

the thought and allow it to become an action. Like a snowball rolling downhill, sin grows more destructive the more we let it have its way: *'each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.'* (James 1:14-15)

- James encourages us to resist giving in to those initial evil thoughts and desires within us.

2.7 Conclusion

- As leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem James knew that his audience were new in their faith. He reminded them that
- 1) Trials would come their way. They should rejoice in such trials as these would mature their faith.
 - 2) They needed to be people of prayer and doers of God word.
 - 3) They needed to recognise the difference between spiritual and material wealth
 - 4) That temptations did not come from God but from evil thoughts and desires within them

3. Questions to consider at home

- 1) Does it matter that the authorship and dating of this letter is not clear?
- 2) Why does James encourage his audience to *'consider it pure joy whenever they faced trials of many kinds.'* (James 1:2)?
- 3) How does God communicate with us?
- 4) What is the difference between material and spiritual wealth?
- 5) What is the difference between temptation and sin?

Matthew Street 25th October 2020



The Parish of Foxcote with Shoscombe

James 1:2-18 - Endurance during times of trial and temptation

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – James 1:2-18

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. 9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- How would describe your life at the moment? Are you facing trials and temptations? If you are, says James then you should be rejoicing in the trials: *'Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.'* (James 1:2) But says James we should be resisting temptation, recognising that temptation is not from God: *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;* (James 1:13) and instead remember that temptation comes from evil thoughts and desires within us.

- So we should be rejoicing in our trials and resisting temptation.
- James also encourages us to be:
 - People of prayer and doers of the Word
 - Recognise the difference between spiritual and material wealth.

2.2 Who is James? When did he write this letter, to who and why?

- James opens his letter: *‘James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.’* (James 1.1)
- But who is James? Many scholars believe that James was Jesus’ brother, not one of the two apostles named James: James the Greater, son of Zebedee who is believed to have been martyred in A.D. 44 nor James the less.
- Some scholars suggest James is an unknown author, probably working at some point between A.D. 70 and 130 based on the quality of the Greek in which the letter is written.
- Assuming the letter was written by James Jesus’ brother then most scholars would probably agree that this letter was written in A.D. 49 a year before the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 50. If so, it is one of the earliest letters to be written.
- James was the leader of the Christian Church in Jerusalem.
- *‘To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.’* (James 1.1) Most scholars would agree that the letter was written to first century Jewish Christians residing in Gentile communities outside Palestine and to all Christians everywhere.
- It was written to Christians who were new in the faith and who were facing all kinds of trials and temptations. James was encouraging them to move from being ‘baby’ Christians to more ‘mature’ Christians.

2.3 Rejoice in our trials

- It certainly was not easy, at this point in history, for Jewish Christians to believe that Jesus was the ‘Son of God.’ Members of ‘The Way’ would have been:
 - pursued and arrested by the Pharisees and put on trial by the religious leaders in Jerusalem.
 - Constantly tempted to go back to what they knew in terms of ceremonial, dietary and religious rules and regulations.
- James reminds them and us that all Christians will face trials. In verse 2 James doesn’t say *‘if’* but *‘whenever you face trials’*. Today we certainly do not face the same trials that the early members of the ‘The Way’ did but we face other trials: A world that is becoming increasingly more secular and like the early members of the ‘The Way’ we can be tempted to blend in and be like the world around us.

- James would encourage us and he did his original audience to persevere in our faith knowing that as we do we will mature as Christians: *‘Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.’* (James 1:4)
- As we persevere and mature we will be blessed says James knowing that we will attain the crown of eternal life: *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.* (James 1:12)

2.4 People of prayer and doers of the Word

- James also encourages us to be people of prayer and doers of the Word. When facing trials and temptations James recognises that we will need *‘wisdom’* from God: *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* (James 1:5)
- But how does God answer such prayers? Primarily through His word. To know God’s will, James would say that we need to read God’s word and ask God to show us how to obey it. Then we need to put into practise what God tells us: *But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.* (James 1:6)

2.5 Recognise the difference between spiritual and material wealth

- James’ audience would have believed that people with material wealth were blessed with this by God. James points out however the reverse: *‘Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.’* (James 1:9)
- James wanted the materially poor in his audience to remember that when it came to spiritual wealth they were indeed very rich.
- He wanted the materially rich to remember that their wealth was transitory: *But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.* (James 1:10-11)

2.6 Resist Temptation

- Another misconception of James’ audience was that temptation came from God.
- James points out that temptation comes from evil desires in us, not from God: *When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.* (James 1:13-14)
- Temptation begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on