

Introduction

A. Right out of the gate James issues his first command **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials”** (1:2)

1. **“Consider”**: refers to regarding something or having an opinion
2. **“joy”**: refers to joy, gladness, or great happiness:
 - a. It’s common to hear there’s a difference between joy and happiness but that’s not supported in the Bible; the words are used interchangeably in the Bible
 - b. However, there is a difference between worldly joy and Biblical or Godly joy:
 - 1) Worldly joy is typically driven by our emotions and circumstances, and often even our sinful pursuits and pleasures—and it’s fickle and fleeting
 - 2) Biblical or Godly joy is driven by our relationship with God and what we know about Him—it’s more than just an emotion dictated by our situation or circumstance but rather something we set our minds too in spite of our circumstances
3. **“all”**: this modifies joy suggesting “true joy” or “true joy”

B. James provides a reason why we should determine to face our trials with joy and it has to do with the PURPOSE and RESULT of trials (1:3): **“knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance,”**

1. **“knowing”**: refers to experiential knowledge, and here it’s a participle, therefore, **“because you know...”**
2. The **PURPOSE** of trials: **“testing of your faith”**: the root of this word means to examine something for the purpose of determining whether it’s genuine:
 - a. Paul uses it this way in 2 Corinthians 13:5 when he says, **“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!”**

- b. However, it is also used to refer to trying or testing something for the purpose of purifying and refining it like gold and silver (LXX of Psalm 11:7 and Proverbs 27:21)
- c. That’s the way James is using it here, and the same with Peter in 1 Peter 1:6-7 (READ)

3. The **RESULT** of trials (1:3): James mentions two

- a. Trials produce **“endurance”**:
 - 1) Greek hupo (under) + meno (stand or remain)
 - 2) Refers to endurance or constancy
 - 3) Which each succeeding trial, we develop more and more endurance (much like an athlete; e.g. swimming or running long distance)
- b. Trials lead to spiritual maturity (1:4): **“and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”**:
 - 1) This is James’s second command and it’s that we are to **“let endurance have its perfect result”**: refers to having reached completion:
 - a) ESV: **“let steadfastness have its full effect”**
 - b) NIV: **“let perseverance finish its work”**
 - 2) The finished work or full effect of endurance is that we **“may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”**:
 - a) **“perfect and complete”** is a Greek hendiadys (two words joined to express a single concept or idea) expressing the idea of completeness and wholeness
 - b) As if that’s not clear enough, James adds the phrase **“lacking in nothing”**
 - c) It’s hard to miss the fact that James is talking about spiritual perfection here, but he’s not suggesting it’s something we can attain in this life; rather, trials are part of God’s plan to grow and mature our faith until that day when our faith is made perfect by Him

- d) Consider Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:11-13, and 1 Peter 5:10

C. James provides instructions on what to do when we don't know how to handle particular trials (5-11):

1. This is James' third command (5): **"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."**
 - a. **"wisdom"** is the practical application of knowledge; knowledge is what you know, wisdom is what you do with it
 - b. **"generously"**: simply, openly or frankly
 - c. **"without reproach"**: God gives wisdom without insult, rebuke, or speaking disparagingly of someone
2. There is a caveat, however, when asking God for wisdom (1:6a): **"But he must ask in faith without any doubting"**:
 - a. Could refer to doubting that God will provide wisdom, but more likely doubting the wisdom God gives
 - 1) The very first topic James starts with when he addresses specific concerns is accepting the Word of God and becoming a doer of it (1:19ff)
 - 2) This statement also parallels 4:1-4 where James chastises them for asking for God's provision but not receiving it because they ask with wrong motives
 - 3) When we ask God for wisdom, we should not only doubt that He will give it, but we should be ready to accept and apply it (e.g. not doubt it)
 - b. Next, James mentions the consequence of asking God for wisdom but doubting it (1:6b-8): continuing to live an unstable life (e.g. tossed here and there by trials):
 - 1) **"for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind."**
 - 2) **"for that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways"**:

- a) **"double-minded"**: having two minds; someone unable to make up their mind, constantly wavering
- b) **"unstable"**: restless, unsettled, unstable

3. Verses 9-11 appear to hint at the nature of the trials James readers were facing:
 - a. The letter suggests that the trials his readers were facing were in part due to conflict between the rich and the poor
 - b. James addresses that here with a charge to both:
 - 1) The **"brother of humble circumstances"** (poor) is to **"glory"** (boast) in his **"high position"** (likely a reference to his position in Christ)
 - 2) The **"rich man"** was to boast in his **"humiliation"** (or low estate)—as we'll see later in James 4, the rich were bragging about their wealth, but here James tells them to boast in their
 - 3) These two verses are an allusion to what James wrote in 2:1-8

4. James concludes with a note about the blessings of persevering under trials (James 1:12)

- a. James says that those who persevere under trials are blessed because **"once they have been approved"** (lit. **"tested"**), they will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised
- b. This phrase, **"crown of life"**, is only used one other place, Revelation 2:10 where it refers to eternal life:
 - 1) Paul refers to the **"crown of righteousness"**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all those who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8)
 - 2) Peter refers to **"the unfading crown of glory"** that we will receive when **"the Chief Shepherd appears"** (1 Peter 5:4)
 - 3) And, in Revelation 3:11, when Jesus was addressing the church in Philadelphia and praising them for their steadfastness and perseverance, He said, **"I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."**