James

Practical Wisdom for
Kingdom Service

Chapter 1: Persevere (with perspective)

James 1:9-11

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.

So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

"Flower falls…beauty perishes"

1 Pet. 1:3-7, 17-25

Isa. 40:27, 28-31; 41:1-16; 42:1-9

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James 1:12

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.

"Crown of life"

Rev. 2:10

Crown = joy, victory, royalty

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James 1:13-15

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Two important points:

1. God isn't tempted by evil.
2. We are.
    - We are responsible for our own desires…
    - …and what is produced when they are inclined toward evil.

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James 1:16-18

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Deceived, misled – Something we do to ourselves (1:14).

Contrast this description of God with the one James refutes in vss 13-15.

- Tempting vs giving
- Man's shifting desire vs God's unchanging nature
- Our choice (death by deception) vs God's choice (life from truth)

Firstfruits…creatures – Among God's creation, we are the only creatures made "in God's image."

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James 1:19-20

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The "message of truth" is most effective under three conditions:

1. Quick hearing
    - Listening to God humbly helps us listen to men sympathetically.
2. Slow speaking
    - The wise man is one who considers his words
    - Quick speech can be ineffective (1 Cor. 1:17b) or do serious harm
3. Even slower anger
    - There is a time for controlled anger (Eph. 4:26), but to let it control us is foolish and dangerous.

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James 1:21

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

"The implanted word"

Our desires must give way to the word's demands.

Let them take root (Mk. 4:1-9)

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James 1:22-24

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

"doers...hearers"

Successful hearing translates to doing.

Mirrors

Mirrors do two things:

1. They reflect reality.
2. They help us make adjustments by showing us what we can't always see from our perspective.

Failure to act on the word is to "hear without hearing" (Matt. 13:13; Acts 28:25-27).

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James 1:25

But he who looks intently into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

"looks intently"

parakupto ("with stooping")

Jn. 20:5,11; 1 Pet. 1:12

"continues in it"

The action required by the gospel is not a one-time event – it is ongoing.

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James 1:26-27

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Religion is primarily seen in two ways:

1. Controlled speech - that doesn't lift self up or tear others down.
2. Generous deeds – from pure motives that mirror God's care for even the most downtrodden.

In both of these ways, we reflect God's glory to men (Col. 3:17).

Pure & Undefiled

God's character is to be our character.

Isa. 1:16-17 – *"Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds."*

Visit *(episkopos)*

Heb. 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:25; Matt. 25:31-46

Care stemming from valuing people as God values people.