

### PRACTICAL FAITH

A Letter from James



Trials and the Wisdom of God - James 1:1-8

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### INTRODUCTION

- James as an early “bridge” letter of early Christian teaching between the life of Jesus and latter letters
- The markedly undeveloped doctrine of Jesus Christ (named 2x) and Holy Spirit
  - Yet, most explicitly influenced by the teachings of Jesus (as recorded later in the Gospels)
    - A Jewish (OT and 2nd Temple) and Jesus theology as backdrop, but main characters are the outworking of a practical faith in the world
- Example of early and basic teachings through a combination of education, time, and personality

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### INTRODUCTION

- Topical, illustrative, practical, and pastoral with an emphasis on obedience
  - Higher percentage of imperatives than any other NT letter
- Luther’s “epistle of straw” comment (despite use)
  - Emphasis on justification by faith alone - conflict between James and Paul
    - Warning of the danger of theological presuppositions skewing perspective
- “General” (or universal) letter, not occasional to a particular church, but to a wider group of churches, yet under similar circumstances

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## GREETINGS (1)

*James*, a servant of God and Lord Jesus Christ,  
To the *twelve tribes* in the Dispersion:  
Greetings.

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## JOY IN LIFE'S TRIALS (2-4)

Count it all *joy*, my siblings,  
when you meet *trials/temptations* of various kinds,  
for you know that the *testing* of your faith (trusting reliance)  
produces *steadfastness*.  
And *let* steadfastness have its *full effect*,  
that you may be *perfect* and *complete*, lacking in nothing.

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## WISDOM IN LIFE'S TRIALS (5-8)

If any of you *lacks* wisdom, let him *ask* God,  
who gives generously to all without reproach,  
and it will be given him.  
But let him ask *in faith (trusting reliance)*, with no *doubting*,  
for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea  
that is driven and tossed by the wind.  
For that person must not suppose  
that he will receive anything from the Lord;  
he is a *double-minded* man, *unstable* in all his ways.

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A CASE STUDY IN WISDOM (9-11)

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation,  
and the rich in his humiliation,  
because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.  
For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass;  
its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.  
So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his  
pursuits.

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RESPONSE

- Trial/temptations are not to be rejoiced in themselves, but the **potential** they have, in response to a faithful and sovereign Lord, to produce in us **maturity and wholeness**
- **Trusting reliance** in God and His wisdom, gained by persevering prayer, is the necessary factor in the alchemic **transformation** of the iron of difficulty to the gold of Christ-likeness (IOW, it isn't automatic)
- The **application** of that wisdom to trial/temptations, whether our condition is "high" or "low" is the key to growing in the grace of Jesus Christ

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