



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 1:1-11

James

"Christian Trials"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank You for the opportunity that we have again this Wednesday evening to come together and to open up the Bible and to read and study it together. We know that that is a great privilege. Sometimes we take it for granted and we don't take advantage of the privilege that we have. Even when we have the opportunity to be a teacher of Your word, it often becomes a routine, and we fail to recognize the great privilege it is to handle and teach the Scriptures, which are Your inherent word.

So we begin this evening and this first lesson in a series with great gratitude to You for the gift of the Bible, the word of God that instructs us and is the means by which we were built up in the faith. And we are changed, and we are made like Jesus Christ. So to that end, we pray that You bless us that the spirit of God would work within the hearts of each one of us to make us receptive to Your truth, and change us and make us like Your son.

Bless the meeting as it concludes with prayer. We pray that You bless our time of prayer together as we exercise our priestly responsibilities, and we come to the throne of grace. We look to You to guide us even in that. May our prayers be made acceptable to You. Give us wisdom as we make our requests, and as we come to You may we come with pure hearts. Bless the young people as they meet this evening. Give them good instruction and good fellowship. We pray that for ourselves. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Well, as I said, we're starting a new series. And our series this evening is in the Book of James. And what I'm going to do is read some Scripture, read the first 11 verses, and expound them following a brief word of introduction to the Book.

But let's look this evening in James 1:1-11. "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 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. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 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. But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away."

The Book of James is one of a group of short books known as the Catholic, or the General Epistles. First and 2 Peter, Jude, and First, Second and 3 John are those books. There's seven of them, and they're called General Epistles because they lack indications of a specific address. And we see here that there's an address. We see that also in 1 Peter, but it's not very specific; it's very general.

So we have this name for these epistles, the General Epistles. Well, as I said there's seven of them, and the first of these seven is the Book of James, a book that has had an interesting and somewhat stormy history. It was late in being admitted into the canon of

Scripture. One writer, William Barclay, said that it had a very hard fight to get into the New Testament.

Maybe so, but from the beginning, it was recognized as scripture by many. Origin, who lived in the latter part of the second century, and the middle of the third century, often cited the Book of James as scripture. And you Eusebius, in his ecclesiastical history, makes an important statement about the book. He seems to have doubted the canonicity, or the authority, the authenticity of the Book of James. But in discussing that, he did state that it was publicly used in most of the churches.

So, even during this period of doubt as to whether it was actually part of the Bible, it was real scripture, it was genuine text from an apostle, or an inspired writing of scripture, that it was recognized by many as being just that. But it was due to the influence of Jerome and Augustine that it was generally recognized as scripture. So since that time it has been recognized as such.

Still, as late as the Reformation, it had its detractors, specifically most well-known is that of Martin Luther who judged it famously as an epistle full of straw because it contains nothing evangelical.

Well he did go on to say that he thought that the Book of James was a highly, was, he thought, that he thought highly of the epistle, and he regarded it as valuable. But his main reason for rejecting it as scripture was that he believed it emphasized the law and not the gospel. And he felt that it was in opposition to Paul and to the rest of the New Testament.

In Luther's opinion, it described justification to works. And in making that judgment he was referring the chapter 2 and verse 24 where James writes, "A man is justified by works and not by faith alone." Well that statement taken on the face of it and taken by itself is a complete contradiction of everything that Martin Luther believed, and was in contradiction to the Reformation in and of itself. Because,

as you know, the Reformation was established by those who believed that justification is by faith alone.

And the Roman Catholic church would cite this text as a proof text, and still does, for its Doctrine of Justification, which is a process in which we are made righteous, and we are made righteous not only by faith but by works, specifically by the works of the sacrament.

So that's the issue that divided men in the Reformation. And Luther rejected the Catholic view, and he saw this as supporting that, as teaching that very thing. He believed that justification was by faith alone, and that James contradicted that.

Well, that was a misinterpretation. The church owes a lot to Martin Luther, but Luther did not speak ex cathedra. He was fallible, and he was wrong here. James did not teach justification by faith plus works, he was teaching what the theologians of the Reformation taught, that we are saved by faith alone but not a faith that is alone. The works of a believer demonstrate the reality of his or her salvation, of his or her justification.

And that's really the great theme of the book, certainly a central theme to this epistle of James. One study on James by Guy King makes a good attempt to express the theme of the book in the title of his commentary on the book, which is a *Belief That Behaves*. It's a book, James is, with an ethical emphasis which shows that true faith is active faith. Saving faith is obedient faith.

One of the main faults against which James wrote this book was that of faith without works. And so he gives instruction on how faith is to operate, how genuine faith operates. He gives the guiding principles, or at least some of the guiding principles, for Christian conduct. Book is notoriously difficult to outline, and many people, probably correctly, see it as simply a book that divides into various subjects, various themes. And there are a number of them.

Christian Trials and Maturity, that's one that we begin, at least, this evening, but many chart that as beginning in chapter 1, verse 2, and going down through verse 18. Christianity in Works in another

subject, Dissensions in the church, another. A Christian World View, that's how one section has been titled. And in that section James does say, you are just a vapor. Well that's a world view. That's a view of man. That's a view of ourselves. One that's even touched on in our text this evening. We are just a vapor. That's a major point that James makes. That's a world view for the Christian.

Well he has other themes as well. Says much about wisdom, much about prayer. It's a book that is similar to the Proverbs. In fact, if there's one book in the New Testament that lines up with the Proverbs that we can speak of in those terms, it's this book; it's the Book of James.

One writer described James as a handful of pearls dropped one by one into the hearer's mind. Donald Guthrie, who is a British New Testament scholar, wrote of James, "Its contribution is very different from that of Paul's letters. And yet, it was a true instinct that led the church to include it in its cannon. For it represents an age of transition, without knowledge of which our appreciation of early Christian history would be the poor and our grasp of ethical Christianity incomplete. He plays a great deal of emphasis on ethics, on Christian conduct, on a belief that behaves."

Well just a word on the author. His name is James, obviously, but the question is which James is it that wrote this book. There are five James in the New Testament. Of those, only two are really likely candidates for author of this book, the apostle James, and James who is also called the Lord's brother. That is his half-brother through their mother, Mary.

The apostle James was killed early, and if you will remember from our studies in the Book of Acts, that's recorded in Acts 12 at the very beginning of that chapter. That was probably around 43, 44 AD, which most feel is too early for this book. And, if that is the case - there are some people that hold that the apostle James is the author - but if his death was too early for this book, then that would leave James, the Lord's brother, as the author. And he is a very good

candidate, probably the most likely, because James becomes a leader in the church very early. Very prominent in the Church of Jerusalem.

In Galatians 2:9, Paul writes that James, along with Peter and John were reputed to be pillars in the church. He has a prominent role in the Book of Acts. In fact, we'll be in Acts 15 this week, which is what many call the counsel of Jerusalem. Many feel it's the first great counsel of the church. It certainly was a meeting in which a very important issue was decided. And the man that presided over that was James, this individual, the Lord's brother.

And so he is the most likely candidate for author of the book. And yet, we don't know a great deal about James. We know he was an unbeliever, he was a skeptic all through our Lord's earthly ministry. John indicates that in John 7:5 where he writes that the Lord's brothers were not believing in Him. In fact, in that chapter they were very skeptical. They indicate that. They were in unbelief.

It wasn't until after the Resurrection that James believed. Paul tells us in Corinthians 15:7 that the Lord appeared to James then to all the apostles. He believed, and he became a leader in the Church of Jerusalem. That makes his greeting particularly interesting. He begins not James, pillar of the church and brother of the Lord, but James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

He was just a servant. In fact, in the Greek text, the word servant is placed at the end of that clause, which puts an emphasis upon it. And so he's emphasizing that fact that sets forth what he was before the Lord, a servant. It doesn't trade upon his physical relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ. He could have done that and that would not have been a bad thing. Jude does that so that we will know who Jude is. But James was such a prominent individual he didn't need to do that, and he doesn't do that.

He begins by stating himself, describing himself as a servant which sets forth really the essence of the believer's true relationship to God. That's what we are. We're all simply servants of the Lord. We are on the same level with one another. And what James says of

himself, anyone else in the Church of Jerusalem, or anyone else to whom he was writing could have said; we're all servants of the Lord. It expresses our relationship with the Lord and, in stating that, it expresses our dependence upon the Lord. He's the master and we are his servants.

Now that title, servant, was among the Greeks, who had a strong sense of freedom, a title that carried a disparaging connotation. A slave was something they looked down upon. In fact, I can remember my Greek, one of my Greek teachers in seminary speaking about Plato, Plato, perhaps one of the most brilliant men, certainly one of the most brilliant men to ever live. Maybe the most brilliant gentile to ever live. One of the greatest philosophers of all time, believed that slaves didn't have souls.

So for James to call himself a slave, in the eyes of a Greek, that would be a terribly disparaging way to refer to oneself. And I suppose that in part James is expressing the humility of his position before the Lord. He's simply a bond servant. But for the Jew, the title servant of the Lord was one of great dignity. It's used of Moses and the Old Testament prophets. To be a servant of the Lord was not disparaging; it was a great privilege.

I suppose there are both aspects to this, that there is the aspect of humility in that title bond servant or slave. And yet, knowing that the bond servant is the servant of the Lord. Well that gives great dignity to the position. What a privilege to serve God the Father, and God the Son as James indicates here that he does. There's no greater privilege than that.

So we come to this first verse and we see that the skeptic had become a servant. He addresses his letter to the 12 tribes who are disbursed abroad. These are Jewish Christians living beyond the border of Palestine, living in the dispersion, or the diaspora, which is a technical term that describes the gentile lands to which the Jews had been scattered, from the time of the Babylonian captivity all the way into the first century.

Now that description or that identification of the 12 tribes as Jewish believers is supported against the idea that this is a description of churches, gentile, and Jewish together as the new Israel by the fact that the whole letter has a very Jewish quality to it. J. Grisham **Machem** wrote that the letter deals typically with Jewish **farasage** faults, like words without deeds, inordinate love of teaching, flattery of wealth and position, contempt for the poor, covetousness. And it ignores gentile faults such as idolatry and impurity, which we find in a letters such as 1 Corinthians, which was addressed to a church. It was very gentile and had those gentile faults.

And so everything about the letter suggests that James was writing to Jewish people, describes them in a very Jewish way, a way that we would naturally think would be referring the Jewish people, 12 tribes disbursed abroad. Jewish Christians disbursed in gentile lands. What those gentile lands are, we don't know. It doesn't identify them. They may not have been very far from Jerusalem, from Judea and Galilee. But those are those are the people to whom he was writing.

And so with that opening salutation of only 15 words in the Greek text, which makes it one of the shortest greetings in the New Testament, James begins his epistle, and follows in verses 2 and 3. The first theme of the book, Christian Trials and Maturity.

James writes in verse 2 that we are to consider all joy when we encounter various trials. He leaves the trials unidentified. He simply describes them as various trials, which literally means variegated trials, or many colored trials. In other words, he says there's all kinds of trials. He's not describing them as beautifully colored trials, or anything like that but they're just a variety of trials that we as Christians experience. We're not exempt from hard times. If we are faithful in the mission that the Lord has given to us, then we will suffer persecution.

If we are pursuing godliness and obedience, we are seeking to conform to the image of Jesus Christ, then we will suffer from our struggle with the flesh and with temptation. And we will all undergo



the sorrows of life. There will be loss of family, loss of friends, sickness, financial setbacks. The list goes on. There are all kinds of trials and testings, and difficulties that we go through.

And James doesn't try to list them all. He doesn't give us the long list of what that could be. He simply groups them into this description of many colored, various kinds of trials. We face all kinds of them. And they will come inevitably.

James doesn't say if you encounter. He says when you encounter, or whenever you encounter. We will encounter these trials. We can't predict when they will occur, but we can know that we will experience them. That word encounter is used only three times in the New Testament, and it's used in the - the other two places it's used is in Luke 10:30, of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and Luke says he fell among thieves; the story of the good Samaritan. And then it's used in Acts 27:41 of the ship that Paul was on that struck or encountered a reef and was run aground.

Now in neither of those cases, in the man going down to Jericho or in the ship crossing the Mediterranean, did it predict, did they predict what would happen. The man didn't foresee that he would fall among thieves. The ship was not aware that it was going to come aground on a reef. It was, they were unexpected encounters.

And so it is with trials. We can't predict when they're coming. We can't know when they're coming. But we can know that they will come, and we need to know that. That's one of the first steps to being prepared for trials. We are not, we are not well prepared if we assume that the Christian life, which is a life of the greatest blessing, we will not be prepared if we live a carefree kind of life, assuming that everything is going to go smoothly for us in this world. No, not at all. We can only be prepared first of all if we are alert to trials.

And so James mentions that, perhaps in part for that reason. But that's not, at the same time, the main reason that he's saying this about trials. He does alert us to that, but at the same time, we should really know that we're going to have trials. That's common to man.

That's part of living in a fallen world. We're going to have trials in life.

What James is saying, and what's significant about this statement, is that we should rejoice when we do have them. Now that's unusual. That's what some have described as paradoxical. It doesn't seem to fit. How in the world do you rejoice in trials? Trials by their very definition, seem to preclude any kind of joy or rejoicing, or considering things as James says we're to do. It brings sorrow. It brings great grief. They undermine everything that we're trying to have and accomplish in life.

So the question is, how is this possible? And of course, the trials themselves are not occasions in and of themselves for rejoicing, and it's not what James is suggesting that we rejoice because we're hurting, that there's something good in suffering a loss or whatever the case may be.

Now he goes on to explain the reason that we are to rejoice, because trials, testings of this kind are a means of great blessing. It's what they do. It's not what they are, it's what they do, it's what they produce that is the reason for that response. Verse 3, "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." Trials are God's agents of revealing the true nature of our faith.

And this is what this is about. It's about our faith. It's about strengthening our faith. It's about examining our faith, learning about our faith. And trials reveal the nature of a person's faith.

One of the old Scottish Presbyterian preachers who wrote an old and very good commentary on the Book of James is Robert **Johnstone**, who wrote, "Affliction lets down a blazing torch for him into the depth of his own nature. And he sees many things, which he little expected to see. He finds his faith weak where he thought is strong. His view's dim where he thought them clear. His pride strong and stubborn where he thought it broken." And so the result of that, of this testing, this illumination, this finding out what's weak that he

thought was strong, is to cause the man to cry out to the Lord for a fuller sanctification, for greater strength and greater growth.

The trials are revealing agencies. They prove what is real and they show what is false, and they show where improvement is needed, and give us an understanding of what to pray for and what to strive for.

As a result of this, there is endurance, steadfastness. One of the commentators, James Ropes, called in his commentary, staying power. Trials make us strong so that we have a certain tenacity of spirit to hold on under pressure, which has a further result, a greater goal. And that's what James states in verse 4, and that is maturity. That's the end of trials. That's what they're designed to produce.

And so he exhorts us in verse 4 to, "Let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." In other words, what James is saying is when these trials come, and these trials will be difficult, very difficult, when that happens, don't resist, don't rebel, don't rebel against the Lord for bringing them into your life. It is by remaining steadfast, it's about remaining faithful, that the perfect work that God is doing through these trials is accomplished. That's how the goal is reached. As we are patient and we endure in the midst of trial - a diamond is made under intense pressure. If that carbon is somehow taken out of the pressure before the diamond is formed, then the diamond, it will never become a diamond.

It's under pressure that that occurs. And it's the same with us. It's as we remain under the pressure, being faithful in the midst of trials, not rebelling against the Lord that we are made firm, that we're made whole, that we're made mature. That is not the result of the number of trials that a person encounters, but the way in which a person encounters those trials - by endurance, by faithfulness.

And all of this has an eternal reward. Paul says that in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comprehension." Paul is speaking of the ultimate result of the afflictions that we go through. James is speaking of what affliction does for us in the present, at this moment. It makes us mature in the faith. But

ultimately that's what these things that James is speaking of looks for as well. It all has eternal benefits in our lives, because everything in this life is preparing us for eternity.

This is a brief moment in our existence. However long we live, it is brief, and it will end. Eternity does not end. We're being prepared for that. And so whether it's what Paul is saying or what James is saying, ultimately it looks to the same end, preparing us for eternity.

So trials, while they are very bitter experiences, and we wish them to end while we're in them. We would not be normal if we didn't. Nevertheless, they have a purpose. Now we're not the victims of chance. Trials occur by the permission and will of God. They are directed by Him. They serve His purpose. And He can and He will deliver us from them.

Now Paul speaks of that in 2 Timothy 3:11 where he recounts the trials that he suffered during his first missionary journey, that which we studied last week and the previous week when he was in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, and how he suffered persecution, how he suffered great trial. But then he writes, "Out of them all," or "Out of all of them the Lord rescued me." He didn't rescue him from them, meaning He didn't spare Paul from suffering them. He did so in Iconium, if you remember. Paul and Barnabus were alerted to the stoning that was being planned, and they went to Lystra. And there in Lystra the stoning happened.

So ultimately the Lord didn't deliver him from trials and difficulties, but what Paul says is He rescued him out of them. And that's what He does for us. God knows when to do that. We don't. We want the pressure to end. But what God is forming in us takes a certain amount, a certain period of pressure. We don't know when that is, when the end of that is best for us, but the Lord does. He's all wise. He knows what's best for us, and so we are to trust Him. This is all about faith. That's what James is talking about that. In the midst of that we're to trust Him and know that at the right time He will end it, He will rescue us out of that. When, and not until, the trial has done its perfect work.

So we're to be patient. We're to let endurance have its result. We are to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials.

And so in view of the end, in view of what all this is producing, in view of the fact that trials are not random, they're not chaotic, they're not without purpose, they do have purpose, in view of that, Paul's counsel is not fanciful. Makes good – James's counsel is wise. It makes sense. It's far superior to be, to being what many people become when they suffer trials. Far better alternatives to succumbing to self-pity and brooding over our circumstances, or just keeping a stiff upper lip and being stoical about things as so many do.

James is saying, rejoice in all of this. It's a far better response. Now this is for the Christian he is speaking. Not speaking to the non-Christian. This is special counsel for us, because the non-Christian can go through trials and do it, but they don't have the assurance that James is giving that these things produce something of this nature. This is for the brethren, he says, and it has a good result for us, a good purpose.

But James knew the nature of trials, and he knew that rejoicing in trials and not rebelling against the experience is much easier to say, and much easier to write, much easier to think about than it is to actually do. It takes perspective. It requires great wisdom, divine understanding of things, and that's what James speaks of in verses 5 through 8. Whoever feels that he or she is unable to look at trials as James says, as he advises us to, then he or she should look to God for wisdom, verse 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.

Now I don't know of anyone who things that he or she doesn't lack wisdom. I know that, I got to thinking about that, and well, I'm sure there are lots of people who do think that they are full of wisdom and they don't lack it at all. But the Christian man or woman who properly understands his or her self knows that we all lack wisdom. And so we all need to seek wisdom, and that's really the first step to gaining wisdom, recognizing that we don't have it. Like recognizing that we need it, and we do need it if we are to see our trials rightly. If we are to maneuver our way through the properly, we need wisdom.

And James knew that. He knew that from his knowledge of the Old Testament, from Psalm 73. There's a great example of one who suffered a

great trial, **Asaph**. And would have suffered it terribly had he not gained wisdom. Remember he's disturbed over the prosperity of the wicked. He doesn't understand it. He's confused. He's somewhat bitter about it. And he said his feet came close to slipping. They almost did until he went into the sanctuary of God and then he got God's perspective. He drew close to the Lord. And there he saw what the end of the wicked really is. When he got God's perspective, when he gained wisdom, he did not slip, he did not lose endurance we might say.

Wisdom is necessary for trials. Wisdom has been described as the art of living or skill in living. It is the ability, as one has written, to select worthy ends, and the best means of attaining them. That's wisdom. And of course, wisdom leads us to do that which is pleasing to God. Wisdom will lead us to do that which brings glory to God. We'll see that as the great end, and we'll know the right ways to do that, which is through obedience to God's word.

There are a number of ways that we can gain wisdom. We gain it through our study of the word of God. Read the Bible, read the Book of Proverbs, read the Book of James. As we study these things, as we study the life of our Lord we see how He lived His life. We read the apostles. We learned the principles of conduct and so forth. We gained it through experience, and I'm sure that that's implied in everything that James is saying. That we're made complete, we're made mature. That involves wisdom. We gain wisdom through our experiences.

The things that you experience today, the hardships that you go through are preparing you to be a good counselor down the road when others face the things that you've experienced and they don't know where to turn and how to deal with them. And you can explain how you dealt with these experiences. It helps us become wise, good counselors.

But what James is saying as a third way of gaining it, and that is through prayer. God's the source of all wisdom. It finds its origin in Him and so go to Him, he's saying. Pray to Him. Seek wisdom from its very source. So we're simply to pray for wisdom.

And James assures us that God will give it, generously and without reproach. God is not tight fisted with His children. He deals with us with an

open hand. He is generous. That is His nature. He won't scold us for asking for too much. He won't scold us for asking too often. We may have that in mind and that's why James writes this, because so often that's the way it is with men. You come to them and okay, they'll be glad to be generous to begin with, and maybe a second or third time. But after a while it's a little annoying for someone to keep coming and seeking something and they respond with their reproach.

But that's not the way it is with the Lord God. You cannot go enough to Him. The author of Hebrews tells us that. We're to draw near the throne of grace. We'll always be doing that. And the servant recognizes under whose authority he or she is. And our complete dependence upon Him will live continually in prayer, praying without ceasing.

That's what we're to do. We can't go too often. We can't, we should never think that God's going to reproach us for coming to Him. He does not do that. He is generous. But as James points out, there is a required attitude in prayer. There's a proper way to approach, there's a proper way to come to him mentally in our mind. And he states that it's without doubting.

Doubt is unbelief. It is an unwillingness to rely completely on God. It disparages God's character. It dishonors His generosity. And so when we approach God, we must approach Him in faith. We must approach Him in complete trust, verses 6 through 8, "He must ask with faith without any doubting, or the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 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." This description of the doubter as being like a surging sea pictures man's soul as being in turmoil and a state of unrest, instability.

This is the mind that cannot fix itself in belief. Can't fix itself on the promises of God with any firmness. And wisdom can't dwell in that kind of a heart. That doesn't give to the man who doesn't trust and believe the Lord. So we must come with faith. If we want our prayers answered we must fix our minds on the Lord's promises, believe those promises, even though they may seem to contradict reality or what the reality of our circumstance, and may seem to be something beyond what the Lord could do or to fix our minds, our

hearts on the Lord's promises. Believe them, believe that He is good for His word, and trust Him to act according to it. To be faithful. That's what He promises to do.

It dishonors God when we doubt that He will honor His word. A person who doesn't do that, the person who doubts, James says, shouldn't expect to receive anything from the Lord, and is unstable in all his ways.

Our attitude toward the Lord affects our whole life. Our conduct, our relationships with others is reflected by our attitude toward the Lord. Unbelief leads to an unstable life. Unstable in all its ways, he said. Someone said the man who does not trust God cannot be trusted by men.

So what we know, and what we believe, is very practical. You hear that a lot from this lectern, or that pulpit, and have for many, many years, that that's important. What we understand, truth is important. And for a person to be stable in his or her life, he or she must be grounded in the word of God, must be grounded in the truth of God, must be grounded in the doctrines of the word of God.

Knowledge is not all that's needed. And if we think that knowledge is everything and that we need not go beyond knowledge, well we don't understand, we don't understand the Book of James for one thing. Faith in what we know and what we learn is important. But knowledge is essential. Knowledge is necessary. Without it, we cannot grow, we cannot develop. How can a person be the kind of man that James is encouraging us to be, a faithful person, one who trusts in the Lord, if we don't know about the Lord, if we don't know who He is, we don't know His faithfulness, and what He's done.

Got to know the Lord God, and I mean know about Him to grow in our relationship with Him and trust Him. In other words, theology doctrine is practical. Fundamental to a walk of faith.

Well speaking of doctrine, who is the Lord here in verse 7? We might think it's a reference to God, which of course it is. But more specifically, it seems to be a reference to Christ, because in verse 1, this is how James refers to Him. He refers to Jesus Christ as the Lord. And later on in chapter 5, verse 7, he speaks of the Lord's return. He's speaking about Christ.



So I think he's speaking of Christ in this statement, which is a way of saying that He is God, not God the Father, but God the Son. He is deity, and He's someone to whom we can pray. I often wonder, can we pray to Jesus Christ as well as to God the Father? Yes, we can pray to the Father as well as the Son, the Son as well as the Father.

So we see here the suggestion of some theology on James's part. He knew that his brother, according to the flesh, was his Creator, was the Lord God, the second person of the Trinity.

Now in verse 9 James takes up a new subject when he address the rich and the poor. And I think we're to take this as the rich and the poor in the church. It might seem unrelated to what has preceded, but it's not. It's very much related. Trials come to everyone to both the rich and the poor, and to everyone in between. And James states here that their attitudes, what their attitudes, rather, should be when they do face trials.

First of all he speaks to the poor man in verse 9, "He is to glory in his high position." Poverty itself is a trial. A poor man has to scratch out a living. He is deprived of the necessities of life. He gets no respect from the world. He's looked down upon. That is a great trial. All of those are great trials, and all of that can lead to bitterness.

I mean I think that James would begin to commiserate with the poor man and try to show some empathy, but he doesn't do that. He says to the poor man, glory in your high position. In other words, remember who and what you are. You are a child of God.

Someone said of the poor man, a prince on his way to his kingdom. That's the way we are. It's not to make light of poverty, and it's not to dismiss it. James is addressing it, because he knows generally the great problems are those that the poor person faces. But his response, or her response, is to glory in his or her high position. So rather than sink into misery, covet another man's position or possession, he should bear in mind that his reward is coming.

And it would be certainly in harmony with James to say, and work diligently to get out of poverty. There's not virtue in poverty. But in the

midst of it, in the midst of those trials, rejoice in glory, in the great position that you have, which is, which is that of a child of God.

Now generally the rich are far less acquainted with hardship than the poor. They live in luxury, and in ease, and that can affect their perspective on life so that they imagine that money is the measure and the end of all things. And I believe that James is here addressing wealthy Christians in the church. There's some doubt about that, but I think that's who he is addressing here. And that would indicate that even Christians can become materialistic, and they can become worldly. And as a result of all that, they can live for the pleasures of this world, and the prestige of this world.

The rich enjoy a lot of prestige, and that's heady stuff. That makes us feel great. And so that can happen. People can begin to live for the world and the honor of the world, even believers.

Even so, the rich don't escape trials, and those trials as we saw earlier come unexpectedly, come suddenly, like a shipwreck, or like bandits falling on a traveler. And the rich can lose a loved one, they can lose all their wealth for all that matter. They can lose their health. They can lose all kinds of things. And such trials can really be harder on the rich than the poor, because they're not used to that. They're not used to privation.

Well rather than become bitter, James says that the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass, he will pass away. Verse 11, "For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich an in the midst of his pursuits will fade away."

Now we don't wish for hardships in life. We don't wish for a crash in the stock market. But catastrophes like that, like a great depression, destroy the illusion that wealth gives permanent lasting security. It's not. It's like evanescent. It goes away. It's not something to be relied on. And trials, like that, force people to realize that and to fall back on what really does last and what really is important, and that is the Lord.

So the rich man can glory in his humiliation because he learns from that how transient all of life is, the things of life are. How transient that he is, just like the poor man, glory in his high position as a child of God. That's what's

important. That's what trials are designed to do. To cast us back on the Lord and on what is important. We are all grass.

Isaiah said it. That's probably where James got this description. All flesh is grass. We're just temporary, but so are our trials. And as Paul said, momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal **wait** of glory far beyond all comprehension. And so in the brief time that God has given us in this world, we are to be faithful. We're to submit to His hand, His blessings, whether they come in the nice things of life, or those blessings come in the hard experiences of life, we are to let endurance have its perfect result. Trust in the Lord for all of our needs. Be faithful to Him and serve Him well. That's why we're here.

Well may God help us to do that, we can do that really, ultimately, only by His grace. So let's close with a word of prayer and ask Him to do that, and then we'll turn it over to Jim. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness, Your grace that comes to us even in trials, even in difficulties. And we confess that we find it hard to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. But You tell us to do that because they are for our good. It's through all of that, through that process that we are made more mature and we become like Your son and more useful. And all of that is making for us an eternal **wait** of glory. May we live for that glory to come, and not for this world? We pray in Christ's name. Amen.