

James

How to Persevere & Love God – Part 1

July 10, 2011

I. Introduction

- A. **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.
- B. Prayer

II. How to Persevere Throughout a Time of Trial or Temptation

- A. Basis for today's teaching: We can no more be victorious over our flesh, the world, and the devil apart from the empowerment of Christ within any more than the Israelites could be victorious over the inhabitants of the Promised Land without the empowerment of God for victory. At the same time, we can no more be victorious over our flesh, the world, and the devil apart from doing our part as given to us by God any more than the Israelites could be victorious over the inhabitants of the Promised Land without going to war against them and driving them out (**Matthew 5:6; Romans 6:12-14, 8:12-13, 12:9-20; Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:1-10, 12-14; I Timothy 6:9-12; II Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 12:12-17; James 4:7-10; I Peter 1:13-16, 3:8-12, 4:1-3**).
- B. How do we remain faithful or persevere so as to continue on through a time of trial or temptation without turning against God (in anger, hurt, unbelief, discontentment) or turning to comfort sins?
 - 1. **First**, you have to want to. You have to want to persevere. You have to want stronger faith and a more godly life. You have to want to treasure God above all else so that nothing earthly or temporal takes precedence over Him. You have to want to die to self and live for God so as to serve Him and please Him above all others – and especially above yourself. You have to want to do your part – whatever it takes – to be holy as God is holy. And when it comes to loving God according to the standard He set for us, you have to want to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - a. When I say you have to want to, I don't mean you have to know it is the right thing to do. Many in the church know what is right and can teach others what is right. **Wanting to** means you want it enough to take the steps necessary to obtain it or become it. As James says: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (**James 1:22**).

- b. Scriptures to speaking of wanting to:
 - (1) **Psalm 42:1-2** . . . As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?
 - (2) **Psalm 63:1** . . . O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- c. Sometimes the want to is as much a part of you as wanting to eat when you are hungry. But sometimes it just isn't in you in that way.
 - (1) When the want to is not in you, when what is in you are feelings or desires or fears that motivate you to move away from doing what you need to do to persevere in trials, resist temptations, and love God up to His standard of love, then you are left with making a decision: Will you do what is right in the sight of God or will you please or gratify or comfort yourself?
 - (2) Those of us here today know that the right choice is living according to the will and word of God. But the decision doesn't stop there, because making the decision to choose God is only useful when accompanied by the decision to do what it takes to push yourself – day after day – in doing what you know is right in the face of strong temptation to give up or go in a direction other than God's way.
 - (3) For those of us who need such decision making in some area or another, I urge you to read and even memorize **II Peter 1:2-11**. Then meditate on it several times per week until it becomes your guide in the pursuit of godliness.
- 2. **Second**, it is vital to believe the right things
 - a. Believe in God's goodness – **Psalm 103:6-14**.
 - b. Believe that God, through Jesus Christ, has broken the power of sin over us so that we no longer have to sin.
 - c. Believe in the grace and power of God to empower you for victory over the devil's temptation, the world's allurements, and your own fleshly desires – just as David believed in God's power for victory of Goliath.
 - d. Believe that Satan never wants to lose a friend. And believe that Satan's only intent is to harm you and gain a victory over God. In other words, Satan wants to pull you down to hell with him, and he will do whatever it takes to get you to turn against God

and join him in his rebellion. Finally, believe that sin always brings more trouble to your life, separates you from God, harms your conscience and mind, and weakens your resolve to love and obey God above all else.

- e. Believe in the wisdom and outcome of God's discipline – **Hebrews 12:4-11, I Corinthians 11:27-32** . . . Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. [28] But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. [30] For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. [31] But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.
- f. Believe in the testing of God. According to the scriptures, God tested Abraham, God tested Israel, He tests hearts and minds, He tests the righteous, He tests men's faith, and if He does all this testing, we can know that He will test us.
- g. Believe that there is no meaningful progress without preparation and daily effort.
 - (1) **I Corinthians 9:24-27** . . . Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. [25] Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; [27] but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.
 - (2) **Hebrews 12:1-3** . . . Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3] For consider Him who has endured such hostility

by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- h. Believe in the need for constant vigilance: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (**I Peter 5:8-9**).
- 3. **Third**, nurture honesty and humility toward yourself. Flee denial, defensiveness, and shameful excuses for any ungodly behavior.
- 4. **Fourth**, nurture a broken and contrite heart over sin, including mourning and weeping for sins committed.
- 5. **Fifth**, guard your mind – against thoughts or desires or feelings that should not be there or that rule over you. Guard against dishonesty or denial or irrational thinking.
- 6. **Sixth**, guard your mouth – no complaining or murmuring or speaking against God or talking about God as if He has failed you or as if He is not worthy of your trust and love, obedience and praise. No using language that blames others or somehow excuses you for giving in to bad, sinful, ungodly thinking and behavior. What we say reinforces what we think.
- 7. **Seventh**, make time for prayer, self-examination, contemplation of the truths of God’s word as it applies to you, meditation on God and specific scriptures, and intimacy with God so as to discover how wonderful it is to engage in an active relationship with God.

III. End Here – finish next week