BIBLE GATEWAY James 1 :: NASB.

James 1:1-4 –

> *“James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

These articles on the Book of James are devotional articles and not a detailed commentary. It is not the intent to go detail as to the identity of the author of this book. It is the position of this writer that the author was James the brother of Jesus (*Galatians 1:19*, *Galatians 2:9*).

Some writers have called the Book of James the proverbs of the New Testament, and others believe this was the earliest book in the New Testament. The book is not addressed to a specific city or church. In fact, it is addressed to the twelve tribes that were dispersed abroad. James became prominent in the Church, but his heritage was Jewish.

In the beginning of the Church, the first Christians were Jewish. When the church in Jerusalem was scattered during the first persecution, those Jewish Christians either returned to their homes or spread out into other areas. James was not omitting non-Jews, but rather he was addressing the changed attitudes and actions that ALL Christians would have to follow.

Verse 2 is a remarkable statement. Afterall, who looks forward to trails, problems, or suffering in life? In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were told, “IF you will be devoted to the Lord God Almighty AND you followed the statutes set out in the Law of Moses, THEN you would have peace and prosperity.”

Yet, here James is saying that not only do trials occur, but Christians should view suffering in a positive way. Yes, suffering can come as punishment, but it can still occur to the righteous Christian, and that Christian is to see that as an opportunity to grow and strengthen spiritually.

Many people expect their physical lives to improve when they become Christians. There is nothing in the New Testament that supports that belief. False preachers proclaim that a person can get rich and leave their troubles behind IF they will just follow their teaching that they received “by the spirit”. That is false teaching and the author of such lies is not God.

Christians must understand that this physical world is no longer their home. In fact, the spiritual powers in this world will OPPOSE those

who are Christians and will try to undermine their faith. Suffering will occur, not because the person has done something wrong, but because allegiance has been given to someone else.

Christians must remember that they now serve a new Master, God the Father, and a new King, Jesus Christ, Lord, King, and Savior. James had been the brother of Jesus Christ, yet he called himself, *"a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ".* He recognized the new relationship he had with his older brother.

So, what do trials and suffering accomplish? For a faithful Christian, it will lead to a stronger ability to withstand such situations. A man or woman that participates in athletics, or some strenuous activity, does not just get up one day and perform perfectly.

It takes practice, training, hard work, sore muscles, sweat, and fatigue. Some might call that "suffering" or "trials", but for the person involved in that exercise and practice, it is merely a part of what is needed to reach the goal of being the best.

That is the attitude that a Christian is expected to have when facing the trials of life. Once a person becomes a Christian, that person is expected to grow and mature in faith and in serving the Lord. That requires the exercise of "spiritual muscles". There are no passive by-standers in the Lord's kingdom.

James 1:5-8 –

> *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*

Verse 5 ties in with the introduction. A person becomes a Christian, and as a new Christian, that person will only have a very basic understanding of what is expected. So, where does a person get the information needed? Where does a person acquire wisdom? The answer, of course, is from God.

In the early days of the Church, the inspired record in the New Testament scriptures had not been completed, and certain spiritual gifts were given to provide the needed information. But once the inspired New Testament was complete, those spiritual gifts faded away.

Today, a Christian acquires wisdom and knowledge from God’s Word. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:*16*–*17*,

> *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”*

Christians live under the teaching of the New Testament, but the Old Testament is also critical to see how God’s plan of redemption came to fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Prayer is also a critical part of a Christian’s Life. Paul said to “pray without ceasing”. Now, God is not going to place inspired words inside a person’s mind, but God WILL answer the prayer for wisdom, in that His Word will begin to open up and become clearer with continual study.

The Bible is not a book that a person can read and fully understand in one of two readings. This is not a man written document. The Bible contains the infinite wisdom of God. A person can read and study for a lifetime and the truths in the inspired pages will continue to open up like a beautiful flower.

Verses 6-8 make it very clear that the receipt of wisdom must be joined to an unwavering faith – a belief that what is revealed is true and is to be followed. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote in in Galatians 1:6–7,

> *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”*

Here were people that had received the truth from appointed apostles! They believed, but as soon as the apostles moved on, many of the Galatians were attracted to someone else’s false teaching.

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So many people bounce from one religious fad to another! “As long as I feel good then it must be true.” How many people vacillate from one belief to another? James warned that such attitudes were condemned. Many will go back and forth, because they want to keep some of their practices and attitudes from the old worldly life. In ***Matthew 6:24***, Jesus said,

> *“You cannot serve God and mammon (wealth)”.*

Becoming a Christian is not like joining a club or organization. It is a life-changing event that is literally a matter of eternal life or death. The person must be very serious about the decision to become a Christian. There is no “I really didn’t mean it”, or “I’m going to take a break” without serious consequences.

Hebrews 10:*26*–*27* make very clear is to the consequences.

> *“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”*

James 1:9-11 –

> *“But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is*

> *destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away."*

That seems to be an odd statement. "Humble circumstances" would refer to someone that is very poor with little hope for the future. So why would such a person glory in their high position? Probably, physically and financially nothing had changed. So, what had changed? Why was the message of Jesus Christ called "The Good News" or "The Gospel"?

For a slave, the poor, or workers that were barely above starvation, the message must have seemed incredible. They realized that there WAS hope. Their present physical position was immaterial. The past sins in their lives could be forgiven, and they would be viewed as children of God.

Paul wrote in ***Romans 6:17***,

> *"and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."*

Their lives would have meaning! When they died, they would NOT simply be forgotten. They could look to the future with anticipation.

But for the wealthy, the message would bring a stark realization that all their wealth, their power, their influence, means nothing to God. James wrote, *"because like flowering grass he will pass away"*. Worldly wealth and possessions do not last.

Who can name the richest men and women of 100 years ago? 50 years ago? How many streets or buildings have people's names on them, and no one knows who they were?

If anything, material possessions and power would be a real hinderance in being acceptable and pleasing to God. Remember the story of the rich young ruler. By every outward appearance, he was a righteous man, and the scriptures said that Jesus loved him. But he could not let go of his material possessions and wealth.

The world presents the idea that the poor "deserve" where they are. Of course, the other point is that the well off "deserve" their good fortune. But the teachings of Jesus Christ and the writings of the New Testament teach the exact opposite! All have sinned, there are none righteous, no not one.

Rich and poor, slave or free are in the same condition. Everyone is spiritually equal. For the wealthy, there would have to be a complete

change in their attitude and perception of others.

While the poor may be more receptive to the Gospel Message, they also will be required to make a change in life. Envy, resentment, anger, sinful pride must not exist in the relationships between Christians. That is why Christians often address one another as “brother” and “sister”.

The words of Jesus Christ, and every one of the letters in the New Testament emphasize that Christians MUST love one another. So, social and economic standing has no place in the Church. This is not an option. It is a command.

James 1:12

> *“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

This is a statement of hope for a Christian. Suffering and trials WILL occur whether a person is a Christian or not. If a Christian does strive to live a Christ-directed life, then that person will avoid many trials in life that come to people that do not live a Christian life.

But there is more to this than simply avoiding trials. If a Christian lives a life that is Christ-centered, in spite of the trials and suffering that occurs in this world, that person will receive the crown of life promised by God.

It does not mean that a Christian will never stumble, but it does mean that the Christian continues forward due to his/her faith and love for the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in *Philippians 3:14*,

> *"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

This is the attitude that every Christian must have.

A Christian life is a life of hope and anticipation for the future. A Christian's life does not end when he/she dies. In fact, life truly begins. Finally, there will be a sense homecoming and completeness that is totally beyond a person's ability to understand or comprehend in this life.

But when a Christian comes into the presence of absolute love and purity, all the struggles in this life will become irrelevant.