

“Steadfast Part 1 Introduction to James” (1-22-23)

Who is James?

- 1/2 Brother of Jesus / not James the brother of John (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3)
- Becomes key leader of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21, Acts 21:17-26)
- Didn't initially believe in Jesus (John 7:5)
- Jesus appeared to him after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4-7)

James 1:1 (ESV)

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Note: He introduces himself not as a brother, but as a servant. He understands who he is, because he understands who Jesus is!

- **Warning** - you can be around Jesus, even among His “family,” but not truly know him for who he is!
- **Encouragement** - There is hope for us all, we need to **encounter the risen Christ!**

Today: Our Need, Our Obstacles, and Our Hope

1) Our Need

James 1:1-4 (ESV)

(1) James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Note: He is writing to the church that has been dispersed due to intense persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1)

Our reaction to “trials of various kinds” . . .

- Pray to avoid them
- View them as punishment from God
- See them as evidence of the absence / neglect of God in my life
- Consider them a knock against God's character - even questioning God's existence

We rarely go through trials thinking - what's needed right now is faith that I may grow and become steadfast. But that is exactly what James is telling us is the very purpose of the troubles we face.

Images of a Modern Christian - The False Front / Messy Grace

The real need - real maturity born out of the realities of life and our own struggles in it!

There is a huge lack of steadfastness in the church today - yet its benefits are massive:

- **Perfect** - fully developed, come of age, mature
- **Complete** - complete in all its parts, in no part wanting or unsound, complete, entire, whole
- **Lacking Nothing** - You have what you need

Our need for Steadfastness is met thru the gift of Wisdom . . . Not avoiding the troubles of this life, but learning how to navigate thru them . . .

James 1:5 (ESV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Note: We need to become steadfast - we grow into maturity through wisdom!

Wisdom - properly applied knowledge (I have the info, I understand it, and I apply it accurately)

James - the Proverbs of the NT (extra study: Proverbs, Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7))

2) Our Obstacles

- **Trials**

James 1:2, 12 (ESV)

(2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds . . .

(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.

Note: Instead of trials being an opportunity to grow, for many they just derail us!

- **Doubts**

James 1:6-8 (ESV)

(6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Note: Instead of questioning the things we should (my own wisdom/perspective, the inherent challenges of life amongst other imperfect people, the wisdom of the age), we question the very one who is our anchor!

- **Various Circumstances**

James 1:9-11 (ESV)

(9) Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, (10) and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. (11) 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.

Note: If the enemy can't side-track us with trials and doubts, he'll just distract with other pursuits

- **Temptations**

James 1:13-16 (ESV)

(13) 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. (14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Note: We don't understand the true nature and role of desire & temptation. In fact we celebrate desire as the indicator of our true selves! What a great deception! The reality: our desire leads to sin leads to death.

3) Our Hope

James 1:17 (ESV)

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.

Note: God is our hope for steadfast maturity - there is no variation, or shadow in him. We can rely on Him!

Before we rush to focus on what our part is in becoming steadfast - we've got to understand this comes from God first and foremost, not my own strength or resource.

I have to participate and not be passive - learning what to do with what God gives, but first and foremost I have to rely upon Him and His gifts . . .

James 1:5 (ESV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Note: We receive what we need from a generous God! He gives us wisdom which we lack without Him!

James 1:6-8 (ESV)

(6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Note: What do we need to grow in wisdom and become steadfast?

Faith - in God (not in myself, not faith in my faith)

Faith - from God

Notice the imagery - tossed about like waves in the sea. We will find the stability we need, by being anchored in God.

Things we receive from God:

- (vs. 5) Generously gives wisdom
- (vs. 6) Access to His gifts thru faith (which scripture teaches is a gift from God)
- (vs. 12) An eternal promise - the crown of life (we are gonna make it, and not just survive, but thrive!)
- (vs. 13) He won't tempt us (he will use the temptation that comes our way for our growth)
- (vs 17) All Good & Perfect Gifts
- (vs 17) He gives Light
- (vs 18) He gives Truth

Conclusion: We become steadfast and anchored even in the most difficult storms, because He is steadfast!

James 1:17-18 (ESV)

(17) 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. (18) Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.