

22.1a The Book of James

Discussion

1A. Remarkable text on trials of various kinds (1.2-4)

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The language of joy sounds too radical for the sober reality of trials.

From 1.2-4, what do you think justifies such radical language? *We must broaden our focus to include the providence of God and passages like Romans 8.28 to help us with us a text like this.*

Does the text tell us to in effect be giddy with joy in the experience of trials of all kinds? *Surely, count it all joy is not the same as experience all joy. We can look to the set goal and count it the case that joy (abiding stable contented and peaceful joy) is where God is taking us. This is His promise; His promise is sure. The promise helps us during experiences of various trials to "get a grip" on our emotions which may run hither and thither.*

2A. Key text that serves as a hallmark of James (1.22-25)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ 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. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ 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.

We are supposed to learn God's word (hearing, v.22, includes the idea of learning).

However, James indicates three things about "hearers only." What are they?

1) Self-deceived, 2) forgetful of the word and law of God, 3) no persevering, not sticking to it

3A. The hallmark leads to a discussion of true faith in relation to the word, law, and works

The treatment of faith and works seems to contradict Paul on justification by faith without works: James has justification by works. A Reformation sola states, "Justification is by faith alone" but James says, "Justification is not by faith alone."

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe- and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"- and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone (2.10-24).

Can you suggest some possible solutions?

James gives a different perspective on justification that Paul, a different emphasis

Surely we will find some of our answer in the "I'm from Missouri, you have to show me" perspective of James: Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works (v. 18)

4A. Thus, James works out the practical implications of being doers in some classic texts:

Wisdom regarding the proper use of the tongue (3.1-13), sin by omission (4.17), anger (1.19-20), true religion (1.27), money (attitude toward it and use of it, 5.1-6; 2.1-13; perspective on gaining it, 4.13-16), worldliness (4.1-10), humility vs. pride (4.6, 10), patience (5.7), and love for your neighbor (2.1-13).

The last section addresses the problem of dissension in the church.

Some major lessons come from what James identifies as the root causes. What are they?

Hint: include implications to the opposite.

¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. ^{ESV James 4:1} What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (3.16-4.4).

Causes of dissension and division are:

Jealousy

Selfishness

Uncontrolled passions and desires

Friendship with the world

By inference to the opposite:

Impurity

Lacking gentleness

Not open to reason

Not showing mercy

Partial

Insincere