

The Testings of the Christian Life

- James 1:2-12

- **Temptations:** The word translated "temptations" refers primarily here to trials.
- **Being tested in our Christian faith is one of the most difficult things as a Christian to go through.**
 - No one enjoys them,
 - They never come at a good time,
 - They last longer than we would certainly like,
 - But ... there is a purpose for them & we will discuss several reasons tonight.

1. Testings Are for a Purpose (vv.2-4)

a. For Our Growth (v.2)

- i. One thing you say for sure when it comes to testings is that it takes us out of our "comfort zone".
 - 1. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations".
- ii. There are times where we may become complacent & even comfortable, but testings will force us out of our comfort zone & encourage us to react.
 - 1. The way we respond to testings tells us a great deal about our spiritual condition.
- iii. When we think of testings, how can we possibly not think of the Old Testament Job. The classic example of a saint being tested by all kinds of adversities in a series of inexplicable disasters, he lost his wealth and his health, his family, the sympathy and fellowship of his wife, and the goodwill of his friends. But Job came out of his trials a wiser and better man.
 - 1. They are not intended to give God an opportunity to see how we are doing but to let us see how far we have come—or failed to come.
- iv. When difficulties & trials come your way, how does your demeanor change? How does your attitude change?
 - 1. Stress
 - 2. Worry
 - 3. Irritable

b. Bring Patience (v.3)

- i. James tells us that testings are designed to bring patience in our lives.
 - 1. "Knowing this, that the trying (proof) of your faith worketh patience".
 - 2. Honestly, how many of you would consider yourself patient people? It often time depends on the object of your patience.
 - a. Patience during a game.
 - b. Patience hunting/fishing.
 - c. Patience waiting on others.
 - 3. We find it very hard to remain quiet under adverse circumstances, don't we?
 - 4. James reminds us that when testings come our way (and they will), count it all joy.
 - a. I don't think anyone did this any better than Paul.

- b. Of all the struggles & beatings & imprisonments, and shipwrecks that he went through, as he sat in the midst of a prison he could still say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
 - ii. Why could he say that? Because God doesn't just allow things to come our way with no purpose at all.
 - 1. Satan was not allowed to touch Job at any time or in any way apart from God's express permission. Moreover, each time he obtained permission to attack God's beloved servant, God drew the line in the sand beyond which Satan could not go.
- c. **To Mature Us (v.4)**
 - i. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing".
 - ii. In other words, testing is a process. It has to go on and on until full maturity is reached and we become people of Christ-like character.
 - iii. "What does he mean by perfect?" Perfect in essence means completed or fully developed. Are you there yet?
 - 1. When I completed a course in counseling or accounting, it meant that I was fully instructed on how to perform my work compared to someone who had never taken the first class.
 - iv. We live in the day where society is not very patient at all & is extremely demanding when it comes to their wants.
 - 1. Fast food
 - 2. Instant news
 - 3. Instant entertainment
 - 4. And then what we attempt to do is carry this over to the spiritual realm & we want our prayers answered immediately, we want to escape this problem now, we want to grow in our faith overnight ... but it requires patience on our part.
 - v. James says, be patient, allow God to do his work in your life, so that you will be complete, wanting nothing.

2. Testings Can Bring Us To Understanding (vv.5-8)

a. Our Need of Wisdom (v.5)

- i. Whenever a testing occurs in our lives, we often have one question consistently come to mind ... "Why?"
- ii. This is not uncommon, nor is it wrong to ask if done in the right manner.
 - 1. Job asked this question when his life around him crumbled.
 - 2. Paul asked the Lord 3 different occasions for his trial to cease.
- iii. The important thing is that we do not linger on God answering "Why" & we instead keep our focus on Him to see us through.
- iv. James encourage us that when we need wisdom, don't be afraid to ask God for it.
 - 1. With James, wisdom has to do with applying the circumstances of life to Christian living.
 - 2. Jesus faced trials in His life as He fulfilled the Father's plan for Him, but He faced those trials in step with the will of God.

3. The Lord went to the cross with all of its agony, suffering, and pain because He trusted the wisdom and eternal purpose of God.
- v. Many Christians today lack that kind of wisdom.
 1. If we are lacking in wisdom, we will not know how to handle problems when they arise.
 2. We all have been at that point in our lives, and when that time comes, James commands us to “ask”.

b. Request It From God (v.5)

- i. "Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."
- ii. God will not withhold anything good from us if it is in accordance with His will. He is a Good God, a Gracious God, & a Loving God.
 1. He bless all, regardless of their standing with Him.
 2. He offers salvation to all.
 3. And in the same way, he offers wisdom to all who ask.
 - a. When Solomon was crowned King & desired wisdom, what did he do?
 - b. I Kings 3:7-9 – “And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”
 4. God gave him wisdom beyond anything that Solomon could have imagined.

c. Requires Faith In God (vv.6-8)

- i. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering".
- ii. There are some rules that James gives us when it comes to our requests, what we commonly call our prayers.
 1. Our request must be in line with God's "good and acceptable and perfect" will (Romans 12:2).
 2. We must be trusting totally in God. Faith is defined for us as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).
 3. Without faith, we will never please Him.
 - a. Hebrews 11:6 - "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him".
 4. Illustration of Moses at the Red Sea / Lame man / Naaman
- iii. We may ask God for wisdom when we are faced with a split second decision & He may instantly give it to us. At other times, we may be seeking wisdom in a financial decision or other personal matter & it may require patience as God gradually solidifies His will in our lives.

d. Requires Commitment To God (v.6)

- i. "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed".

- ii. The man who looks to God for wisdom, then rushes for counsel to this person and that person, tries this angle and then that angle, rushes down this path and then that path, and tries this door and then that door is making a mockery of his prayer for wisdom.
- iii. Because in vv.7-8 James tells us, "For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways".
 - 1. One of the things I want to caution you church in is following God's Word & adhering to Godly counsel.
 - 2. That does not necessarily mean that you will like the counsel nor are you excited about the counsel, but you are to obey it.
 - a. Often people will not act on the counsel that they receive. Instead, they run from one counselor to another, hoping to get the kind of advice that they can accept comfortably.
 - 3. The word for "double minded" means literally "double souled," indicating a man of divided loyalty.