

Epistle of James
Week 4 – January 10, 2010
James 1:13-18

notes from BibleGateway.com and EnduringWord.com commentaries on James

1:13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When tempted” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trials (v.12) and temptations (v. 13) are not the same – James is continuing the line of thought about the spiritual dynamics of trials. The temptations he has in mind now are especially those that come in the context of trials. – God sometimes allows great tests to come to His people, yet in no case does God entice a person to evil. He warns Christians not to blame God for temptation and sin. However, he does want us to see the testing as a divinely used and positive alternative that stands in direct contrast to the temptation. <p style="text-align: center;">TRIAL => TESTING => PERSEVERANCE => MATURITY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TRIAL => TEMPTATION => SIN => DEATH</p> • “Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God’s side, and a temptation from Satan’s side, just as Job suffered from Satan, and it was a temptation; but he also suffered from God through Satan, and so it was a trial to him.” (Spurgeon) • God’s character - He is holy and cannot be tempted by evil; God’s will – He does not tempt anyone
1:14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The origin of the temptation</i> is the person's <i>own evil desire</i>. James's term is <i>epithymia</i>, a "desire" or "longing" especially with evil meaning. This is a call for us to take responsibility for our own lives and to deal with our sinful motives. • One of the most significant ways we resist the work of God for our growth toward becoming "mature and complete" is that we blame factors outside of ourselves for our sin. • <i>The action of the temptation</i> is to drag away and to entice. This is a hunting and fishing metaphor (dragged away as by a predator; enticed as by a lure).
1:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effect of the temptation is sin leading to death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – uses a childbearing analogy – showing how natural the progression is from sin to death – NOT a reference to losing salvation
1:16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do not be deceived, my dear brothers” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do not be deceived about the origin of temptation – vs. 13-15, and – Do not be deceived about the origin of every good and perfect gift – vs 16-18
1:17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Father. . .who does not change like shifting shadows” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – James wants his readers to cling to the certainty of God’s unchanging love in their suffering. • Especially in times of trial, is your image of God one of exalted authority, trustworthy constancy and unfailing generosity? Do you believe that God gives you good gifts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fundamental truth: in the midst of the trials, God has good gifts for you. • “coming down from the Father of heavenly lights” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Greek is actually “the Father of <i>the</i> lights” – James evokes an image of looking up to receive something wondrous, in order that we may anticipate God’s good gifts instead of looking only at the hardship of our circumstances.
1:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He chose to give us birth” – the new birth; salvation – “through the word of truth” • James may refer to his own generation of believers when he calls them firstfruits, especially as being mainly written to Christians from a Jewish background.

“When servants of God meet trials, they can respond in either of two ways: out of evil desires, making the trial an occasion for temptation, leading to sin. Or they can respond out of faith, with joy . . . This response makes the trial an opportunity for testing instead of temptation, and this testing develops perseverance that causes the Christian to become mature and complete in Christ.”

Don't Give Up

January 8th, 2010
by Donna Mitchell

Perseverance is not my favorite word. It means to continue a course of action in spite of difficulties. There are other ways to say it...hang in there, keep going, remain, stand firm, stick at it, don't give up. I believe perseverance is what it is going to take for every believer to finish well. It is going to take perseverance to believe God even when we don't see evidence of what He is doing or we witness what appears to be contrary evidence.

When challenges arise, it will take perseverance to believe God's heart is good and His ways are perfect. Perseverance will help you love sacrificially and obey His leading. It's what you'll need to pray when you don't want to, praise when you don't feel like it, stay when you feel like leaving, and embrace when you feel like giving up.

Remember, Jesus continually demonstrated perseverance.

The book of 2 Thessalonians is an encouragement in perseverance. I would encourage you to read it with that theme in mind. In the third chapter, Paul's request for prayer is our prayer for each other... "Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you. Pray, too, that we will be rescued from wicked and evil people, for not everyone is a believer. But the Lord is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. And we are cc in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we commanded you. May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ" (2 Thess 3:1-5, NLT)

We have to let Him lead our hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ. Jesus gave His life away to reach others – in life and in death. He is maturing us, changing our hearts, building our faith, and deepening our love for Him and for others. He helps us put love into action, and teaches us to stand firm and endure patiently. He is not asking us to do something He didn't willingly do Himself. Every believer, all through the centuries, has been called to do likewise.

No matter how you consider perseverance – it is not easy. However, it is easier when you resolve the issue in your mind. To persevere is a choice, an attitude of the will. It is driving a stake into the ground and saying, 'thus far, the Lord has led me' and I will choose to follow Him. (See 1 Samuel 7:12-14)