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Lesson 1

Testings

(James 1:1-11)

Key Concepts

1. Focus on the purpose and end result of each test.
2. God is generous with His wisdom.
3. Faith is thoughtful and deliberate but unhesitating commitment.
4. Lowliness leads to glory.
5. Wealth fails when you need it most.

Word Studies

1. Count (*hegeomai*). To consider, deem; to judge carefully and deliberately.
2. Temptations (*peirasmos*). The trials of man's fidelity, integrity, constancy; testings and provings with beneficial purpose and effect.
3. Patience (*hupomone*). Steadfastness, constancy, endurance; the opposite of cowardice or despondency.
4. Perfect (*teleios*). Finished, lacking nothing necessary for completeness; fulfilling designed purpose.
5. Entire (*holokleros*). Complete, whole, sound.
6. Wisdom (*sophia*). Skill and discretion in imparting Christian truth; the knowledge and practice of godliness; the power to trace the relationship of truth to real living; spiritual excellence of the highest sense.

7. Wavering (*diakrino*). At variance with oneself, hesitating, doubting.
8. Double-minded (*dipsuchos*). Wavering, uncertain, doubting; divided in interest.
9. Unstable (*akatastatos*). Inconstant, restless, out of order.
10. Rejoice (*kauchaomai*). To glory, boast.
11. Grace (*euprepeia*). Goodly appearance, beauty. (Not to be confused with *charis*, which is God’s grace to mankind.)
12. Fashion (*prosopon*). In this case, the outward appearance of inanimate things. (However, of its seventy-eight usages in the KJV, fifty-five times it is translated *face*.)
13. Fade away (*maraino*). To render arid, to waste away, perish; to have a miserable end.

Looking at the Text

1. What relationship do you see between the first two verses?
2. To whom was this epistle originally directed?
3. Why should we face testings with joy?
4. What is the “perfect work” of patience?
5. “Perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” What does that mean to you?
6. To whom ought we to turn in times of perplexity?
7. What is the significance of *wavering* in the context of asking for wisdom?
8. Why is a double-minded man unstable?
9. In what way should verse 9 be practiced?

10. Why should the rich rejoice in that he is made low?
11. How does the first part of verse 11 explain the latter part?

Practical Applications

1. How might you “count it all joy” the next time you are *in* the middle of testing?
2. In what sort of circumstances might you appeal to God for wisdom?
3. How can you ask in faith without wavering? How is the pursuit of faith a test?
4. Look at verses 9 and 10 again. Which applies to you? Why? How is wealth (or poverty) a test?
5. “So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.” What significance does this have for us today?
6. Who is rich?
7. What verse or concept especially caught your attention in this lesson’s passage?

Think About This

1. Christian joy has no foundation in circumstances nor in the feelings (fleeting or extended) related to those circumstances. Otherwise, some verses would present insurmountable contradictions (for examples, read James 1:2; Matthew 5:11, 12; Acts 5:41; 2 Corinthians 7:4; 12:9, 10; Colossians 1:24; Hebrews 10:34; 1 Peter 4:13, 14). Christian joy is founded on the faithful constancy of the Lord Jesus and in the resulting assurance that after testing comes glory.
2. Our attitude and perspective in testing are very important to God. Verse 2 is not talking about playing

games with your mind. When God uses James to tell us to “count” testings as joy, He means a careful (even detached) consideration of these facts as opposed to the reactionary distraction of sentiments. As we look at testings, we realize they produce patience (the Biblical characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and loyalty by even the greatest trials and sufferings). The one being tested focuses on the coming glory (Romans 8:17, 18) and steadies himself on the constancy of Christ’s love (Romans 8:35). Thus, as we are tested, we don’t just wonder, “How much longer will this last?” but also, “What will God produce in me through this?”

3. Biblical perfection for mankind is not the eradication of sin nor is it the absolute purity and flawlessness of divinity. Biblical perfection lies in performing at a level commensurate to design. What you are sitting on was no doubt designed for you to . . . sit on! It may be scratched, dented, nicked, split, repaired, rough, or stained, but as long as it holds you up, it is functioning according to design and is therefore perfect! What are the implications of this for us as Christians? And what relationship does this bear to our context in this lesson?
4. We are told to ask in faith for wisdom. Faith is more than believing that God can or will give us the wisdom for which we ask. Faith is also our commitment to live by the wisdom that He gives us. It seems our pursuit of wisdom is rather backward at times; we wish to reserve the option to decide about obedience once we know what wisdom will tell us. God does not honor that kind of wavering search for wisdom.
5. Wealth and riches fade. Those who are attached to them fade with them.

6. Just as meat is for the mature, so tests are for the prepared and able. Did Jesus test “doubting” Thomas because he was weak in faith, or because he was strong (perhaps even stronger than any of the other disciples at that time)? Part of my faith in the faithfulness of God is the confidence that He is a Master Teacher who knows how to prepare His pupils for the tests He knows they have coming. One of the implications of this is that tests prove God’s work in my life. What are some other implications?