

TESTING

JAMES 1:1-18

ROSEDALE BIBLE COLLEGE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2021

LONG ISLAND is to ITALIAN CATHOLICS as LANCASTER is to DUTCHY ANABAPTISTS



CHRISTIANS ARE SCARY AND BAD AND YOU SHOULD AVOID THEM



CHRISTIANS ARE NOT SCARY OR BAD AND YOU SHOULD STICK WITH THEM



JAMES [the son of Zebedee] or JAMES [the brother of the Lord]?





JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JESUS

1. named as a **brother of Jesus** by the unbelieving crowd in Jesus' hometown (Mk. 6:3, Mt. 13:55)
2. **rebukes Jesus as insane** (Mk. 3:20-21)
3. **rejects Jesus during earthly ministry** (Jn. 7:1-5)
4. **meets the resurrected Jesus** (1 Cor. 15:7)
5. **recognizes Jesus as Lord and Messiah** (Jas. 1:1)
6. **becomes a recognized "pillar" of the church** in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9)
7. makes **wise judgments about controversial topics**, informed by Scripture (Acts 15:12-21)
8. **is martyred for Jesus**, being thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, then stoned and beaten with clubs (Clement, Hegesippus, Josephus)



THE TESTIMONY OF JAMES

- James once **foolishly rejected Jesus**
- Faced with the gospel of Jesus Christ in the resurrection, James responds with **repentance and faith.**
- James is **redeemed.** Once foolish, James becomes **wise.**
- The **church recognizes James as a wise teacher.**
- **James bears witness to Jesus** with his life and death.



JAMES' STORY IS OUR STORY

We are at Rosedale to:

- **be encountered** by the Truth of the Gospel: in God's Word, through God's Spirit, recognized among the fellowship of the church.
- **repent** of the ways that we have all regarded Jesus, his earthly ministry, and especially his cross as insane and foolish (1 Cor. 1:18-2:5)
- **grow "wise unto salvation"** through faithful study of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15)
- **practice discernment** of complicated, controversial, chaotic situations according to God's Word (1 Thess. 5:21)
- **prepare for witness** to the gospel in life and in death (Rev. 12:11)

James

The “Letter” of James does not follow a typical NT letter form, nor does it read like a personal letter.

James was likely circulated among **scattered communities of Jewish-background Christians (1:1).**

Frequent reference to “trials” suggests that **the primary audience was likely suffering;** perhaps expelled from mainstream Jewish life in the synagogues.

James reads like a collection of brief homilies. These are focused on practical Christian faithfulness amid challenging dark and chaotic circumstances.



We might, then, consider *James* a collection of “wisdom sermons,” which offers:

**practical instruction
about how to live well
in a world where Jesus is Lord,
but where most people
(even Christians)
reject Jesus as Lord
in their thinking and living.**

James is helping *us* to do what *he* had to do: “unlearn” false ways of thinking and living; learning to live as witnesses to the truth



FIRST HOMILY: TRIALS AND TESTING (1:2-18)

The first homily of *James* deals with trials (Gk. *peirasmós*). Often, this word is translated “temptation,” as in the Lord’s Prayer (Mt. 6:13).

“Temptation” evokes an internal struggle: lust, anxiety, impulse control. The Greek work *peirasmós* as a much broader range. It can refer to both:

1. subjective struggles (i.e., “temptations”)
2. objective struggles (e.g., persecution)

Both uses of *peirasmós* are united by a general sense hardship.



More broadly, however, *peirasmós* is that puts people or things “to the test.” Various examples of “testing” or “trying” [*peirazo*] include:

- Paul and his companions “try” to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them (Acts 16:7)
- Jesus’ opponents “test” him, asking him for a sign from heaven (Mt. 16:1)
- God’s people “try” God’s tolerance of sin with their wicked behavior (1 Cor. 7:5)
- We “test” our own faith (2 Cor. 13:5) and the faith of others (Rev. 2:2) — and we should!
- Jesus asks questions to “test” Philip — even though Jesus already knows Philip’s response (Jn. 6:5-6)
- Satan “tests” Jesus in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1)

Testing is the kind of engagement (often involving hardship or conflict) that *reveals something*.



James 1:2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.



Testing is a “formative assessment”

Formative assessment does not determine the final grade in a class. Its purpose is to *reveal* student progress: to identify areas for growth, and support learning.

Sometimes, we might not like what such testing reveals about us. The entire act of answering the question, and of having the answer evaluated, can be very unpleasant.

But if we endure such testing, we are transformed, like James was transformed. Testing can make us more mature and complete (v.4).



But not all testing makes us more mature and complete. Some trials have made people bitter. We can all think of examples.

What kinds of people grow from trials? Under what conditions can such hardship help us to grow?

Does James have any practical advice [i.e., wisdom] for us, about how to deal with trials?



James 1:5-8

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.



If anyone lacks wisdom [i.e., practical knowledge of what to do in time of trial], **ask the gracious God who makes the sun to shine on the wicked and the righteous alike.**

This gracious God intends to use your trials: to steady you in a dark and chaotic world, to use hardship to make you more fully what He has declared you to be in Christ: holy, righteous, redeemed.

But **faith in God's grace** is essential to growing through trials. If you do not believe that God is for you — that he intends to redeem this hardship, regardless of your unworthiness — you will only be storm-tossed.

Faith in God's grace brings salvation through trials.



James 1:9-12

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wildflower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. 12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.



All of life is recast by the Christian approach to testing.

Now, the hardship of poverty affords unique advantages.

The ease of wealth is fleeting, and might actually disadvantage those who seek maturity through patient endurance of trials.

Although the righteous poor are marginalized, as Jesus was during his earthly ministry, they can expect to be crowned with glory, as Jesus is today.

By grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, you can do hard things, purposefully and with endurance.

James 1:13-18

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.





Let there be no confusion: God's purpose is *for you*. His design is to crown humanity with glory (Ps. 8; cf. 1 Cor. 15). We are responsible for our failures, not God.

God, in his great wisdom [i.e., practical know-how] has ordered the work of our Adversary to produce his downfall, just as on the cross.

For us, the cross of Jesus is a trial: a revelation of God's gracious love for sinners.

God is unchanging in His goodness and truth. He is completely worthy of your trust, even in your own trials.

LET'S PRAY

