

## **James: Faith Through The Storm**

James 1:2-8 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (4) But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

I love God's Word, but I especially love the book of James, I think because James is such a straight shooter.

He doesn't pull any punches; he just says it like it is.

And James seems to have a knack of cutting straight through to the main issue.

In this first message based on James 1:2-8, we're looking at the topic Faith Through The Storm.

Because life has its storms; life isn't just plain sailing.

And as we study these verses, we learn some very important lessons.

### **1. You can fall into trials**

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

I want to point out here that there's a difference between falling into difficulties and walking into them.

There's no doubt in my mind that many of our difficulties in life are self-inflicted, but then there are those that sneak up on you.

You're just getting on with life, and through no fault of your own, problems just happen to you.

Let me give you an example:

ILLUS – Before David became king of Israel, he used to serve King Saul. And Saul was tormented by a spirit, and to try to give him relief, David would play his harp. And one day, David was playing his harp before King Saul when Saul picked up a spear, and threw it at David, hoping to pin him to the wall.

David had done nothing wrong, but suddenly he's in the midst of danger and one of life's great trials.

He fell into that trial!

Then there are trials that you walk into.

These kinds of trials don't come by chance; we cause them ourselves.

ILLUS – When David was older, and should have been wiser, and had replaced Saul as the king of Israel, his army was off at war. And David decided to take a little stroll on the roof of his house. Back in those days, in that part of the world, it was common for them to have flat roofs that they could walk on. And David looked out over the balcony, and there was beautiful woman taking a bath on the roof of her house. He should have walked away, but he likes what he sees. So David inquires as to who she is and finds out that her name is Bathsheba and that she's married to a man named Uriah. He sends for her and sleeps with her. And you probably know the story. Bathsheba becomes pregnant, so David now has a big problem. How can he cover up his sin? He sends for Uriah and tells him to his home along with a gift of food. He's hoping that Uriah will sleep with his wife and nobody will find out what he's done. But Uriah is an honourable man. All he can think about is that the rest of the army is living in tents and doing it tough. So how could he rightfully partake of the normal pleasures of life? He sleeps at the door of the king's house. When David finds out, he sends

Uriah back to the battle along with a note for Joab the commander of the army. Joab is told to put Uriah right at the front where the battle is most dangerous, and then, at a strategic time, the troops are to withdraw and leave Uriah to be killed.

And the person who hires the hitman is just as guilty as the man who pulls the trigger.

David has now committed murder too.

Adultery and murder, and God's judgment comes upon him, and life takes a sudden turn for the worse.

David didn't fall into that trial; he brought it upon himself.

But when you fall into the trials of life, James suggests an unusual response: Rejoice.

I believe that this is one of the most difficult things to do, and that it takes a lot of faith.

It's easy to rejoice when everything is going well, when you feel blessed, when all the good things of life seem to be coming your way.

It doesn't take much faith at all to rejoice when life is easy.

But when times are tough, when everything seems to be going wrong, it takes great faith to see beyond the natural circumstances and trust God enough to rejoice.

## **2. The goal is patience**

James 1:3-4 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

God wants to produce patience in our lives.

I never used to understand this.

I used to think that it involved circular reasoning: Why do we go through tests? So we can develop patience. Why do we need patience? So we can go through tests.

That didn't make a lot of sense to me.

I used to think: Why doesn't God just skip the tests and we won't need patience?

But the word that's translated here as patience doesn't mean what a lot of people think it means.

When we talk about a person being impatient, we think of a person who's in a hurry; they can't wait to get wherever it is they want to go.

So a patient person is someone who's not in a hurry.

But the word actually means a lot more than that.

This word is talking about endurance, perseverance.

In other words, God is the business of building tough people.

He wants people who can endure.

This quality is especially needed if you're in a pioneering church.

ILLUS – Back in the 1800s, there was an explorer named John McDouall Stuart, the most famous of all the explorers of Australia's inland. He was determined to find a way from Adelaide in the south, to the Indian Ocean in the north. And he kept trying, and trying, and trying, until he finally did it. It took him five or six attempts, and in the process, he contracted scurvy, lost the sight in his right eye, was attacked by Aborigines, and his clothing was reduced to rags. And all for an earthly mission.

He knew what it meant to endure; those early explorers were tough.

This is the quality God wants to develop in us.

He doesn't want us to be weak, wimpy Christians.

And the reason is that we're in a race, and the race isn't a sprint; it's a marathon.

ILLUS – I read that the fastest man in the world ran the 100 metre sprint in 9.58 seconds; that's an average of about 37 kilometres per hour.

That's fast, but you can't keep that speed up in a marathon; you have to pace yourself.

You have to be able to last the distance.

Jesus said, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Mat 24:13)

I've seen far too many people drop out of the race over the years.

It's easy to start, but God wants us to last the distance and make it to the end.

### **3. We need wisdom**

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

So what's going on here?

James starts talking about the trials of life, and now he's talking about wisdom.

What's wisdom got to do with anything?

Well, we need wisdom so that we can know how to respond to the trials we're going through.

In the story we mentioned before, where Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear, it tells us only three verses on that "David behaved wisely in all his ways." (1 Sam 18:14)

Wisdom is an important asset for us to be able to deal with trials.

But this isn't just any wisdom; it's not man's wisdom.

ILLUS – Here are some examples of man's wisdom: Einstein said in 1932, "There is not the slightest indication that nuclear energy will ever be obtainable." Roosevelt, when he was still Assistant Secretary of the US Navy said that planes would never be useful in battle against a fleet of ships. (Of course, that was before Pearl Harbor.) Charles H. Duell, commissioner of the US Patents Office said in 1899, "Everything that can be invented, has been invented."

That's human wisdom!

Even really smart people can say the dumbest things because human wisdom is very limited.

But God want us to have His wisdom.

If you read Proverbs 1-9, you'll find a list of qualities that are associated with wisdom: There's instruction, understanding, prudence, discretion, learning, knowledge, discernment.

These are all great qualities, and we need them when we go through life's trials.

So how do you get it?

### **4. We need faith**

James 1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James says that to get the wisdom of God, all we need to do is ask Him for it, but we need to ask in faith.

This reminds me of something Jesus said:

Mark 11:23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he

says. (24) Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Faith is essential if we expect to receive anything from God.

Jesus said that the condition for receiving anything in prayer is that we must first believe that we receive it.

James says, “No doubting.”

And that the person who doubts is “double-minded”.

That word literally means “two-souled”.

Let’s think about this for a moment.

Humans are tripartite beings, which means that we have three parts: Spirit, soul and body. (1 Thess 5:23)

The body has five senses: Taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell.

The spirit, that’s the human spirit, has three faculties: Conscience, intuition, and communion.

And the soul also has three faculties: The mind, the will, and the emotions.

James is not implying that a person literally has two souls if they doubt, but that it’s just like having two souls.

One mind thinking one bunch of thoughts, and the other one thinking the opposite.

One set of emotions pulling one way, and the other set of emotions pulling the other way.

One will making a choice to believe God, but the other will choosing not to believe.

No wonder he says that that person is “unstable in all his ways”!

God wants us to have His wisdom, and the way to get it is through single-minded faith.

Here are two great qualities: Wisdom and faith.

Without wisdom, how can you know how to respond during the trials of life?

But without faith, how can you face the storm and rejoice in it?

God has a plan and a purpose for us, even in difficult times.