

Count It All Joy: James 1:1-11 Explained

Scriptures for Today:

***James 1:1-11** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. 2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. 5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. 9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: 10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

Introduction

In the past recent weeks, we have been spending a lot of time reading letters from the Apostle Paul to the early New Testament churches and leaders. During that time, churches were being planted, doctrine was being established, errors were being corrected. The foundation was being laid for all churches that would ever exist until the return of Jesus Christ.

The same doctrine and truth that was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and that the early churches were built on is the same doctrine and truth that continues to build and establish our faith today.

Now we are moving away from Paul's writings, and we are starting the book of James which is the 59th book of the Bible. This book has 5 chapters and takes about 14 minutes to read the entire book.

The book of James is written by James himself. This is most commonly known to be James the brother of Jesus.

James talks about what faith looks like when life is hard. He talks about trials, patience, and asking God for wisdom.

He warns us about temptation and sin, and he pushes us beyond being hearers only into being doers of the Word.

He confronts partiality (being a respecter of persons), the misuse of the tongue, pride, and worldliness.

He finishes with a strong emphasis on endurance and prayer—because a mature Christian isn't just someone who knows truth, but someone whose life shows it.

So let's dive into the book of James and look at how we can apply these things to ourselves.

Verse 1: A Servant Sends a Message

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,...

Right off the bat, James declares himself to be a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who was the greatest servant who ever lived?

Philippians 2:7-8 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: **8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

James was following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He was our greatest example. In your life you also want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. When you shift your mindset from serving yourself, to serving your God in Heaven, things will start to change significantly for you in the best way possible.

...to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

When James says he's writing to 'the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,' he's identifying his audience as Israelites, meaning someone who is a descendant of one of the 12 sons of Jacob, who have been dispersed throughout the nations.

This scattering goes back to the Old Testament: the northern tribes were carried away by Assyria, Judah later went into Babylonian captivity, and over time the entire physical nation of Israel ended up being spread across the entire world. Remember, God had promised that would happen if they did not obey.

But to be even more specific, James isn't writing to Israel in general—he's writing to Israelites who have believed on Jesus Christ. Understand that Jews who were believing in Jesus were being scattered and persecuted even more because of their faith.

Even though James might be addressing physical descendants of Israel who have believed, this still applies to all of us who have believed in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

We are the Israel of God through faith. We are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. So when James says "to the twelve tribes", understand this is still profitable to all who have Faith in Jesus.

Verse 2 – 4: Joy in Trials Produces Patience

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; **3** Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

So remember, part of the reason why the brethren were scattered abroad was because of the persecution they were facing.

Imagine if it was illegal for us to gather together and worship our Creator and Savior. Imagine if we had to flee Louisville because of persecution. Those would be very trying times. And those times might come someday in the future. But understand that there are Christians all over the world today who face persecution and affliction because of their faith.

Notice what James says our response should be. He says, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations"

The word temptation has several meanings. When people hear the word temptation they often immediately think about being enticed to commit sin. And yes, it often does mean to be enticed to sin.

But the word temptation also refers to being tried and tested in different ways.

We see an example of this in Genesis 22

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

God was tempting Abraham, not with evil, but he was trying (testing) his faith when he asked him to offer Isaac, his only son, as a sacrifice.

In our life, we can be tested and tried by various different things because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

So James is saying when we fall into divers or various temptations, we are to count it all joy.

We are to take pleasure in and be joyful in the fact that we are going through a hard trial.

That is the complete opposite of how we usually want to respond when we are going through hardship. We often get discouraged, we want to give up, we want to blame others. We want to blame God.

But no, we are to count it all joy!

For example, if you believe in Jesus Christ, and you tell your family and friends that you are going to start going to church every week, or they see that you are changing your lifestyle, you are trying to obey God, stopping sin in your life, and they make fun of you, and call you names, and they pressure you to stop going to church...are you supposed to cave to the pressure? Are you supposed to get discouraged and stop serving God? No, you're supposed to count it all joy!

Luke 6:22-23 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. **23** Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

When you start getting things right in your life, you are seeking God, you are reading His word, you are growing in faith, you are excited about the direction things are going, and then all of a sudden you get hit with health problems, or financial struggles, or the death of a loved one...

You can get mad at God. You can go back to your old ways. You can stop serving the Lord. Or, you can **count it all joy** when you fall into divers temptations.

The apostle Paul set an example for us in 2 Corinthians 12:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Paul had a thorn in his flesh, some sort of on-going affliction that he faced. It could have been physical (he was stoned and dragged out of the city) it could have been spiritual opposition. Nonetheless, it was something that caused him trouble and brought weakness.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** Therefore **I take pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Even though Paul was struggling, even though he faced tremendous hardship, he counted it all joy when he fell into divers temptations. We want to do the same in our own lives. And why should we count it all joy?

Why should we go against the response of our flesh? Our flesh wants to say... "Why me?, This isn't fair". We are supposed to go against that response and count it all joy. Why is that?

James 1:3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

When we face various temptations and trials, when our faith is tried and tested it works patience within us. What is the biblical definition of Patience?

Having patience is when you are able to suffer affliction, pain, and hardship without murmuring and complaining. When you can suffer without being discontent. To be able to persevere through hard times with a good attitude.

When you face those temptations in your life and you count it all joy, you are working, you are building, and strengthening your patience. Why is that important?

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; **4** And patience, experience; and experience, hope: **5** And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Notice the order:

Tribulation (temptations, hardship) works patience.

Patience builds experience. Why is experience important? Because it allows us to help others who are going through the same things we go through. Understand, if you have gone through horrible things in your life, (maybe you were abused, maybe you lost people that you love, maybe people you loved betrayed you) those things happened because of the corruption of sin and sinful man.

When you go through those things you still count it all joy because your patience is being worked. And that patience builds experience. And you will be able to use that experience to comfort others and help those who have gone through or are currently going through the same things that you have went through.

Experience that you get builds hope. When we experience God getting us through hardship in our life (and He does it over and over again) it builds hope within us knowing that He is able to bring us through.

And that hope makes us not ashamed. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. It causes us to declare and share the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

James 1:4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

When our patience is worked, notice how it says that you may be perfect and entire. That word perfect does not mean moral perfection. It means to be complete. When patience is done being worked, it will make you complete, wanting (lacking) nothing.

When you have the experience, when you have the hope of the gospel—You know who's got your back. You have God almighty on your side. You are complete, you will lack nothing. But look at verse 5...

Verse 5 – 8: Wisdom for the Trial

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

You know what helps you get through those trials and temptations in your life? Wisdom. Wisdom helps us to navigate decisions, it helps us to remember who is the one in control, when we lack wisdom it's harder to get through those hardships. When we go through trials it reminds us of our need for more wisdom. And what are we supposed to do when we lack wisdom? We simply ask God.

He gives to all men liberally. He doesn't hold back wisdom from you if you ask. It also says that he upbraideth not, meaning he does not get mad at you for asking. Wisdom will be given to you if you ask.

James 1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. **7** For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. **8** A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

There is a condition added here. Wisdom shall be given to you if you ask, but...you have to ask in faith, nothing wavering.

In other words, when you ask God for wisdom, you're not flipping a coin about whether God hears you...or whether God will answer...or whether God can handle your situation. You're coming to Him with childlike faith—believing that God is who He says He is, and that His Word is true.

And what does that wavering look like in real life:

Maybe you pray, but immediately assume nothing will change: "I asked, but I know it won't matter." Maybe you trust God for everlasting life, but not to provide for your physical needs. Not in all things. Maybe you start getting things right in your life, you ask God for Wisdom, but then you quit because results are not immediate.

James says that kind of man is "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." He has no anchor. He has no settled confidence. He's at the mercy of whatever feeling hits him next.

And then James gives a strong warning:

“Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

The issue is not God's willingness to give. The issue is a heart that won't rest in what God says.

That's why he sums it up:

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

Being double-minded is like living with two competing loyalties— you want God's help while still refusing God's way; you want God's peace while clinging to control; you want God's answer while keeping an exit plan of unbelief.

You don't want to live your life like that. You don't want to be double-minded.

Verse 9 – 11: Tested in Poverty and Prosperity

James 1:9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

James 1:10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

James now turns to a specific place where trials and wavering often show up. He mentions two different circumstances regarding money and status.

He talks about the brother of low degree and the rich man.

The brother of low degree is a believer who is poor, lowly, and overlooked. Someone who does not have much.

Maybe you don't have much in your life. Maybe you face many trials because of your financial situation. Remember, you count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.

" Let the brother of low degree **rejoice** in that he is exalted:" If you are poor and lowly and have nothing, how are you exalted? You are exalted in Jesus Christ. You rejoice because in Him you have everything. You have riches far beyond what this world can contain. You have everlasting life.

What does the rich man rejoice in?

James 1:10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

The trials that a rich man will face might be different than trials of the poor. Someone who is rich must stop trusting in their own riches and put all their trust in Jesus Christ. You count it all joy, you rejoice in the fact that you have been humbled and made low.

James 1:11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

This is a reminder that everything in this life will fail... money will disappear, health will change, relationships will shift, and circumstances can turn quickly. But God never changes.

And James is teaching us that whether you're low or whether you're rich—whether you're in a season of lack or a season of abundance—your faith is still going to be tried.

So what do we take away from this passage?

1. Expect Trials in your life.

James doesn't say if you fall into divers temptations, he was "when". Trials are part of the Christian life. You count it all joy, knowing that God is working patience in you, and patience is making you complete.

2. Ask God for wisdom. Ask in Faith.

When pressure hits in your life, the answer isn't to panic or give up. The answer is to go to God in faith and ask for wisdom. He gives liberally. And he doesn't scold you for asking. Don't be double-minded. Don't be like a wave that is driven with the wind and tossed. Ask in faith.

3. Don't let your circumstances define you.

If you are poor or of low degree, rejoice! You are exalted in Jesus Christ. If you are rich, rejoice when God humbles you and makes you low, because the world is passing away.

So the question is, when you go from here and trials come in your life, what will you do?

Will you murmur and complain? Will you waver and be tossed? Will you trust in money, comfort, and control? Or will you count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations? Will you ask God for wisdom and let patience have her perfect work?

Let's Pray.