

James 1:1-8

James 1:1-8 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. (2) 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.

Questions On The Text

How do we enter into trials?

Verse 2: James says we can “fall” into trials. There’s no doubt that through our own foolish actions, we can bring hard times upon ourselves. But trials aren’t always our own fault; bad things also happen to good people.

Notice that he also says “when” you fall into trials. Christians cannot expect that faith means being protected from the difficulties of life. This fits in with what Jesus said in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

What is our response to life’s trials meant to be?

Verse 2: We are to rejoice – not grumble – in personal suffering. This may be difficult to do, but God expects His people to live up to this standard of victorious living.

What does the testing of our faith produce?

Verses 3-4: The testing of our faith produces patience. The word “patience” means endurance. Notice that for a Christian, trials are far from being pointless. They test our faith with the result that God builds endurance into our lives. Anyone can be strong when life is easy, but God doesn’t want His children to be weaklings. He wants us to be tough, able to last the distance.

So when we go through trials, it’s the quality of our faith that is being tested. See also 1 Peter 1:6-9.

Notice also that we are to “let patience have its perfect work.” In other words, it is up to us to cooperate with what God is trying to do in us as we go through the various trials. If we don’t maintain a good attitude, we can block what God wants to do. But if we let patience do its job, it will make us perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

What quality will we need in going through trials?

Verse 5: Wisdom is absolutely necessary for us to get through trials successfully. Fortunately, God is a God of wisdom, and He’s more than willing to share it with us. All we need to do is ask Him.

What condition does God expect us to fulfil when asking for wisdom?

Verse 6: The person who asks God for wisdom must ask in faith and not doubt. Hebrews 11:6 confirms the same principle that without faith it is not possible to please God at all. In fact, Romans 14:23 says that whatever is not of faith is sin. These are pretty clear statements that show us that even in the midst of difficult circumstances, God wants us to exercise faith.

What kind of person doesn't ask in faith?

Verses 6-8: The person who doesn't ask in faith is unstable in all his ways. James uses the analogy of "a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." This is a very clear picture of instability and unpredictability. James also says that this person is double-minded. The word "double-minded" literally means two-souled. The soul is our mind, emotions, and will, and the idea is that of a person with considerable inner conflict.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Can you think of a trial you've been through that was no fault of yours?

How do you normally react to tough times? How can you improve?

How can you best remember to rejoice in trials and ask for wisdom?

When you ask God for wisdom, how do you know that He will give it to you?

What are the implications of being two-souled? What would it be like if you had two minds, two wills, and two conflicting sets of emotions?