

James 1:12-18 – Blessed in the Good and the Bad

Michael Silva / July 29, 2018

- ❖ Opening: Optimists think that the glass is half full, and pessimists think that the glass is half empty, but realists know the glass is actually two times larger than it needs to be.
 - a) Which of the three are you?
 - b) In today's passage James helps us to have proper perspective on the difference between good and bad in our lives.

Introduction: The Epistle of James – The Proverbs of the New Testament.

1. **Key Theme:** Living out your faith, being doers of the Word and not just hearers of the Word.

Our passage today is James 1:12-18 (NKJV)ⁱ

1. In the opening verses of James, we are reminded that **doers of the word**...
 - a) Are part of a **family**, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ (Vs 1-2), we are in this **together**.
 - b) Next, *doers of the word* **count it all joy** when they fall into **various trials** (Vs 2-4).
 - c) *Doers of the word* **ask for wisdom** in **faith**, without **doubting** (Vs 5-8).
 - d) *Doers of the word* **invest** their time, talent, treasures in **eternal things** that glorify God (Vs 9-11).
2. I've **summarized** our passage today with: **Blessed in the Good and the Bad**.

James 1:12 ¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1. James begins a new section by declaring that the *doer of the word* **who endures temptation** will be **Blessed**.
 - a) The word **temptation** could also be translated as **trials**; the original Greek word πειρασμός - **peirasmos** carries the idea of being **tested or proved**.
 - b) Again, we see that James was greatly **influenced** by Jesus's opening to the **Sermon on the Mount**.
 - i) Let's look at the **Beatitudes**, which is the opening to the Sermon on the Mount. Read **Matthew 5:1-12**.
 - ii) Much of what Jesus speaks of in the Beatitudes could be **described** as **tests and trials**.
 - iii) Jesus declares that those who **experience, endure, and overcome** these circumstances are **blessed**.
 - c) James, the half-brother of Jesus reminds us that God's blesses those **who endure temptation**.

2. The word **endures** is translated as ‘**remains steadfast**’ in the **ESV**. The **NIV** translation declares ‘Blessed is the one who **perseveres** under trial...’
 - a) It’s saying **no** to what the **world** often says **yes** to.
 - b) It’s **passing through without** giving in.
 - c) It’s **staying the course** God has set you on.
3. James declares, **for when he has been approved...**
 - a) When, **not if; when he has been approved...**
 - i) David **Guzik** explains, “Here James states the purpose of God in allowing temptation. The purpose is to approve us; that through the testing we would be revealed as genuine and strong in our faith.”
 - b) James continues, **he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**
 - i) It really is **worth it** to endure and persevere through the trials.
 - ii) For the **crown of life** has been reserved for the one who passes through those trials.
 - (1) **1 Corinthians 6:19–20** ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.
 - (2) Those who endure receive a crown that signifies that you have lived **life** for God’s glory.
 - c) Do you **love Him**? Are you enduring temptations? God’s **promised** that you **will receive the crown of life**.

James 1:13-14 ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

1. Why is there **evil in the world**? Have you heard that question?
 - a) Many who do not know God want to blame God for the evil in the world.
 - b) **1 John 4:7–9** ⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, **for God is love**. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.
 - c) Evil does not come from God for God is love and evil and love cannot coexist together.
2. God did not create evil, nor does God tempt us to do evil.

Blessed in the Good and the Bad

- a) But He will sometimes allow the Evil One to tempt us as a part of the **testing of our faith** to help us **grow** as Christians.
 - i) But we can never say that we are **tempted by God**.
 - b) C.H. **Spurgeon** helps to clarify this issue, “Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God’s side, and a temptation from Satan’s side...”
 - i) The **trial** might be difficulty in your **marriage**, the temptation might be to turn to **pornography** or engage in an extramarital **affair**.
 - ii) The **trial** might be **financial** difficulty, the temptation might be to **steal** or **cut corners**.
 - iii) The **trial** might be a **difficult boss** or a demanding **deadline**, the temptation might be to escape with **alcohol** or **drugs** or to **release** your **anger** and **stress** on everyone else.
 - c) Consider Job from the Old Testament, **Satan** threw everything he could at Job in order to try to get Job to **curse God**, yet Job did not.
 - i) That was a temptation from Satan, which God allowed as a trial in Job’s life. And now we have the incredible account of Job’s **patient endurance** through the midst of extreme trials.
 - ii) The account in Job ends with **Satan defeated** and **Job** being **abundantly blessed** by God once again.
3. Temptation comes from **two sources**...
- a) When we are **drawn away by his own desires**.
 - i) That describes our **sin nature**.
 - ii) **1 Corinthians 10:12–13** ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.
 - iii) With each desire to sin, there is a **way of escape**, provided by our loving Heavenly Father.
 - b) Also, temptations come from being **enticed**.
 - i) These are temptations **from the enemy**.
 - ii) Spiritual Warfare – **Ephesians 6:12–13** ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
4. To be **tempted** is not sin. **Satan tempted** Jesus, but Jesus **never** sinned.
- a) But, when we **yield** to the temptation, that is when we sin.
 - b) When you **entertain and indulge in** those temptations... You are **drawn** or ‘dragged away.’
 - c) Think of **Fishing** when you think of sin – If you play with the bait and you’re likely to get **hooked!**

James 1:15 ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

1. This is the **full progression** of sin in this world, it always leads to **death**.
 - a) In **Genesis 2:17** God warned Adam and Eve, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
 - b) Sin, which is **rebellion** against God’s word and plans, leads to death.
 - c) The problem is... the appetite for sin is **never satisfied**. When you feed sin it only wants more.
 - i) It’s like a **fire**, the more you feed it the **stronger** it gets.
 - ii) It’s like an **infection**, it **grows** unless you kill it.
 - iii) It’s like **weeds**, they rapidly **spread** unless you just pull them out.
2. This is what makes the **gospel message so glorious**...
 - a) **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - b) **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - c) Jesus said in **John 10:10** The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.
 - d) The gospel gives us hope! Our sins can be forgiven by faith through grace!

James 1:16 ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

1. James exhorts, don’t be **deceived**, why? Because some have.
 - a) It’s **easy** to be deceived by our **sinful desires** and the **Evil One**.
 - b) We must keep our guard up, always!

James 1:17 ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

1. Next James **contrasts good and evil**.
 - a) God does **not** send temptations to do evil, instead God sends **Every good gift and every perfect gift**.

2. Let's take **inventory**, what is good and perfect in your life? Anything good and perfect is all from God.
 - a) Do you have some **good traits** that others like? Some good **skills** or **habits**?
 - b) Do you have some **nice** and **good possessions**?
 - i) A **car** that works, a **job** that faithfully pays you every two weeks?
 - ii) How about an **A/C** that keeps you cool? A **refrigerator** with food?
 - iii) If it's good, if it's perfect, God has **sent that down** to you through **His grace, love, and provision**.
 - c) Everything that is great, wonderful, praiseworthy in your life is because of God's grace to you.
3. Next James uses a **shadow** as a **contrasting illustration**.
 - a) Shadows change, God does not.
 - b) An **umbrella** at the beach... What happens as you sit under it? You have to **keep moving your chair** to stay under the shade because the shadow is always changing and moving.
 - i) But God does not turn or change.

James 1:18 ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

1. Wiersbe explains the meaning of these verse, "By granting us a new birth, God declares that He cannot accept the old birth. Throughout the Bible, God rejects the firstborn and accepts the secondborn. He accepted Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau. He rejects your first birth (no matter how noble it might have been in the eyes of men), and He announces that you need a second birth."
 - a) He continues, "It is this experience of the new birth that helps us overcome temptation. If we let the old nature (from the first birth) take over, we will fail. We received our old nature (the flesh) from Adam, and he was a failure. But if we yield to the new nature, we will succeed; for that new nature comes from Christ, and He is the Victor."
 - b) **1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Conclusion: What's the big take away from this passage?

1. Let's not blame God for the bad and forget to thank Him for the good!
2. Good or bad, no matter what we face, we are blessed...
 - a) For by His grace **we can endure temptations** for **His glory**.
 - b) And as we do, we become His **firstfruits**, which in **farming terms** represents the **best** of the crops.

Blessed in the Good and the Bad

- i) **Firstfruits** are prize possessions.
- ii) You, by faith through grace, are God's prized possession!

Invitation: Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

¹ All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The New King James Version. (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.