

James

I. Introduction

A. **James 1:12-18** . . . 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. [13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. [14] But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. [15] Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. [16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. [17] Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. [18] In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

B. Prayer

II. Approval and the Crown of Life

A. **[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.**

1. This is very similar to the Beatitudes spoken by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. It begins by announcing that the person who does a certain thing is blessed, and ends by proclaiming what the reward or outcome is of doing that certain thing.
2. Blessed is the person who remains faithful to God and godliness throughout the duration of a trial or temptation. Why? Because being faithful to God and godliness until one's dying day brings approval by God, and those God approves, He gives the crown of life – just as He does to all who love Him.

B. **Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial;**

1. The **trial** spoken of here could be a reference to the trials of **verse 2**, or it could be a reference to the temptations of **verses 13-15**.
 - a. If it is a reference to the trials of **verse 2**, then it seems that this verse (**verse 12**) is the conclusion to that section. This section (**verses 2-12**) begins with the promise of stronger faith, greater

endurance, and significantly diminished sinfulness when we keep our eyes on the long-term spiritual benefits of our trials. And it ends with the gift of the crown of life (eternal life), which God promises to all who love Him.

- b. If the word translated “trials” by the NASB is a reference to the temptation spoken of in the following verses, then it is the lead-off statement in a section that ends at **verse 18**. This section (**verses 12-18**) begins with a promise of eternal spiritual blessing to all who remain faithful to God in the midst of trials and temptations. It clarifies what the root source of temptation is – our fleshly desires and selfishness, and it concludes by confirming that only good things come from God. As John writes, “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (**I John 1:5**).
 - c. The Greek NT is of little help here because the word translated “trials” in **James 1:2**, is the same Greek word translated “trials” here in **verse 12**, and has the same root as the words translated “tempted” in **verses 13-14**.
 - d. Based on my reading and understanding of **James 1**, I am choosing to make it the lead-off verse for the following verses rather than the concluding verse for the previous verses.
2. To persevere under trial and suffering, or throughout a period of temptation, is to remain faithful to God – in thought, word, and deed – from beginning to end.
- a. An example of remaining faithful in thought:
 - (1) **Philippians 4:6-7** . . . Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 - (a) There is only one reason for the kind of anxiety spoken against here – distrust of God, or fear driven unbelief.
 - (b) When anxiety tempts us, we are not just tempted to worry, we are also tempted to think thoughts of God that are far from hallowing His name, and revering Him, and believing He is good.
 - (c) We may say we are merely questioning God, or wondering in our mind if God is truly good in all situations – as if such questioning were our right or the mark of a thinking person. And maybe it is, but if we end with our questions in tact, rather than ending our time of pondering and

questioning with a strong affirmation that our trust and confidence is in God and His goodness and in His faithfulness and in His lovingkindness, our questioning is ending on a note of unbelief rather than faith.

- (d) Therefore, to persevere under trial and in the face of temptation, is to put all unbelief to rest and walk through it in confidence that, regardless of the circumstances or how we feel, God is good and we are safe in His hands.
- (2) **I Corinthians 10:13** . . . No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
- (a) God promises that no trial or temptation is stronger than our current spiritual, mental, and emotional strength to pass through it without sinning.
 - (b) To the first promise He adds a second – He will provide a way of escape, not from having to endure the trial or temptation, but from having to give in to despair and unbelief and sin while passing through the trial or temptation.
 - (c) Therefore, a second example of remaining faithful (persevering) in the face of trials and temptations is acting on the confidence that God makes sure we are stronger than any trial or temptation that comes our way and added to that, God provides ways to escape.
- b. An example of remaining faithful in word: **Philippians 2:14-16** . . . **Do all things without grumbling or disputing;** [15] so that you will **prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent,** children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, [16] holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.
- (1) **I Corinthians 10:9-10** . . . Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. [10] Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer (*angel of death*).
 - (2) The Israelites tempted God, or tried His patience and pushed His long-suffering (*forbearance*) to the limit. They did this

by rebelling against Him, murmuring about Him (*an undertow of quiet but ongoing complaints*), impatience with Him (*wanting God to fix the difficult situations now!*), and being dissatisfied or discontent with His dealings with them.

- (3) God called this grumbling and complaining, rebellion and sin, and God responded to this behavior on their part with the kind of severe discipline He brings against all evil.
 - (4) When facing trials and temptations, do you grumble against God or speak in ways that indicate you have allowed distrust of God to rise within you? What about when those hard times or temptations just seem to keep coming with no end in sight?
 - (a) What are you telling God with your murmuring and complaining?
 - (b) What does this behavior say about your trust in God and love for God?
 - (c) How does this behavior affect your relationship with God?
 - (5) Therefore, an example of remaining faithful in word while passing through trials and temptations is doing so without murmuring, grumbling, talking as if you are a victim, talking as if you feel sorry for yourself, or saying anything derogatory about God and His dealings with you. May we trust God in the same way Job did, so like him we can say: “Though He slay me, I will [still] hope in Him” (**Job 13:15**).
- c. An example of remaining faithful in deed:
- (1) **Ephesians 4:25-27** . . . Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. [26] Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and do not give the devil an opportunity.
 - (a) How easily we allow hard times and the tiring battles of resisting temptation to motivate, or even justify the manifestation of frustration or anger toward those around us. This is NOT remaining faithful or persevering, but rather turning to sinful thinking and acting under the pressure of the trial or temptation.
 - (b) Yes, we need to speak honestly to those around us, including those who are doing things that tempt us to evil or who are causing our suffering. But we need to do so with meekness, respect, patience, and mercy. Allowing frustration or anger or resentment to rise within us and

influence our speaking and actions is proof we have been overcome by the evil rather than overcoming evil with good – the good of continuing to do what we know is right even under difficult circumstances or in disappointing relationships.

- (2) **Romans 12:14, 17-19, 21 . . .** [14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. [17] Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. [19] Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. [21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
 - (a) Remaining faithful (persevering) in the face of trials and temptations is giving love for hate, kindness for meanness, meekness for hostility, gentleness for anger, blessing for suffering, and godliness for ungodliness.
 - (b) Remaining faithful is doing our part to live the Christ-like life regardless of how others are living – especially those nearest and dearest.
 - (c) It is making God the supreme being in all situations and relations and thoughts and words and deeds regardless of the outcome or even the hoped for outcome. May we be like Daniels three friends: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. [18] But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (**Daniel 3:17-18**).
- d. Other things we ought to do to remain faithful in hard times and in the face of temptation:
 - (1) Use scripture to resist the devil. Submit to God so as to do His will and live up to the standard set by His word. Draw near to God so as to experience His nearness to us.
 - (2) Value the valuable not the expedient or the momentarily pleasurable. In other words, value the spiritual growth and perfection that comes from passing the test to be of such value as to motivate you to remain faithful (sin free) in the midst of taking the test.
 - (3) Live up to the same standard to which you hold others.

(4) Continue reminding yourself that approval – passing test after test until death separates us from this world – leads to receiving the crown of life. Which seems to imply that disapproval or failing too often (just as in school) leads to the loss of the crown of life.

C. **for once he has been approved** – if we pass the test by remaining faithful to God in the midst of temptation to sin, or in the midst of a hard time that provides numerous temptations to sin, we will be approved.

D. **he will receive the crown of life**

1. What is the crown of life? Heavenly reward? Earthly reward? Eternal life?
2. Most likely, the answer you would give or the answer you are expecting to hear depends on your theology and if you interpret scripture according to your theology. I want to urge all of us to wrestle with the God's word to see what God means by what He is saying, and especially so in relation to those portions that differ from our theology or are difficult to understand.

E. **which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

1. Without question, many Christians, including most of us, say they love God. But does saying we love God mean we love Him? Do warm feelings of admiration, or an intimate sense of His nearness, or a deep sense of appreciation mean we love God? What about those special emotions that wash over us during times of worship. Do they mean we love God? Where might we find the answer to **what it means to love God**? In God's Word!
2. The scriptures make it clear that there are standards for us to live up to if we are to love God. Let me give you four.
 - a. Love God more than anyone or anything else, love God supremely.
 - (1) **Mark 12:30** . . . And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.
 - b. Willingly submit to the will and word of God so as to obey God.
 - (1) **John 14:15** . . . If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (**John 14:21, 23**)
 - (2) **John 14:24** . . . He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

- c. Do not love the world! **I John 2:15** . . . Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
 - d. Love those around you. **I John 4:20** . . . If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.
3. What can we learn from these four standards? To love God below these standards may be a sadly lacking form of love, or it may be the first steps of a new Christian heading in the direction of loving God as He wants to be loved, but it is not loving God up to the standard He sets for us.
- a. In fact, knowingly and continually loving Him less than these standards is a clear indication we still love ourselves or the world or some other thing or person more than we love God?
 - b. What wife or husband is happy and content being loved in this same "I love myself the most" way by their spouse? Yet how many of us pass such love off on God, and expect Him to believe, or at least treat us as if we really love Him?
4. And there is one more truth I want to add to these standards set by God in relation to loving Him. We do not love God supremely or for Himself until we love Him regardless of what He does or doesn't do for us.
- a. And how do we know if we love God for Himself?
 - b. By how we respond to Him, to life, and to others when our circumstances become difficult or painful or something other than what we want them to be.
5. What is the point? To love God, according to His requirements of us, is to love God above all others and more than anything else, and to obey Him. Such are the ones who receive God's gracious and eternal gift of the crown of life.

III. Conclusion

- A. Blessed is the person who remains faithful to God and to the ways of God throughout the duration of a trial or temptation. Why? Because being faithful to God and godliness until one's dying day brings approval by God, and those God approves, He gives the crown of life – just as He does to all who love Him.
- B. May we be people who live in such a way as to receive this crown of life!