

Life Link**Video Illustration:** We Give You Thanks**Slide Background:** Refiners Fire**Sermon Series: Book of James****Title: When The Going Gets Tough**

Big Idea: As we begin our study of it is important to see the context in which this book was written. The New Testament mentions 4 men who have the inspired scriptures included within its pages. Other than the Gospel writers, the New Testament mentions at least four men named James: (1) the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Mark 1:19), (2) the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), (3) the father of Judas (not Iscariot; Luke 6:16), and (4) the half brother of the Lord (Gal 1:19). Which one wrote the epistle?

This epistle was written Date

Flavius Josephus, first-century historian, records that James was martyred in A.D. 62, so the epistle must have been written prior to that date. Since no mention is made of the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 49) in which James took so active a role, it is likely that the letter was written between A.D. 45 and 48 A.D..

This letter was written to the Jewish Christians of the twelve tribes (vs.1) to the followers of Jesus as they were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. It is likely that Peter wrote to the Jewish Christians scattered to the West (cf. 1 Peter 1:1) and that James addressed the Jewish Christians scattered to the East, in Babylon and Mesopotamia

Introductory Illustration: One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway, it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey So he invited all his neighbors to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up.

Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off Moral: Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up!

Read Sermon Text

James 1:1-8

JAMES

Greeting to the Twelve Tribes

1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:
Greetings.

Profiting from Trials

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.

1. Attitude of Trials (vs.2) *

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

- a. Attitude of Trials- James writes to us and instructs us as to what our response to the difficulties of life should be. It is true that no one likes facing the hardness of living in this world James makes a statement which seems to make no sense at all. He tells us that we count the trials we face with "joy". I don't know about you but I not very happy when things go wrong in my life. I don't think that any one is. We all wish that life is like being in a boat on a sea that is smooth as glass. But James is saying that it is only when we face the storms of life that we can learn how to handle our lives.
- b. James realized that it is easy to say that you are a follower of Jesus but it's is hard to be identified as a disciple and to live as a disciple. This word disciple is defined as:

Disciple

— a scholar, sometimes applied to the followers of John the Baptist (Matt 9:14), and of the Pharisees (22:16), but principally to the followers of Christ. A disciple of Christ is one who

- (1) believes his doctrine,
- (2) rests on his sacrifice,
- (3) imbibes his spirit, and
- (4) imitates his example (Matt 10:24; Luke 14:26,27,33; John 6:69). (from Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

We as disciples of Jesus must understand that there is a cost to following Jesus. Not a monetary cost but we must die to self and live for Christ. Paul who suffered much in his life of service said he counted all things of this world as loss for serving as a bond servant was the greatest calling of his life.

Philippians 3:7 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. NKJV

Luke 6:22 Blessed are you when men hate you,
And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil,
For the Son of Man's sake. NKJV

Rom 8:17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. NKJV

2 Cor 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. NKJV

1 Peter 4:13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. NKJV

Text Illustration:

d. An old violin player explained why his violin had such quality. It was made from a certain kind of European tree, but not all of these trees would do. "The trees in the forest, sheltered by their neighbors, will not do," he said. "Fine violins come from lonely trees that grows on the hillsides where the wind twists them and the sun beats up on them and where the roots have to search deeply for water and where they have to be hardy to survive." So the Christian is the stronger and more useful who faces and overcomes trials.

2. Advantages of Trials (vs.3-4)*

James 1:3-4 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. NKJV

- a. We could ask ourselves what is the purpose of this trial which we face. It is to correct our lives and bring us in line with God's will. Discipline is used to correct an action or a wrong doing, discipline is not the only reason to face trials in our lives. Trials can be used to help us develop our spiritual character. Our resolve to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Luke 14:28

reminds us to count the cost to see if we can finish. Many of those who say they are disciples have not sat down and counted what it will cost them to follow Jesus.

- b. We must understand that we are to lose our lives in Jesus and by doing so we must become partakers in His suffering. Consider the 12 disciples. They all suffered greatly, they all died martyrs' death for following Jesus. But they all gain much more than they lost for Following Him.
- c. James writes that our testing of our faith produces patience and perseverance brings us to completeness and completeness brings us to a oneness in Jesus. Just to endure the trial is not the end result. The end result is that we may be perfect and complete in Christ Jesus. James main theme is to bring us to spiritual maturity. Only when that perfect work has finished can we reach the goal of spiritual maturity. In the movie about the famous artist Michael Angelo who was commissioned to paint the *Sistine Chapel of the Vatican* was asked when would he finish, his response was "when it's finished," In like manner trials will only be finished when we have reach the place of "being perfect and complete."

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — NKJV

Text Illustration: Perseverance--James does not leave us in despair and defeat. He assures us that our trials or tests develop Christian perseverance. THE UPPER ROOM a Christian publication had a couple of fantastic devotionals on Perseverance. A Texas lady by the name of Lou Storm wrote the devotional for September 15, 2004. I could relate 110 per cent to her situation when she began by proclaiming: "Pastor Don's sermon Sunday emphasized a theme that spoke to me: 'Sometimes persevering means we just show up every day.'" We have all faced days like that, and we can be certain we will face many more before Jesus either calls us home or returns. There will be those days that perseverance for us means "just showing up."

3. Assistance for Trials (vs. 5-8)*

James 1:5-8 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. 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,

- a. In vv. 5-8 James deals with this matter of faith, as expressed in prayer. We do not always understand God's purposes, and often Satan tempts us

to ask, "Does God really care?" This is where prayer comes in: we can ask our Father for wisdom, and He will give it to us. But we must not be double-minded. The word suggests hesitation, doubting; it literally means "two-souled." Doubleminded Christians are not stable during trials. Their emotions and their decisions waver. One minute they trust God; the next minute, they doubt God. Faith in God during trials will always lead to stability; see 1 Peter 5:10.

- b. Both rich and poor worshiped in the assemblies to which James wrote (2:1-9; 5:1), and James pointed out that trials benefit both groups. Trials remind the poor that they are rich in the Lord and therefore can lose nothing; trials remind the rich that they dare not live for riches or trust in them. Verse 12 is a wonderful beatitude and promise for us to claim in **times of testing and trial.** (from Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament. Copyright © 1992 by Chariot Victor Publishing, an imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved.)
- c. James writes of value of testing. When I was in school I believed that exams were a way of the teacher punishing us as students for the grief which we inflicted upon her. But I have come to realize that testing (trials) was for my benefit. It was used to show my weakness and flaws that I had not learned as a result of my teachers instruction. Likewise when we face the trials of life. The testing we face reveal the flaws in our Christian character and is used to bring us to work on areas of our life that need improvement.

Text Illustration: WATCH A SPIDER?

Have you ever watched a spider?

The spider will spend many hours, days, in great effort spinning a web. As the spider spins the web, the key factor will become patience. Many hours after the web is completed, the spider waits and waits.

The spider must be very still and quiet. The spider has a plan, but the plan can never develop without patience.

As the spider waits, one day the spider will feel the web moving, the food has come suddenly. But there was nothing sudden about it. It was patience released.

Conclusion: Daily living for each of us will become difficult from time to time. Some time it is a result of our own doing. The bad choices we make can lead to difficulties in our life. The Christian can expect the trials of life to include living as a disciple of Jesus. Jesus said that we would face these trials as He did. But He promised not to let us face them by ourselves. He promised to "never leave or forsake us". We can always call upon Jesus. He will be with us no matter what we are going through. Matthew 28:20 Jesus said "I am with you always even till the end of the age."