

Introduction

I want to make it clear right away that this commentary series is not for Bible scholars, pastors or anyone else who is well versed in the Greek New Testament.

Instead, this commentary series is for everyone else who does not fit into that group of scholars. It is for those who would like to study the New Testament with the knowledge of what the significant Greek words mean and how they fit into the context of each verse, chapter and book that you may be studying.

As a pastor, I have watched many Christians (not just new Christians either) struggle to better understand what God is saying to them through His Word.

I started doing this process more than twenty years ago when I was teaching a new member class at my church. As it turned out, I started out with eight adults who were all either totally new to studying the Bible or they were not the strongest readers. Therefore, both groups were having a difficult time understanding the Bible.

So, I began by placing the verses of each lesson in a diagram form. When that proved to be helpful, I then began to take the Greek words and defined them so they could understand the different meanings that each Greek word could have when translated into English.

The result was that the class soon became the largest class in the church and we all (especially me) learned a great deal about God's Word in the process.

Therefore, this is the approach I have taken with this new Bible commentary series. I will show you how this is done with the example provided below,

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The Easy Study Bible Commentary takes *The Easy Study Bible Diagramed* and examines, describes and expounds upon each New Testament book, chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph, verse by verse and finally phrase by phrase.

In my many years of Bible study, I have found this arrangement to be the easiest to follow and understand.

I have done my best to write this commentary with the idea in mind of making it easier for you to understand and therefore apply the great teachings that God gave to each of us through the various books of the

New Testament.

I don't put in the Greek word or the transliteration of the Greek word. I simply put the word as it is translated into the English then I give the definition of the Greek word as it is in the context of the verse being studied.

At the end of each section that we study, I will give you what I call my Greek Paraphrase. What I do is to take all of the expanded Greek definitions and put them together to help us better understand the passage.

I use this method whenever I study any part of the Bible, whether I'm just studying for my own enrichment or to teach it to others. It helps me to understand each passage well enough to apply it to my life as well as to help others do the same. This makes the whole experience so much more enjoyable for both my students and for me as well.

I sincerely hope that it will make the Bible more understandable for you too. Please let me know how it works for you.

You can reach me anonymously through the 'Contact Us' tab on the menu of my web page.

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Chapter One

In this chapter, James spends quite a bit of time on the general subject of temptation and trials. He wants to make sure we know that temptations will come and how we're supposed to deal with them when they do.

Then he goes on to introduce the subject of the nature of true religion. He states that all true religion has its origin in God and that He requires us to be submissive and meek, be doers of the word, bridle the tongue, and to be the friends of orphans and widows.

Verse 1

The Purpose of Trials

¹ *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Greetings.*

¹ ***James,
a bondservant of God
and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
to the twelve tribes in the dispersion.
Greetings.***

This is not a standard greeting such as we see in all of Paul's letters. James is not only identifying himself but he's also identifying who he is writing for. He seems to be taking great care that we know what his relationship is to Christ.

Now, let's take each part of the diagram and look at them separately.

Phrase by phrase:

¹ ***James,***

As was mentioned in the introduction, this James is the half-brother of Christ, not James, one of the twelve disciples. He wants us to know right away who is writing.

a bond servant of God

bond servant – slave, bond servant, servant

God – God the Father

and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Lord – a title, the One we belong to

Jesus – Jehovah is salvation

Christ – the anointed One, the Messiah

In this statement, James makes it clear that he is writing for God and Jesus Christ because he is their slave or bond servant. There really wasn't much difference between the two back then.

There are three words in the Greek New Testament that can be translated as 'slave' or 'servant' but this one is the strongest one. It always means either a slave or a servant who is legally bound to his or her master. It is used one-hundred-twenty-seven times.

One of the other words usually refers to children or servants at a king's court. It is used twenty-four times in the New Testament.

The other word almost always refers to a domestic servant who is not bound to the master. It is only used four times in the New Testament.

So, with all that in mind, I believe that James is stressing the fact that he is a slave to God. So, since he belongs to Christ, therefore everything he writes here is the same as if it was coming straight from Christ Himself.

to the twelve tribes in the dispersion.

tribes – tribe, nation, people

dispersion – scattering, dispersion

In this phrase, he is making it clear who he is writing to. Therefore, he is writing to the Jews who became Christians and are now scattered all over the known world (They only knew about the Middle East, Southern Europe and the nearer part of the Far East).

The term 'Twelve Tribes' refers to the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. And the dispersion refers to the fact that over the years between Jacob and the New Testament time, most of the tribes weren't even in Israel much less still together as a tribe. They had been scattered by different rulers over the area and also many were lost during the Babylonian captivity.

I would like to share something with you that I've discovered over the years. Whenever we study any part of the book of James, I think it would help us to come back here to James' greeting first. If we do, it will help us to better understand what James is saying in all the other passages.

Greetings.

Greetings – to give a greeting at the beginning of a letter

This is not a normal greeting. It is one which is full of joy. It means to rejoice and be exceedingly happy.

Wow! That really tells us that some good things are coming. Hang on!

These next two verses can cause confusion if you don't stop to think about what James is really saying. He is making four statements, which come out quite well in the diagram of verses 2 and 3 below.

1. Trials test our faith.
2. The testing of our faith allows us to endure.
3. Endurance will result in making us "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."
4. We are to be happy about all the above!

Let's look at each of these, one at a time.

1. Trials test our faith.

James didn't say 'if' trials come your way, he said 'when.' They will come! When they do, our faith is going to be tested. Why?

2. The testing of our faith allows us to endure.

This next statement answers the 'Why' question above. The testing of our faith gives us endurance. Without endurance, none of us would make it very far in our Christian walk.

3. Endurance will result in making us "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

James didn't mean that we would be literally perfect in all ways, just that we would become acceptable to God.

4. We are to be happy about all the above!

We are to be happy about all of this simply because the whole process brings us closer to God.

It's like everything else in our walk with the Lord, we are to strive for the perfection that He showed us when he walked on this earth.

James is only picking up on what Christ said in The Beatitudes, in Matthew 5:10-12, *Blessed are those having been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every wicked word against you, because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. For in this way, they persecuted the prophets before you.*

Paul also said it in Romans 5:3-4, *Not only this, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering brings about endurance, and endurance, character, and character, hope.*

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At the end of each section that we study, I will give you what I call my Greek Paraphrase. What I do is to take all of the Greek meanings and put them together to help us better understand the passage.

It works great for me and I sincerely hope that it will work for you too.

Greek Paraphrase of Verse 1:

I am James who has devoted his life to God and the Lord Jesus Christ and am as bound to Him as a slave would be to his master. I send my greetings to all of you who are descended from the twelve tribes which are scattered all over the world.

* * *

Verses 2-4

² Consider it all joy my brothers when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ But, let endurance have its perfect work so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

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⁴ But, let endurance have its perfect work
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lacking in nothing.

This is the beginning of the section where James is talking about our faith and how it will be tested. The best thing about this whole section is that James makes sure that we know what will happen to us when we successfully endure all of these trials that he's talking about.

Verse 2:

² Consider it all joy my brothers when you encounter various trials,

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Joy? Did he say joy? How can suffering ever be thought of as joyful? Hang on and James will tell us exactly what he means by that.

Phrase by phrase:

² Consider it all joy my brothers

Consider – to consider, deem, account, think

all – here it could mean every single thing, both little and big!

joy – means to be extremely happy.

brothers – fellow believers

when you encounter various trials,

encounter – basically means to fall into or be surrounded by something

various – many different kinds

trials – anything that could possibly cause us trouble and pull us away from Christ

We should think of this as a very happy thing to have happen to us! Trials test our faith!

Again, James didn't say 'if' trials come your way, he said 'when.' It is going to happen. He knew it and so do we.

They will come! When they do, our faith is going to be tested. Why? James is talking about anything that could possibly test our faith.

Wow! That doesn't sound like little things, does it?

I think James is saying much the same as what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, *Indeed, all who want to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Some of these 'trials' will come in the form of persecution.

Verse 3:

³ *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

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James is now going to explain what he meant in verse two.

Phrase by phrase:

³ ***knowing that the testing of your faith***

knowing – to learn to know, come to know, to understand

testing – the proving or testing

faith – conviction of the truth of anything, belief, faith

The testing of our faith allows us to endure.

This statement tells us why. James puts it quite simply. It gives us endurance. Without endurance, none of us would make it very far in our Christian walk.

James is saying that we should know for sure that all of this testing or tempting will damage our faith if we let it. But, the more we resist

temptation, the more our faith will grow and the more we'll be able to resist it

He's saying that we should know for sure that all of this testing or tempting will damage our faith if we let it. But, the more we resist temptation, the more our faith will grow and the more we'll be able to resist it

produces endurance.

produces – to preform, accomplish, achieve

endurance – continue on doing the same thing over and over again

Whenever our faith is being tested, the result should be that our faith is proven each time.

So, what James is saying is that we need to find what works for us and stick with it.

Romans 5:3-4, *Not only this, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering brings about endurance, and endurance, character, and character, hope.*

Verse 4:

⁴ But, let endurance have its perfect work so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

*⁴ But, let endurance have its perfect work
so that you may be perfect and complete,
lacking in nothing.*

Here comes the final explanation that James is giving us for what will happen when we do it the way he was telling us above. It really sounds great too, doesn't it?

Phrase by phrase:

⁴ But, let endurance have its perfect work

endurance – steadfastness, constancy, endurance, continue on doing the same thing over and over again

perfect – brought to its end, finished, perfect

work – an act, deed, thing done, work

If we continue doing the right thing, then we will keep on getting better and better.

Romans 2:7, *eternal life to those who by endurance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality*

Of course, there are always a few more things involved. Notice in Romans 2:7 that we need to follow what Christ has asked us to do for Him and all of those that we come into contact with.

2 Timothy 3:5, *May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the endurance of Christ.*

Now, 2 Timothy 3:5 really tells us what James is truly talking about, “the endurance of Christ.” That sure is some endurance but both Christ and James told us that we can do the same thing that Christ did. Great!

so that you may be perfect and complete,

perfect – brought to its end, finished, perfect

complete – complete in all its parts, complete, entire, whole

lacking in nothing.

lacking – to be left behind, inferior, lacking, fail

We are to be happy about all the above! We are to be happy about all of this simply because the whole process brings us closer to God.

It’s like everything else in our walk with the Lord, we are to strive for the perfection that He showed us when he walked on this earth.

Here is the final result! God will make sure that we have everything we will ever need!

Endurance will result in making us “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

James didn’t mean that we would be literally perfect in all ways, just that we would be acceptable to God.

God will make sure that we have everything we will ever need!

Isn't that the greatest?

Greek Paraphrase of Verses 2-4:

Think of it as a very happy thing to happen to you my fellow believers when you are surrounded by many different kinds of trials, temptation or persecution. You should know that through all of these struggles, your faith will allow you to keep on doing the right thing over and over again. Then, the result will be that you will be acceptable to God.

When we look at it this way, what do we begin to understand about this passage? We are supposed to be happy that God tests us so that He can make us into the kind of person He wants us to be. Great!