

The Book of James

April 20, 2025

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled, "The Book of James." Thank you to Paul, Heather, Dave, Aisha, and Don for being part of the service. The scripture reading is James 1, 2-8. Happy birthday this week to Barb, Daniel, Kathy, and Rafael.

James 1:2-8

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Sermon

Good morning everyone. Thank you very much for being with us. Just to have a brief message I'd like to share with you today. And I'm going to be in the book of James. James is unique. James is one of the physical brothers of Jesus. And Jesus did have a variety of siblings, some six siblings. And James is very responsible in the beginning of the church. He's encouraging people to know who Jesus is. And he shares his message with the understanding that we're all here together as one. And he talks about these beautiful understandings with specific words that need to be spoken.

He begins by saying, "Trials and temptations." Two thousand years later, it's still the same, isn't it? "Trials and temptations." And so what James is trying to do is to try to bring Jew and Gentile together as one, which was unheard of back in that time. So when they gathered together at the Council of Jerusalem, James was one of those figureheads saying, "Let's put all our differences aside. Let's come together as one in Christ." And we have these things that we don't want, sins. But we have some things that we do want, forgiveness. Forgiveness.

So he begins with these words, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." And there's where I want to stop. "Consider it pure joy when you're in trouble." I think that's what he's saying. "Consider it pure joy when you're facing trials." And all of us have faced significant trials, wondering, "What are we going to do with this? How are we going to get through this?"

Prayer is so important as well. So he says this, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. And perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

If any of you lacks wisdom, here's what we ought to do. Ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault. One of the interesting points of being a Christian is, even though we have different points of view, even though we have different lifestyles, we can come together as one in Christ. And we can demonstrate that by godly behavior. We can demonstrate that by authentic love and joy and peace and patience and kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. And that's a lot of words. But we can embrace these so we can share it with others.

So I don't know how we could ever do this, somehow climb back into the first century, it would be a completely different lifestyle. We really wouldn't understand anything actually happening in that time of how do we live there.

But it says here in James, "Consider it pure joy, when trials come." How many of us have had to face trials? If you haven't, you are the most fortunate person. They will come.

So he says, "The brother or sister, in humble circumstances, ought to take pride in his high position, but the one who is rich should take pride in his low position." That seems opposite, but it's not. It's living a life of love for self and others. Now remember, this is one of the first New Testament books that's being written. And it's being passed out. And you try to put yourself in that position, not knowing that there's going to be other books written, but this is the book that's written and looking at it and saying, "What do we do with this?" "The brother or sister, in humble circumstances, ought to take pride in his high position, but the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, for the sun rises with scorching heat and withers, plants are destroyed," and so forth and so on. Just talking about life is what he's saying. But then he says, "Blessed is the person who perseveres under trial." How many of us have had trials wondering, "What in the world are we ever going to do with this? When will this end?"

Then he says, "Blessed is the person who perseveres under trial." Because he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. And then he says, "And when we're tempted," and we're all tempted, "when tempted, no one should say, 'Well, that's God doing that.'" No, no, no. God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone, but each is tempted when their own way, they've had that desire and they've been dragged away. Then after the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. So let's stop that. Let's just move forward. Let's be praying together. Let's be sharing together. "Don't be deceived," he says, my brothers. "Every good and perfect gift is from above." And I love this. "Coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows, he chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all creation." Amazing what God has given us. This wonderful love, this forgiveness of sins, this sharing with others, this understanding of a future that we have with our Father.

My dear brothers, take note of this. Be slow to be angry. For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all filth and evil that's so prevalent in that time. Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what the word says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a person who looks at his face in the mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. I'm not sure he's talking about physical but maybe spiritual.

The person who looks intently into the perfect law, the law of love, gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard but by doing it he will be blessed in what he does. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this. Look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. In other words, just share with people, help people, be there for people.

And then because of this, at the Council of Jerusalem, some very, very intelligent people gathering together and some people were saying, "Well, I'm going to follow Peter. Well, I'm going to follow John." Or, "I'm going to follow someone else." James comes along and says, "No. Favoritism is forbidden." My brothers, as believers in our glorious Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a person comes into your meeting wearing gold ring and fine clothes and a poor man with shabby clothes comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing the fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat," but then to the poor man says, "You stand over here or sit on the floor by my feet." Have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

So then he says, "Listen, my brothers. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom?" He promised those who love him, but you have insulted the poor. It's not the rich who are exploiting you. Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones slandering the noble name of whom you belong? But if you really keep the royal law, the royal law, love of God, love of Jesus, love of the Spirit, love of people, your neighbor as yourself, you're doing right. But don't show favoritism. For whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking the law. We all sin. We all sin. Some of us maybe have had sin where we just can't even sleep anymore because we know what we've done. But we understand what Jesus has done for us, and we understand how precious his forgiveness is. Some of us maybe remember one of our children coming to us in tears saying, "I've done something terrible," only to find out it wasn't

that terrible, but for them it was terrible. And they just wept, and they'd jump into us, and we'd hold them and hug them and kiss them and talk to them and share with them.

I think that's what he's saying here in Scripture. Scripture isn't always just, "Read it," and that's what it means. There's emotion to it. And in this book of James, probably the first or the second book that was written in the New Testament, he's saying, "Let's all come together as one, as best we can." Yes, there'll be some differences. Yes, there's Jew and Gentile trying to figure all of these things out, but James comes along and he just smooths the waters and welcoming people to come together.

So be careful, and be careful what you say in chapter 3. Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never faulted in what he says, he's a perfect person, and I don't know a perfect person yet. So then he says, "Let's talk about this." With the tongue, let's talk about this. With the tongue, we praise our Lord and Father, and with the tongue, we curse people who have made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. And then he says, "My brothers, this should not be so. Let your yea be yea, and your no be no." And then share that as to why.

So there's wisdom, and this wonderful James comes along. He talks about these two kinds of wisdom. "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done by the humility from wisdom." And don't harbor bitter and envy and selfish ambition. Don't do it. Stay away from the unspiritual. And so he says, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure." Then peace, joy. Peace, joy, considerate, peace of mission. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. See, here's James gathering with a group of people, sharing these messages. Here's how we live. Here's how God wants us to do.

He says this, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something, but you don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight, and you do not have because you don't ask God. And when you ask, you don't receive because you ask for the wrong motives, and you may spend on what your pleasures will only be for yourself." Do you think that scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely, but he gives us more grace? That's why from the beginning the scripture says God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

And then he says to others, "Suffering is part of life, and it's not easy. Be patient," he says. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield this valuable crop, and how patient he is. You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near. And I've always found that a fascinating scripture, the Lord's near. And as you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. The Lord will be coming. Obviously, he's with us even now. So we have to be patient as best you can. If any of you is in trouble, here's what we do. We pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any of you sick? He should call the elders of the church and pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of offered faith will make that person well. Therefore, confess your sins to each other. Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. It's not always easy.

People sometimes go through very, very difficult lives. And will it ever get better? For many of us, we remember when our children maybe had a terrible fever. Crying, hallucinating, and everything else, wondering what in the world can we do? We bathed them, we hugged them, we loved them. Finally, finally the fever breaks. And in reality, looking at our own lives, no matter how old our age, even though they're suffering, it will break. It'll break. One day, seeing our Father, seeing Jesus, seeing the Holy Spirit, seeing our loved ones will come together as one. So he says, if any of you should wander from the truth, someone, hopefully us, will bring that person back. Remember this, whoever turns a person from their sin, from their error, save them, will save death, and will cover a multitude of sins.

Very, very brief message today. But I was reading this every day of the week, from this past week. And it seems so simple. It seems so easy. And this wonderful, wonderful James, the Council of Jerusalem, they're holding on

strong, teaching both Jew and Gentile, coming together as one. And I could see people walking away from that in my own imagination and saying, well, how long is this going to last? 2,000 years later, we're still here. And we love what James has said. He's a no-nonsense kind of person. But James says, God loves us. Jesus loves us. The Holy Spirit loves us. His promise is true. He'll never leave us or forsake us. And when we don't have answers, we keep asking. And one day, that fever breaks, and that peace of God comes to rest. Amen.

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