

The Letter of James¹
Bible Study Session Two
James 1:2-12

Greek NT, UBS 4

2 Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, 3 γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν. 4 ἢ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἔχέτω, ἵνα ᾦτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

5 Εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, αἰτεῖτω παρὰ τοῦ δίδόντος θεοῦ πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ. 6 αἰτεῖτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἕοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ. 7 μὴ γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, 8 ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ.

9 Καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ, 10 ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου παρελεύσεται. 11 ἀνέτειλεν γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσῳ καὶ ἐξήρανε τὸν χόρτον καὶ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτοῦ ἐξέπεσεν καὶ ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἀπώλετο· οὕτως καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ μαρανθήσεται.

12 Μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν, ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

Elberfelder

2 Achtet es für lauter Freude, meine Brüder, wenn ihr in mancherlei Versuchungen geratet, 3 indem ihr erkennt, daß die Bewährung eures Glaubens Ausharren bewirkt. 4 Das Ausharren aber soll ein vollkommenes Werk haben, damit ihr vollkommen und vollendet seid und in nichts Mangel habt.

5 Wenn aber jemand von euch Weisheit mangelt, so bitte er Gott, der allen willig gibt und nichts vorwirft, und sie wird ihm gegeben werden. 6 Er bitte aber im Glauben, ohne zu zweifeln; denn der Zweifler gleicht einer Meereswohle, die vom Wind bewegt und hin und her getrieben wird. 7 Denn jener Mensch denke nicht, daß er etwas von dem Herrn empfangen werde, 8 [ist er doch] ein wankelmütiger Mann, unbeständig in allen seinen Wegen.

9 Der niedrige Bruder aber rühme sich seiner Hoheit, 10 der reiche aber seiner Niedrigkeit; denn wie des Grases Blume wird er vergehen. 11 Denn die Sonne ist aufgegangen mit ihrer Glut und hat das Gras verdorren lassen, und seine Blume ist abgefallen, und die Zierde seines Ansehens ist verdorben; so wird auch der Reiche in seinen Wegen dahinschwinden.

12 Glückselig der Mann, der die Versuchung erduldet! Denn nachdem er bewährt ist, wird er den Siegeskranz des Lebens empfangen, den er denen

NRSV

2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; 4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. 6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; 7 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

9 Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, 10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

NLT

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. 7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.

9 Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them. 10 And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field. 11 The hot sun rises and the grass withers; the little flower droops and falls, and its beauty fades away. In the same way, the rich will fade away with all of their achievements.

12 God blesses those who patiently endure

¹For a deeper study of the Book of James, see my internet based study of James at <http://cranfordville.com/DSLIRJamesframe.htm>. For the Lesson 02 study of James 1:2-12, see <http://cranfordville.com/JasLess02.html>

verheißen hat, die ihn lieben.

testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

The Study of the Text:²

Context of our passage:

	STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF TEXT Of James ³		
PRAESCRIPTIO			1.1
BODY	1-194		1.2-5.20
Facing Trials	1-15		1.2-12

Exegesis of the Text:

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

a) *How does the thought flow run in these verses?*

The rhetorical structure of this passage reflects a fourfold thought progression, with the boundaries of the pericope determined by the use of the word 'test' in verses 2 and 12.

The first subpericope, verses 2-4, contains an admonition for the developing of a correct posture or stance toward the experience of trials or tests. The second pericope, verses 5-8, addresses the concern of finding sufficient 'wisdom' to be able to adopt the correct posture. The third pericope, verses 9-11, illustrates (and admonishes again) the correct posture through two economic extremes of experience. Finally, a beatitude (verse 12) invokes divine blessing in eschatological judgment upon the individual who faces the test correctly as set forth in this passage.

b) *The literary genre (type of writing).*

These verses represent both ancient paraenesis (moral admonition) and ancient Jewish wisdom writing. Paraenesis defines ancient Greek, Jewish, and Christian writings that sought to admonish individuals to behave by certain standards. The guidelines and motivations for behavior differed in the ancient world, sometimes considerably. For Greeks and Romans, everything centered around living a stable life that contributed to a highly structured society. For Jews, everything mostly revolved around living in strict obedience to the Law of God as interpreted by the scribes of the day. But for Christians, behavior grows out of one's love for and commitment to Jesus Christ.

Ancient Jewish wisdom literature basically represents the Jewish version of paraenesis. The label, however, can cover a wide variety of Jewish writings both inside and outside the Old Testament. Writings such as Psalms and Proverbs reflect the earliest form of this material. Many more writings were added by Jewish scribes after the close of the Old Testament era. All of this eventually came together in the Jewish Talmud as written material in the third and fourth Christian centuries.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

James touches upon key themes beginning with how to face trials (vv. 2-4). Then he instructs us on how to secure wisdom (vv. 5-8). Later in 3:13-18, he will define true and false wisdom. In verses 9-11, he illustrates facing trials with two opposite examples from first century Christian experience. He then pronounces a blessing upon those who follow his advice in the form of a Beatitude (v. 12).

So the central emphasis of vv. 2-12 is the best way to face difficulties in daily living as a Christian.

²With each study we will ask two basic questions. First, what was the most likely meaning that the first readers of this text understood? This is called the 'historical meaning' of the text. That must be determined, because it becomes the foundation for the second question, "What does the text mean to us today?" For any applicational meaning of the text for modern life to be valid it must grow out of the historical meaning of the text. Otherwise, the perceived meaning becomes false and easily leads to wrong belief.

³Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, A Study Manual of James: Greek Text (Fort Worth: Scripta Publications, Inc., 1988), 285. **Statements** indicate core thought expressions in the text as a basis for schematizing the rhetorical structure of the text. These are found in the Study Manual and also at the James Study internet site.