

## **“Finding the Joy in Trials”**

### **James 1:2-18**

A Study in the Book of James - Our Crowns Sit Crooked in a Conflicted World

#### **Historical Context:**

“James writes his epistle to Jewish Christians who have been driven from their homes and possessions. He addresses people who suffer because they are exploited by the rich, dragged into court, and slandered for believing in the noble name of Jesus (2:6, 7). To these people James directs a pastoral letter in which his first admonition is to rejoice.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **Theological Context:**

James is a respected “rabbi” sourced in the Jewish Law and culture teaching and guiding Messianic Jews. He writes between Acts 8-12. He is one of the first NT authors to write. The language he uses comes from the Hebrew Scripture. For the most part, the tensions in the book are generated by his vocabulary, not his theology.

#### **Structural Context:**

In reading chapter one, let us keep in mind its historical and theological framework. Let us work to keep it somewhat separated from Systematic Theology.

- I. His Introduction (1:2-4)
  - A. Trials are Instructional (“count it all joy; you know; testing”)
  - B. Trials are Inevitable (“When you meet”)
  - C. Trials are Intentional (“Faith produces steadfastness; that you may be perfect and complete”)
  
- II. His Invitation (1:5-8)
  - A. The Invitation from God (“if any lack, let him ask”)
  - B. The Description of God (“who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”)
    1. God is Generous
    2. God is Impartial
    3. God is Good (1:17)
    4. God is Unchanging (1:17)
    5. God is Wise (3:17)
  - C. The Condition for us (“But let him ask in faith” vv. 6-8)

### III. His Observation (1:9-11)

- A. The theological paradox - The lowly will be elevated and the rich will be debased.
- B. The practical outcome - trials treat everyone the same and level the playing field. Riches are temporal and offer no eternal help.

### IV. His Conclusion (1:12-18)

- A. James reiterates his opening premise (v. 12; cf. 1:2).
- B. James states his theological framework (vv. 13-16)
- C. James defines biblical maturity (vv. 16-18).

### **Now What?**

1. Trials are for your good.
2. Ask God to help you see them from His vantage point.
3. Know the truth about economic and social categorizing.
4. In trials, you are your own worst enemy.
5. Let the trial work the good in you by trusting God exclusively.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, James, etc., NTC, p. 31.