

# Practical Christian Living

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] to be here this morning I hear it now alright I had issues with the mic one other time whenever I got up and it was just it throws you off whenever you're like things aren't going right out the gate again grateful for the opportunity to be here this morning grateful for y'all being gracious and patient with somebody that's just trying to learn how to better preach the word and I'm really grateful for the opportunity I was listening to a preaching podcast the other day and like anything else in life preaching is one of those things where you just have to do it there's just no ands ifs or buts about it and I'm grateful for you all giving me that opportunity this morning I appreciate the small family vibe here it's just being here being with y'all I can see that you guys are a tight knit group and that's really valuable so again really grateful it's a privilege to be here we're going to be looking at James 1 this morning so if you go ahead and turn there in your Bibles so the reason I chose James is I kind of wanted to start something that I would divide into a four part study because I'm looking at an opportunity to to possibly do that

Megan and I we work with the youth at our church and I was looking at something that I could possibly do as a four part study but as I got into it James is there's a lot there for a four part study there's five chapters and I was like okay well maybe I can put like I think it's three and four a little bit shorter I'll put them together but even just chapter one here there's a lot I imagine somebody could do a four part study just on this first chapter but we're still going to go through it this morning and we're going to break down as much as we can and just try to see what God in his word is saying to us this morning as I studied through and prepared I saw that James it just the book or the letter has a lot to say about practical Christian living as I studied I found that some would say that it's almost too practical and maybe almost goes to the point of being legalistic or making the Christian life more about the things that we do than the faith that we have in the gospel but as we dig into the passage and as you get the opportunity to look at the rest of the book

I'm sure most of you are very familiar with James and what he says in his letter here we'll see that it's clear that James is not calling for a works based salvation he's simply showing these new believers at this time that they are to work out their new faith we know that our faith without works is dead I think that's a passage that we often go to faith without works is dead when faith is present there will be actions and attitudes that follow in genuine faith these are some of the things that James will present here in this book let's read the passage together and I'll just give some introductory material on some of the main points that I want to tackle this morning so let's look at James chapter 1 verse 1 I'll read from the ESV so if it sounds really different from what you're reading I know sometimes it's hard to follow along I grew up reading the KJV and as soon as somebody brings the ESV and you're like where are we?

I have no idea but that's one thing I never ask Greg oh great perfect perfect alright here we go James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes in the dispersion greetings count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing if any of you lacks wisdom let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given him but let him ask in faith with no doubting for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind for that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord he is a double-minded man unstable in all his ways let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation because like a flower of the grass he will pass away for the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass its flower falls and its beauty perishes so also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him let no one say when he is tempted

I am being tempted by God for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one but each person is tempted when he is lowered and enticed by his own desire then desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death do not be deceived my beloved brothers every good gift and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures know this my beloved brothers let every person be quick to hear slow to speak slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls but be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves for if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror for he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like but the one who looks into the perfect law the law of liberty and perseveres being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts he will be blessed in his doing if anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart this person's religion is worthless religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world there's a lot there we're gonna we're gonna dive in and tackle it as much as possible but before we do let's open in prayer

[ 6 : 29 ] God we're again so grateful for the opportunity that we have to be in your house this morning and to be with this group of believers Lord and with this text Lord we know that's all by your design Lord you know and have ordained everything that has happened thus far this morning and you have this passage for us today Lord I just pray that you would help us to have attentive and open hearts to what James has written here in this letter Lord and that we would find something here that we can take with us this week to affect change in our Christian lives Lord just give me the words to say as well as we work through the material again we thank you and praise you Lord in your name Amen so by way of introduction just looking at some of the introductory things about the book that it's helpful to know to get some context we see that the opening or greeting of this letter it really does not leave any question as to who the author is or who he's writing to as I look through and study there's little dispute out there that the James that wrote this letter is the James that we know as the half brother of Jesus

James was mentioned as the half brother of Jesus on quite a few occasions by Matthew, Mark and Paul in different passages it's likely that he did not identify himself as being the half brother of Jesus because everyone that would have been reading the letter would have known exactly who James was James had a unique testimony as a follower of Christ he got to grow up with Jesus and see his life first hand which I mean just to imagine that just seeing Christ when he's younger and seeing him grow up that would have been an incredible privilege but we know from John 7 that James was actually not a believer of Jesus right away at the beginning of Christ's ministry it says that he wasn't a follower of Christ but we do know that his faith changed as we see he was involved in the establishment of the church at Pentecost and we can assume that his conversion happened when Christ himself appeared to James after his resurrection as we see in 1 Corinthians 15

Paul describes that so we know that after his conversion and the establishing of the church James became a pillar of the church as we see in Galatians 2 Paul is saying that he was counted as a pillar and a very important prominent person in the church he became one of the main leaders of the Jerusalem church and presided over the Jerusalem council where it was clarified that salvation was by grace and faith alone so this is quite the impressive or quite the testimony a really impressive resume that he could have boasted in but James we see he introduces himself simply as James and then he goes on to say that he is simply a servant to the Lord James was not concerned with what he had done or who he was but with who he served James' reputation certainly would have preceded himself and we can assume that the audience of this letter knew exactly who James was when they read the letter James was also clear who the audience of the letter was he addresses the letter to all the Jewish

Christians that were dispersed these Christians were displaced from their homeland and were suffering persecution on top of that this is apparent as James spends a lot of time encouraging them and the trials that they're facing and showing them how these trials are a test of the genuineness of their faith James addresses his readers as his brothers and writes to encourage them in their faith in this difficult time while most of us I'm assuming maybe none of us are Jewish believers were not suffering persecution in the same way that these believers were and we're not living in that time where it was Christianity and the faith was very new we were working through those things there still is so much in this passage that we as modern believers can learn from what James has written and apply it to our own lives through the lens of what James wrote at that time just a couple other contextual points

James would have written this letter from Jerusalem and between the fact that he did not mention the Jerusalem council which he almost certainly would have mentioned as it was a very major event and a few of the other factors that theologians have pieced through it's likely that the letter was written between AD 44 and 49 so that would make it the first or one of the first New Testament books that was written so it's just a really cool piece to think about how some of these believers this is the first of what we know is the New Testament that they would have ever read or interacted with and this is what God had for them to see and read and hear so I think that's really important James was writing this book to ensure that the believing Jews knew how to tell if their new faith was genuine like I said they really didn't have like a rubric to go from before this they didn't have I mean of course they had the Old Testament but they don't have the entirety of the New Testament like we do so James was giving them this structure in the first chapter that we're going to look at today he covers a lot of material he's hitting these believers with like a rapid fire before he digs into some of the more focused topics later in the book

[ 12 : 04 ] I think that the best way to divide the passage this first chapter here is to look at the trials of the Christian life in verses 2 through 18 and then the second part it's a little shorter and less specific we'll just say it's the general exhortations to the believers in 19 through 27 not general in that they're not specific but there's not like one theme to attach to they're kind of separate in that way so let's first dig into the first section 2 through 18 and look at the trials that we see of the Christian life and what James has to say to these believers about it I think we're all familiar with what we mean by the trials of life we know that they come we all go through them they're hard in one way or another and we still we do not love them at least I know that I don't and we're often discouraged by them but James starts off with showing us what the purpose of this testing is he starts this purpose statement by using an imperative and commanding these persecuted believers to count it as joy when they suffer trials like I said this is certainly not our natural response and therefore is a choice that we have to make

I think this is a rebuke to all of us and I'm sure especially to the believers that are hearing this and I know that there's things in my own life that are still fresh on my heart that I know that some of those situations those tough situations I did not approach with joy and that's what James is talking about here we know that we can turn to Christ as our example of this as we know from Hebrews 12 too it says that he endured the cross all the pain of the cross with joy so we know that that joy is possible even in our circumstances we also see examples throughout the New Testament of Paul proclaiming the goodness of God as he endured the trials of persecution and imprisonment in a lot of ways our trials are probably less painful than these I'm not trying to downplay the things that we go through but when you consider some of the things that we encounter persecution imprisonment things like that it seems like maybe in some ways it's a little bit less of a trial but our trials are still difficult and painful for us as well we should be looking at our trials with joy and know that God is in control of these situations and working them out for our good as the passage says we are to count it joy when we meet these various trials like I mentioned these can take so many different forms they can be physical mental spiritual and I think we know the toll that a trial can take in one way can say it's a mental thing and then it can affect us physically as well as it works on us so I know that they can take a huge toll on us trials can bring us down but James says to be encouraged because these trials bring about steadfastness in our faith in the process

James is equating the trials of this life to the testing of our faith as I mentioned confirmation of genuine faith is one of the purposes that we see throughout the letter James is saying that our joy and trials is directly connected to our genuine faith he says that these trials and testing produce steadfastness or another translation might say endurance I think endurance I like a little better steadfastness I feel like it's one we don't use as much so endurance feels a little better there the idea James is using is that trials do not work out patience or something that is temporal or just happens in that time for the moment and is gone when the trial is over but these trials they're building and growing on themselves with every trial that we encounter to build that endurance over time so as we continue to experience trials we are strengthened in our faith as we go he goes on to say that the effects of steadfastness or endurance result in our perfection and completion we know that the only way to escape trials is to just go through them we just have to live through them and trust

God through it but God is promising that these trials will fully develop the believer and make us whole this is what the ideas of perfection and completion are talking about when James mentions them we know that we as sinful humans can never be perfect or complete on our own but James is saying that these things are possible through our constant growth as we experience and grow through our trials he says that we will be lacking in nothing when we have gone through these trials I think we can sum up this point by saying that James wanted these believers to react in joy when they meet trials because God was using these hard times to help them to become whole and mature in their faith this should be the same way for us as we think through the trials that we go through understanding and knowing that God is using those things to grow us and mature us and I can see that in my own life I know many of you I'm sure can certainly relate you don't when you're in the trial you don't it's easy to throw your hands up and say why but I think you know whether it's years or months or however long down the road

God makes it clear why those things happen next we'll see God's wisdom and testing that's a few verses down here James talks about the wisdom necessary during these tests James says that if anyone lacks the wisdom necessary during a time of trial they can simply ask God for it by wisdom James means a spiritual measure of understanding to help us through these trials our faith is not based on our feelings in the moment but on knowledge and understanding of the promises of God's truth that is only made possible by God the only way to navigate trials is through our knowledge and recognition of the truth of God this is the wisdom that we must be seeking and like James says to these believers if we do not have it God has given us the ability to pray and ask God for this wisdom in these times

[ 18 : 45 ] James is relaying to his hearers the truth that God will give his wisdom and understanding in trials if we simply ask him for it the only qualifying statement that James adds is that this request must be done in faith as we looked at in the introduction again it will come up over and over the genuineness of the faith of these new believers is what James is really looking at there must not be any doubt in our asking we must have full faith that God is who he says that he is and that his promises are true for us James compares someone who asks for this wisdom and doubts to a wave of the sea and a double minded or unstable person our true and genuine faith in trials must be without any doubt that God is who he says that he is and that he will keep every promise that he has made to his people I think the hardest part of a trial is having that faith when it seems that to us keyword that the right thing is not happening we often have our own thoughts of how things should go but

God promises to work these things out for us in his way and not our own our faith must be in his plan and not what we believe is best for us I think that's at least in my experience that's one of the harder parts is realizing that even though I think I have it all planned out God has something that is far better if he's not working in that same way not having doubt is much easier when we look at it from that perspective we accept God's wisdom in our trials next we see in verse 9 James moves on to pointing out the earthly position of the believers it kind of seems like it's a pivot it's like he's changing the discussion but as I think we'll see it's not really a pivot it's kind of in the same line of thinking here he pivots to the idea of material concerns of the dispersed

Jews like I said as we look at it I don't think it's a change of topic but it's a specific trial that the believers that he's writing this letter to are facing the first group that he addresses were those that are economically poor this would likely have been a majority of the Jewish believers as they were just pushed out of their homes they're being persecuted and they're probably just trying to get away with their own lives and survive many had likely at one point been well off financially but had to give this all up to flee and survive in these trials James is saying that those who we view as the lowliest on earth should still boast in their position as a child of God those in the lowest positions on earth can attain the highest possible position by being a child of God being okay with this comes with the wisdom and understanding that we talked about in the last section and it all connects back to the joy that we mentioned in verse 2 the lowliest person on earth can have joy in their genuine faith and their relationship with their savior so he kind of goes to the flip side of this and he mentions the materially well off person the rich person should be and he says that they should also be rejoicing in their humiliation those that seem to have it all in an earthly sense should rejoice when they encounter trials in life just the same

James points out that this proper perspective on earthly wealth is because both wealth and the individual will pass away at some point all things come from the Lord and are subject to change at a moment's notice life and riches can go away tomorrow but the steadfastness that is gained in trials does not those with riches are to rejoice in their trials just the same the visualization here is like that throughout scripture where he emphasizes things that grow and that they die all around us he mentions the grass and the flowers and as I'm sitting there writing and I'm just thinking about it was mentioned that I work maintenance at the church it would be nice if the grass would start I don't know if I want it to just die but it would be nice if it would like slow down I just can't it's like there's a pretty big facility down there at Colonial and it's just like every week we're out there mowing it and it's like if you could just slow down but that's what I thought of

I thought of the grass and it will not be too long before we won't have to mow it anymore and being a western Pennsylvania I thought of the beauty of the fall and how you have the springtime and everything is lush and you can't see anything because there's just green everywhere and the fall time comes and everything dies but it's still beautiful at least I think so when the leaves all turn but that's what I thought of whenever I thought of how he's talking about the brevity of things and how it all dies at some point James he borrows the imagery of this from Isaiah 40 what he's saying is that all earthly possessions can and will pass away and this should drive even people that are considered rich or have this earthly possessions it should drive them to the Lord and to growing in their maturity one commentator that I read pointed out that trials are the great equalizer that brings all children to dependence on God it does not matter what side of things that we might find ourselves on a serious trial does not care if you're rich or poor all those things pass away and at the end all we are left with is

[ 24 : 37 ] Jesus next we'll go down to chapter or sorry verse 12 there's a section here where he kind of brings temptation into the idea of trials here in verse 12 he continues with the idea of steadfastness in our trials the idea of the continued growth and ability to navigate trials by running to God for help and counting it joy as we talked about in verse 2 the God given ability to remain steadfast in trials is reason for blessing and further reward by God perseverance in trials and temptation bring the approval of God and the approval of God brings the crown of life some of the people I read say the crown that we're talking about here is not a picture of royalty as we would normally think at least that's what I headed first thought but it's the idea of the wreath that is placed on the head of an athlete I think this is more like more in their time frame where it's like the

Olympics and things like that happen and they put the wreath on their head and it's showing someone has won an event and they've displayed a perseverance to triumph in that way what James is saying is that those that persevere are approved by God and this approval gives evidence of eternal life James is not advocating works and saying that if we persevere we will be saved but he is rather saying that perseverance is itself the result and evidence of salvation and eternal life James is associating our faith and perseverance under trial with our love for God our perseverance is a display of our love for him again bringing it back to the idea of these believers proving the genuineness of their faith a genuine believer is not someone who at one point made a profession of faith and I'm not saying that's not important but someone who is a true believer is someone who demonstrates true faith and an ongoing love for God that cannot be destroyed in verse 13

James seems to shift a little from the idea of trials to temptations this is again not a shift of topic it's a logical move because a trial is something that's presented and we have the choice to respond properly to call on God and his plan and count it all joy but what can often happen is we do not turn to God in our trials and they become a temptation that can lead us into sin James makes it clear makes it clear that these temptations are not from God our right response to trials leads to our joy and our growing in steadfastness if we do not pursue God and our trials and temptations follow James is clear to these new believers that God is not the source of our temptation to sin he does not leave them and out or to be able to push the blame of their own sin to someone else and certainly not to God ever since the first sin in the Garden of Eden we know we as humans always like to find someone else to blame our sin on we try to rationalize the things that we do wrong and find a way to escape from any of the culpability that comes with it that is what

James is aiming at and when he says that no one can say to himself that he is being tempted by God he is saying that this is this is all on us this is on you he is he is getting ahead of our natural tendency to point the finger to others if we are trusting God in our life but not keeping the goodness of his plan in view it is conceivable that we may want to point the finger at God when things don't seem to go the way that we thought that they should we then find ourselves in the place where we are tempted to do something that we are not supposed to do and whether or not we give in we decide that God is easier to blame than ourselves because he is in control right that is wrong that is the wrong way to look at it James could not be more clear to these Jewish believers that God is not tempting them to evil in fact God himself cannot be tempted with evil and therefore he will not tempt anyone either it is against his nature the two exist separate evil and God they exist in separate realms and never meet God is aware of evil but is untouched by it and would never tempt anyone with evil so verse 14 is where

James brings the truth of the situation back squarely on us each individual is tempted when we are lured and enticed by our own desire he uses these personal words to stress that it is all on us the temptation that we suffer is a result of our improper response to trials and tests that lead us to being tempted by our own desires so James he outlines here like the natural progression that we take when we sin he starts with we're lured we're drawn away from what is right by our own desires and then our desires lead us into doing that something that is wrong that we know that we're not supposed to do and these sins are what condemns us to death as I read I think it's interesting the imagery that James is using to describe this to his hearers it seems that he's using like the imagery at first of like a hunter and prey if you think about that or I suppose maybe around here fishing is a better one a lot of fishermen thinking about the bait that you use to get something to take the hook

[ 30 : 15 ] I thought whenever I was thinking about it I thought more of so at the church we have I don't want to throw it's not a rat problem but you know you have a big building sometimes you just got to be preventative when you can and try to get ahead of things so we set the rat traps and stuff and I just kind of like it'd be cool to like set a camera and kind of like figure out what's going on there you know like the rat it might smell the peanut butter it's like hmm something something decent over there I think we'll go check that out and then he goes over sees it is enticed by it he's like well let me take a little bit just see what you know oh I like that boom the trap hits there it is I feel like maybe that was the imagery that he's going for definitely a little more formal in the way he presents it but that's that's the way I thought of it and he also in this in what he's talking about here he uses the imagery of conception and the birth of life as well so there's a beginning to this idea of our temptation there's a beginning to the temptation and it grows to the point that it's brought forth and when it is totally grown it is committed it ultimately brings forth death just as our own human life does when it's fully completed so I think it's a really good imagery that he uses there to help us to capture what he's talking about in verse 16 he caps that thought with a statement that launches him into the next point so he tells these believers to not be deceived they are not to deceive themselves into thinking that their temptation is anyone's fault but their own we should not look to blame anyone else but ourselves when we fall into sin because we would be deceiving ourselves this phrase connects this thought of putting us in our place with affirming that all good things come from

God it's kind of like the positive and negative view of this we are the source and enabler of the sin that we commit but God is the source of every good and perfect thing God has no responsibility for sin but is the one solely responsible for all good things I think this is a reminder to us but would have been such a valuable clarification and revelation for the original hearers of this letter sin falls squarely on us when we give in to our own desires God is only good and has no part in it but we know that he is there for us and ready to help us to avoid sin if we will rely on him I think a valuable thought to cap this is that if we as children of God are showered with all the blessings and grace from our heavenly father why should anything evil ever be attractive to us this is a reminder for us to look to God and his good gifts even if they are trials and we will not even have the desire to consider sin in those situations again James caps his proof that

God is not responsible for our sin with verse 18 and says that our nature is what brings about death which was described in verse 15 and the gift of God is what brings about life regeneration is an act of God and his own free will to give it to us he brings it about by his own word which is the scripture that he has given to us God has given the gospel so that we would know him and be the first fruits of his creation so that we could be his children James or so that we could be his children James ends the section on trials by pointing his hearers back to their saving faith and the reason for all of this in the first place I know this probably sounds like a review for most of us I'm sure we're familiar with James 1 here but to these believers in these challenging circumstances I imagine this would have been some very helpful and encouraging information for them so just in review of what we covered in that first section because I know it was a lot it's like hard for me to even follow it just standing up here



I want to give some specific application at the end but just a pause for a quick recap James he starts by commanding the believers to joy when they enter the trials of life and when they come joy because this testing will produce steadfastness that continues to help us to run the race of the Christian life this testing leads to steadfastness and the steadfastness leads to completeness and maturity as a child of God if we are struggling with understanding the with the understanding of a trial that we're going through in our life we can ask God for his wisdom and he will give it to us asking for wisdom is a testing of the genuineness of our faith and it must be done without doubting that God is good and in control of these situations James mentions in this first passage that earthly position does not keep anyone from testing and can be changed at a moment's notice leaving all of us the same before God we are the source of our own temptation and when we do not rely on God in a trial and follow down the road of temptation that leads us to sin we are alone are responsible for that

James is so clear about that but God has made a way for us to know his gospel and become the first fruit of his creation I think that's like an incredible amount of stuff going on in that first section what an arc and kind of how James logically builds it up so we know trials will come for all and it is all about how we react in these trials that is important we must navigate them joyfully and knowing that God is using them to grow us in steadfastness so in steadfastness I think there's a lot of great truth there and like I said I'll maybe try to make a couple application points here in a bit the next large section that I mentioned verses 19 through 27 just dealing with the general exhortations to the believers it's the final section of the chapter and like I said it's less connected under one theme like trials but they're very specific in the things that James is saying and I think it's important to look at those because if that's how he started this letter and those are the things that he wanted to convey to them up front

[ 36 : 49 ] I think they're really important the first one that he addresses is anger he says he addresses anger in verse 19 and how it must be under control with meekness so that we're able to receive the word that God has for us verse 19 is full of commands or imperatives first he says for his brethren in Christ to know and understand the truth that he's about to share these are important for genuine faith and he is trying to reinforce these things in the people these are things that we should know but he is giving them no excuse now and giving them the imperative to listen and understand to what he's about to say next he follows with three simple commands for those that are to follow God's word and submissiveness first believers are to be quick to hear we must be careful listeners to the word of God and paying attention that we get the message right the word should be the first place we go when we are blessed when we encounter trouble when we're confused about what we're supposed to do when we're tempted it's where we go for everything the Bible we know has all the answers for us if we will just look to it and listen intently to what it has to say

James is saying that a mark of a true believer is that they will look at the word and carefully listen to it in all of the situations of life these Christians as well as us can be benefited from regularly examining our lives and whether we are hungering for the word day to day a true believer will be attentive to listening to the word and will make it part of their daily routine so that they are growing in knowledge and understanding so the next imperative James tells these believers to be slow to speak this makes sense in light of the first one how can we be good at listening if we are trying to talk at the same time it is not about us and genuine faith what we are striving towards recognizes this by putting aside our own agendas and focusing on what God is saying in his word James is also pointing out that when we do speak it must be carefully thought out in an accurate representation of what God says in his word and not what we are saying through our own words it should be our concern to say what is true and to say it in a way that edifies those that hear it and honors the Lord speaking about what God has to say is not a light matter and should be done only after we have been quick to hear what God has to say finally

James gives the last imperative he tells these believers to be slow to anger in the context of this passage it seems that he is pointing at anger that might be had about the truth that is found in the word truth that confronts sin or goes against the way that we think that things should be this admonition would likely have carried a special weight at this time in the early church when this was all still new and things were still being revealed by God it may have been that the people would get angry with others when they didn't understand or believe the truth that they were learning through scripture but James he is just giving them the general admonition to be quick quick to hear and dig into the word and slow to speak until they have arrived at the truth and allowed it to sink in and slow to anger with others when it comes to the truth of God's word putting off anger is such a good practical truth for us and James says that we need to do it because anger does not produce the righteousness of God anger does not accomplish what is right in God's eyes especially when the anger is directed toward the truth of God's word as we're seeing here in the passage which we know is ultimately directed at God himself the righteousness of God is only made possible when filthiness and wickedness are put out of our lives entirely this is specifically the moral impurity evil or corruption that is present in our lives these sins and desires for these sins must be put out of our lives as they corrupt our lives reduce our hunger for the word and cloud our understanding of what's in the word when these sins have been put out of our lives we can have we can in humility receive the word of

God once we have put ourselves aside the word is ready to be received the word we know is planted in us and is the only means of saving our souls from the penalty of death next we see in verse 22 James talks about or he takes it a step further and talks about being doers of the word he says that we should act on the word and not simply hear it he says in verse 19 to be quick to hear and furthers that saying don't only hear but do the word do what the word says as well the word is what saves our souls but it also contains commands that we must also follow as children of God a test of genuine faith which again that's one of the things that James set out to do that a test of our genuine faith is that someone will hear and do what the word of God says the language here emphasizes that doing what the word says is more than just something that we do but it is part of who we are as a believer genuine faith will result in us being doers of the word at all times and in all circumstances he gives the negative to this by saying that those that are only hearing the word are deceiving themselves he uses an analogy to further describe what he means he says those that are hearers only are those that look in a mirror intently and then go away and forget what they have just seen immediately for some reason these people are rejecting what they just saw and don't care enough about it to remember it now I thought this was interesting as I read about this analogy just thinking a little bit more about the difference between looking in a mirror today and what would have been for the hearers or those that were reading this letter back then so modern mirrors pretty good you can see your reflection pretty good of course it's reversed but you can see it pretty clearly but the mirrors of James' time at least as far as what we know from archaeology and all those types of things were really just highly polished metal surfaces that would not have been nearly as user friendly as what we have today so it would have taken a lot of work maybe the right lighting some extra polishing to be able to get a good representation of how you actually looked in this mirror so what James is saying is he's saying imagine doing all the work of looking intently at this mirror to get an idea of how you look and then just simply walking away and forgetting that you ever saw it and at that point it seems like a waste like why do all that what was the purpose of that so a lot of times bringing it back for whatever reason we might look in this mirror and forget what we saw either because of distractions maybe we weren't happy again if you're looking in a mirror maybe you're not happy with what you saw in there it's first thing in the morning or something and you're just not quite ready or you just poor memory you just put it out of your mind for whatever reason but you wasted all that you did see in that reflection so James is saying to be careful with the word and diligent and not to waste the intent listening and reading and studying of the word that we do but to actually be doers of it in verse 25

James gives the inverse of this and says that we are to intently look into the word and be doers who act and we will be blessed in doing this God's perfect law of liberty liberates us to forsake sin and to pursue righteousness James continues to hit home in this section the importance of not just being a passive hearer of the word but an active doer that does what he finds in God's word we'll move on to the last two verses here 26 and 27 James he finishes out this part of the or this chapter chapter 1 here by pointing out that someone who is not a doer of the word and is truly following all that it says is simply someone that is just involved in doing religious things we can't accomplish all of the religious things I guess in air quotes here the religious things that we want but if our faith is not genuine that will be made clear by the things that we do by our fruits right by their fruits you shall know them and there are lots of potentially lots of indicators that could point out the genuineness of someone's faith but the tongue is possibly one of the most reliable because it's the way we communicate with others it's our means of communicating it's often a telltale sign of the things that are in our heart the tongue is not controlled by God there's a sure indicator that the heart is not controlled by

[ 46 : 24 ] God either James spends more time later in the letter unpacking the importance of the tongue and I know that's kind of I feel like that's the thing that when I think of James it's the tongue so he really unpacks that later but just brings it up here in that first section just to throw that in there but he definitely spends more time on that later on in the letter another reaction to the proper view of God's word is putting off selfishness and serving others especially those in need so he specifically calls believers to support orphans and widows that are in need and we know from other passages that this is one of the responsibilities of the church to be looking out for these at need groups so there's a lot more that could be unpacked there but we won't camp on that one too much but James he finishes the chapter with just one more proper response to the word of God knowing and doing the word of God will lead to believers keeping themselves from the moral and spiritual impurity of the world the idea to keep emphasizes the continual action and the work that a believer must do to remain unstained from the world this is not work that we must do on our own but we know that we are empowered and

God gives us the power to keep his word if we will be doers of what he says in it so that's as you can see the last two verses there there's a little less connection but a lot of good meat that I think James unpacks well throughout the rest of the book the letter so in conclusion I know like I said before there's just a lot here there's a lot of information to cover we talked about a lot of different topics and this first chapter just has a lot of introductory thoughts when it comes to the letter but like I said before I think it's very important to look at what's here because this is how James chose to open the letter to these people and if he found these things important then I think we should as well I'll make a couple points of application first like I said it seemed very important and I know I mentioned it throughout it seemed important to

James to write this letter to communicate to these believers what their genuine faith should look like if that was his purpose in writing the book then to those people it seems like it should definitely be one of our major takeaways now all of the things that we covered this morning whether it was trials or being a doer of the word all of these things all of that we covered this morning is as to whether or not we are genuine in our faith or simply just hearers of the word there was something in the text that we covered this morning that you know in your heart and I know that the spirit works and through my broken words and everything so if there's something that the spirit did in your heart this morning that you know you need to work on in those things that's really what James is pushing towards is making sure that we understand what our genuine faith looks like if there's anything like I said that's on your heart I encourage you to do that that's really a lot of times where it starts is the ability of us to be real with ourselves and say these are the things that I know

I need to work on and going to God's word to know how to work on those things and relying on others too another application that I found helpful and I think honestly this is probably where most people would focus in chapter one is on the idea of the trials that we face big or small we are all living through now or we are on our way in the future to a trial we know that just a reminder to be joyful and God's strength and wisdom knowing that these trials are for a reason they're bringing steadfastness and endurance so that we can endure the future trials and so that God can work in our life to refine us to who he wants us to be for service to him just think on this week as you encounter these tough times be joyful that was the first thing he said and I think it's probably the hardest thing is just to be joyful in those things finally the other thing that I thought really stuck out was being a doer of the word of God and not just a hearer only do not do the work of looking into the word and coming to church you know it's a sacrifice a lot of people don't even make it you know you come to church you study the word on your own you study with others you do all this work of looking into the word and sitting through sermons and all these things but then you simply walk out and you just go back to the distractions of life and of all the things that like we talked about with the mirror the things that keep us from remembering what we saw

I think distractions are probably one of the biggest ones in our culture our society is just the things that they might even be great distractions but they're still distractions things that when we leave we won't even consider what we just heard or what God's doing in our heart or what we're studying in his word so I just encourage you as you go through the week to remember the things that you're studying to think on God's word and to be a doer of the word and not just hear what is in his word again thank you for the opportunity it's been a blessing reading the word with y'all and thank you for listening but just go out this week and think through these things and how we can practically live as children of God let's pray God we're so grateful for this letter that you have providentially kept so that we could have it so that we could read what James wrote to these believers

[ 52 : 41 ] Lord and we know that it's for a reason that you've given us this and we can read it now thousands of years later and be changed by it Lord we're just thankful for it and I just pray that you would help anyone that is in the midst of a trial Lord that's just really struggling that they would find joy in you and in your word and that they would turn to you Lord that pray that as we go out this week we would do what your word says and not just hear the things and continue on our walk Lord I just pray for this congregation Lord and just watch over and protect everyone this week your name amen and thank you for if you were going to papi can I see the green German or if not for help me could you let me know what I mean for that you two