

# James

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How to Persevere & Love God – Part 2

July 17, 2011

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## 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? **REVIEW 1-7:**

1. **First**, you have to want to.
2. **Second**, it is vital to believe the right things.
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 – because 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.

- C. 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? **CONTINUE ON:**
1. **Eighth**, be careful, wise, and diligent in your praying.
    - a. Pray without ceasing. Be devoted to prayer. In other words, pray often throughout the day.
    - b. Talk to God as you would talk to a counselor or friend who is helping you.
  2. **Ninth**, have a plan for preparing to meet the enemy and gaining the victory. Work the plan!
    - a. **STEP ONE:** Select a sinful behavior or thought pattern that needs to be thrown overboard or gotten get rid of by putting it out of your life. (*Identify a thought pattern, habit, or behavior that you know is wrong and needs to be changed. Determine when and how you are most often tempted to do this thing you know is wrong.*)
    - b. **STEP TWO:** Identify why your sin is heinous, horrible, awful, terrible, so as to be thoroughly convinced why you ought to hate it and put it out of your life.
    - c. **STEP THREE:** Identify what godly behavior / thought pattern ought to be put in place of the one you are getting rid of.
    - d. **STEP FOUR:** Count the cost so you are prepared to pay the price. Examine the short term consequences and the long term consequences of keeping your sin and of replacing it with godliness. Review these consequences daily until they are fixed in your mind. Then focus on the positive consequences so you know why it is worth going the distance in making the change.
    - e. **STEP FIVE:** Select a scripture verse to use in (1) resisting temptation, (2) redirecting thinking when thinking the wrong way, (3) re-establishing direction after going the wrong way, (4) drawing deeper into the knowledge of and communion with God as you meditate on it and talk to Him about it.

f. **STEP SIX:** Prepare for battle, every day. Fight the enemy (*too often yourself*) until victory is won. Give this a minimum of three months, and up to a year or more, if needed. Then maintain the progress through daily vigilance.

- (1) In conversation with God, tell Him what it is you want changed. Ask for increased sensitivity to the problem so that you not only see when it is happening, but you see it coming. Ask for wisdom to deal with every facet of it. Remind God you are depending on His empowerment and provision to be successful. Remind Him that you want to do this for His honor and glory in the world, and for the well-being of everyone affected by your choices and behavior.
- (2) Review with God all the consequences (short/long term). Use this information to reinforce how foolish and destructive sin is, and how good, God-honoring, and relationship building it is to do what you know is right.
- (3) Review with God what He says in His Word about this area of needed change. Verbally affirm your commitment to do what He says. Review how you will use your chosen scripture verse to help you resist temptation and redirect your thoughts toward doing what you know is right.
- (4) Look ahead and determine the most likely times during the day when you will be tempted in regards to the sin, thought pattern, ungodly habit you are working on. Ask God to help you be more sensitive to those times so they do not catch you unaware.
- (5) Look back to the last time you were tested in this area. If you failed the test, review the situation. Think about how you might have handled it better. Then picture yourself going through that situation again and handling it right. Use this practice as one means of preparing to handle testing in the future.

g. **What to do when you sin:**

- (1) Be humble enough to acknowledge your sin without making any excuse or explanation. Be sincere enough to make right whatever wrong you have done to anyone, beginning with God.
- (2) Do not give in to discouragement or false guilt. Wallowing in despair helps no one. Use your energy to get back on track and make more progress in overcoming the sin. In time, doing the right thing will become a habit that replaces your old, sinful practice.

(3) Remember, perfection is what we are aiming for. But commendable, measurable progress – equal to the need – is the best we will do in this life. Be realistic. Sanctification is a process that depends on consistent, accumulative progress to achieve its goal. So aim for perfection, but find encouragement and hope in consistent, measurable, God-honoring progress.

D. How do we get to the place where we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Where our love for God is so strong that we eagerly and carefully obey Him, whatever it costs us to do so? Where we love Him more than the things of this world? Where we love those around us as we ought – in other words, as we love ourselves?

1. Get rid of known, repetitive sin in your life and put righteousness in its place. Why is this vital to loving God supremely?

a. First and foremost, Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (**Matthew 5:8**).

b. Second, because sin is rebellion, and it is impossible to someone you are at odds with or rebelling against on a recurring basis. In other words, you cannot love God when you are repeatedly rebelling against Him in one or more areas of your life.

c. Third, righteousness is the result of faith and obedience – faith in a good God and obedience to a supreme ruler or master or lord. You will not pursue whole-hearted, whole-life righteousness without seeing God as a precious treasure and your Lord and Master. But when you see God this way, you cannot help but grow in your love for God to the depth and extent He longs for us to give Him.

d. The point here is this – we will not get to the place of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength until we want to be with Him. And we cannot satisfy our longing to be with Him without removing those things which we know are standing in the way of trusting God completely and obeying Him fully.

(1) David wrote: “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? [4] He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (**Psalms 24:3-4**).

(2) In other words, the path to loving God more than anyone or anything else requires taking the holiness of God seriously and the persistent and zealous pursuit of personal and practical holiness seriously.

2. Nurture a meaningful relationship with God by consciously coming into His presence (*drawing near to Him*) and focusing your attention on Him as often as you can.
  - a. It is my opinion that it is not likely that many Christians in our day will put in the required time and effort to experience God in the more intimately meaningful ways I am pointing to in this part of the teaching today. However, we can all nurture a more intimate, meaningful relationship with God than we currently have. We can draw nearer. We can touch His presence more deeply. We can enjoy Him more fully, regardless of where we are in our relationship with Him today.
  - b. Now I have already pointed out the importance of getting rid of all known sin. This is vital to intimacy with God, just as getting rid of all girlfriends or physical intimacy with anyone else is vital to meaningful, lasting, intimacy and companionship with my wife. So don't let up on this part of the requirement to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And of course, this is not just a matter of putting off, it includes putting godliness in place of what we put off.
  - c. The next thing we need to do in nurturing a meaningful relationship with God is to develop a sense of the presence of God, and consciously enter into that presence often during each day for the purpose of talking with God and enjoying God for himself.
  - d. Now I want to make it clear that for the Christian, there are two kinds of consciously being in the presence of God.
    - (1) There is our regular, planned times of prayer where we pray for and intercede for others, or we pray for ourselves, or we pray through a specific list of some sort. Added to this are our planned, regular times of reading and studying the scriptures. And without question, these are important activities for every Christian – activities we are wise to engage in often – for our own spiritual well-being **and** because they can bring us into a conscious sense of God's presence.
    - (2) In addition to the more common awareness of God's presence, there are those times of contemplating the goodness and greatness and love of God, of consciously coming into the presence of God just to be with Him, and of conversing with Him about things that are important to Him and His kingdom – just as you would with a special loved one or a dear friend.

- (a) It is important to remember that these times together, including the conversations, are not focused on our needs or our wants. The essence of these times together are focused on opening our heart to God, on speaking with Him – most often about Himself, and on finding joy and fulfillment in being with Him – just as we find joy and fulfillment in being with someone we dearly love.
  - (b) In other words, we are not looking for or expecting God to come to our aid. Rather, we are taking the opportunity to satisfy His longing to be with us and to satisfy our growing desire to be with Him.
    - i) James points to God’s longing to be with us when he says: “God jealously desires the spirit that He has made to dwell in us” (**James 4:6**).
    - ii) And Jesus points to the fact that we ought to want to be with God in this way when He says: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (**John 17:3**).
- e. Once again, this kind of dwelling in the conscious presence of God is more rare among Christians – partly because it requires a serious pursuit of holiness, partly because it requires extended periods of quiet or alone time, and partly because it is not commonly taught or encouraged like daily Bible reading and prayer is commonly taught and encouraged.
  - (1) I discovered this kind of fellowship with God by accident, or so it seems that is how I come upon it.
  - (2) You, however, are hearing that it is a possibility. So if you seek it, seek it according to the requirements for such a relationship with God. And persevere in your seeking.
- 3. My final suggestion today for seriously heading in the direction of loving God supremely is to seek His help. Now He should not have to do this for us. Nevertheless, ask God, each day:
  - a. to teach you more about loving Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,
  - b. to teach you how to think and choose as one who loves God supremely,
  - c. and to show you when and where you place a higher value on something or someone other than Him.

### III. Conclusion -

#### A. Take Time To Be Holy, William D. Longstaff, 1882

1. Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord; Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word. Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak, Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.
2. Take time to be holy, the world rushes on; Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.
3. Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide; And run not before Him, whatever betide. In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord, And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.
4. Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul, Each thought and each motive beneath His control. Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love, Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.