) Man must pray believing.