

**I. God and Our Trials (vs. 12-18)**

[Trials & Temptations ◊ 1:1-4; 4:13-5:18]

A. The PROMISE of trials – “*he will receive the crown of life*” (vs. 12)

1. Endurance is remaining “steadfast under trial” and leads to one being approved (1 Pet. 1) or having “stood the test.” This comes from the maturity/growth trials bring as explained in 1:2-4.
2. “Crown” which is life – eternal life itself, promised to believers (Rev. 2:10/2 Tim. 4:8)
3. “To those who love him” – all believers are described as those loving him (1 Cor. 16:22, Eph. 6:24). They are characterized by love for God. *Is this true of us?*

B. The PERIL of trials – “*I am being tempted of God*” (vs. 13-16)

1. The Greek word “*periasmos*” can mean a “test,” a “trial,” or a “temptation”
  - God does tempt/test or prove/try people – Abraham, Israel, other examples (cf. Heb. 11:17)
  - God doesn’t try to get us to “do evil”; context also helps us understand this
2. Two Responses to Trials
  - We’ve seen the first response already (v. 1-4):
    - See trials as TESTS → ENDURANCE → MATURITY → GENUINE FAITH → ASSURANCE
  - 2nd response to trial:
    - See trials as TEMPTATIONS [set-up to fail] from God → SIN → DEATH [can be ultimate]
  - WAIT – James says. “DO NOT BE DECEIVED”. God doesn’t intend our failure through his tests – he gives them to us as GOOD GIFTS.

C. The PERFECT GIVER of our trials (vs. 17-18)

1. God is GOOD (he gives good gifts).
2. God doesn’t change (hasn’t stopped loving you).
3. God IS in control. (he is “ABOVE”, and the Father of lights – controls the heavens)
4. God intends/wills our spiritual birth – he means the trials to produce endurance and faith in us.
5. God gives trials as GOOD GIFTS for our ultimate joy.

**II. Wisdom in ACTION (vs. 19-26)**

[Wisdom & Speech ◊ 1:5-8; 3:1-4:12]

A. WISDOM is needed to:

1. Understand and endure trials.
2. Properly respond to poverty or wealth.
3. Act peaceably in trying times – finding unity with one another in the assembly.
4. To prove that your religion is real & your faith is living – ultimately to receive the crown of life.

B. Wisdom in ACTION “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath”

1. The three commands which encapsulate wisdom (v. 19)
2. Slow to Wrath, or anger (v. 20-21)
  - “Wrath” – not merely outbursts of anger but deep-seated rage
  - “Righteousness of God” (not produced by God, but that befitting or directed to God)
  - “Produce” or “work out” – this is an apt description for how a believer lives for God (see v. 21)
  - Instead of anger/wrath/rage we should be characterized by humility – vs. 21.
  - “Put away” –like Paul, James calls us to put off our old life (Eph. 4:22/Col. 3:8), but he doesn’t follow this with “put on” virtues, James directs us to receive the word.

- “Implanted word” – that seed was put there when we were given new birth, it is now a part of us (grafted to our very nature) – but we should “receive” it or take to heart the truth of its existence and hope in its future flowering and growth in our life
  - “Able to save” – able is “being able” the only present continuous verb in this verse – the power is in the word not our receiving or putting off.
3. Quick to Hear (v. 22-25)
- “Become” or “Be” – is present and implies a continual, repeated action – we must continually be doers of the word in specific situations and occasions.
  - Parallel with Matt. 7:24-27 “ hears these words of mine and acts on them” or “does them” or “puts them into practice” – just like the foolish man felt secure on the sand, so some people feel secure in knowing facts and hearing words but are actually deceiving themselves.
  - “Mirror” – polished brass, it would require someone to stare intently at it to get a good picture of themselves. But going away and doing nothing is absurd. So is how some of us treat Scripture. We have an appearance of studying the word intently, but we don’t change our ways and actually live out the word in a wise gospel-centered life.
  - “Perfect law of liberty” – the Gospel – the new law (with a corresponding ethic that Jesus taught) which gives true liberty (in contrast to Torah) [see also the contrast in 2:11-12]
4. Slow to Speak (v. 26)
- “Seems” (KJV) or “considers” – not necessarily in fact, but it seems that way on the surface
  - “Religious” – technically refers to devoted to cultic rites/worship/deities/gods –
  - Not bridling the tongue – is key in the evidence that someone’s faith is shallow. James 3 will elaborate on this. (cf. Matt. 12:33-34)
  - Silence or slowness in speech was a hallmark of a wise person (see Prov. 10:19 and 29:20).
  - “Worthless” – this religion or faith is utterly worthless, idle, empty, fruitless, powerless

### III. Our Obligation toward the Poor (vs. 27)

[*Trials & Temptations* ♦ 1:1-4; 2:1-26]

- “Religion,” “pure,” “undefiled” – ritual worship, OT often requires undefiled worshippers (Ps. 24:4)
- “God and our Father” – the ultimate judge or recipient of our worship is God.
- “Visit” – implies being with them to comfort them, but also providing material help to them
- “Widows” and “orphans” – these are two of the most common classes of destitute people in James’ day. (See God’s repeated concern for them: Dt. 10:18, Ps. 68:5, 146:9; Jer. 7:6; Zech. 7:10.)
- “Distress” – the term is “*thlipsis*” which is tribulation – their suffering is part of the tribulation and trials believers experience in this world (Acts 14:22, James 1:2).
- This practical mercy is part of the good works that doers of the word do (v. 22 and 25).
- We must also maintain moral purity in this world – keep “unspotted” from the world. “World” is typically the evil system of this age in James (see: 2:5, 3:6, 4:4).
  - “In” but not “of” the world – don’t avoid the world so much you can’t help others, but beware
- Summary of the Three Themes (v. 27 is thesis statement of the Book)
  - Take care of the poor – HANDLING POVERTY/WEALTH
  - Remain pure – LIVING WITH WISDOM/FAITH that WORKS
  - In the world [which is maligning you and tempting you] – ENDURING TRIALS