

JAMES

LIVING FAITH



Steadfastness

James 1:12-18



Introduction

Steadfastness is a noble trait. The ability to remain calm under pressure and to not veer to the left or to the right, but to remain focused on the task at hand and the goal ahead is admirable. Where does steadfastness come from? Where do we go to find steadfastness so that we can be resilient in the face of whatever trials await us around the corner?

James says that steadfastness in the life of the Christian comes from an awareness of God and an awareness of ourselves. In James 1:12-18, James encourages his audience towards steadfastness and he encourages them in this direction through telling them of the nature of God's work in their lives, and of the nature of the human heart as it responds to trials.



Study

Context: In James 1:12-18, James echoes some of the same points that he previously made in James 1:2-8, but in this section he approaches this concept of tests and trials from a slightly different perspective. In this section James seeks to help his audience to understand the difference between a test that God brings about in the Christian life and a temptation that is born out of our sinful human nature. James wants his audience to understand the nature of God's work in his people through tests as well as the nature of sin in the human heart evidenced in temptations. James wants his readers to understand these differences in order that they may pursue steadfastness as the people of God.

Structure:

- I. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trials (1:12-15)
- II. God gives good gifts to his children (1:16-18)



Reflect

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trials (1:12-15)

1. Read 1:12. What do you notice about James' flow of thought from remaining steadfast under trial, to receiving the "crown of life", to being among those who love God? What do you notice about the connection between loving God and remaining steadfast under trial?

2. Read 1:13-15. James presents a reality that is perhaps hard to initially grasp: God brings trials or tests into the life of his children, and yet at the same time he does not tempt his children. *Consider this example: God may test his children with financial hardship, but when a Christian who is facing financial hardship faces the temptation to not trust God and to cheat on his taxes or steal from his employer then these temptations are not from God. They are birthed from the sinful nature of the individual walking through the God-sent test of financial hardship.* With that said, what do you see James warning his audience about in these verses? And why is James so serious about making sure his readers understand this truth?

APPLY → James writes in v. 14 that we can be "lured and enticed" by our own desires. Where are places that you might be walking through a test from God, but you are also aware that your own desires may be birthing a temptation that could lead you to sin?

God gives good gifts to his children (1:16-18)

3. James begins v. 16 by telling those to whom he is writing, “do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.” Why is James so concerned with his audience not being deceived about the character of God when it comes to them walking through tests and trials?

4. In v. 17 it is likely that James was referencing the stars in the sky and God’s supremacy over them when he wrote that God is the “father of lights.” Building upon the other matters which he has written about, why do you think that James wanted to remind his audience that God is unchanging?

APPLY → James has now taken great strides to remind his readers that God does not tempt his children to sin and that God is unchanging in his nature. What makes these two realities helpful to you as you pursue steadfastness as a child of God?

5. Read v. 18. What do you think James is referencing when he mentions that God “brought us forth by the word of truth”?

NOTE: James 1:18 is the clearest reference to the gospel in the book of James. In this verse James mentions that by his own will God brought us forth (this is language that could be used to describe gave new life, or even birthed new life) by the word of truth (the gospel) that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

6. In v. 15 James wrote that “sin when it is fully grown *brings forth* death.” In v. 18 James wrote that God “*brought us forth*” into new life through the gospel. Why do you think James uses the same language in describing how sin ultimately will bring forth death and how God brings forth new life in us through the gospel?

APPLY → In this section of his letter, James urges his audience to pursue steadfastness because God has brought them forth by the gospel in order that they might be grown by him in the face of trials as he prepares them for eternity in his presence. Steadfastness is born out of your awareness of God and his work in you through trials. How does this passage shape your awareness of God as you pursue steadfastness in trials?

APPLY → James also urges his audience to pursue steadfastness and be aware of the dangers of their own human nature and sin-infused tendency. Taking a test from God and turning it into a temptation could ultimately lead to sin and death. How does this passage shape your awareness of yourself as you pursue steadfastness in trials?



Connect

Gospel Connections. When we think of remaining steadfast under tests and trials, the great example that we look to is Jesus and his perfect steadfastness in his life and in his cross. His test was one of rejection and suffering as his disciples abandoned him, the crowds mocked him, and he suffered for our sins. At the cross, Jesus remained steadfast and looked to the joy set before him, and he now sits at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus set the pattern for steadfastness in trials and he now sits at the Father's right hand, interceding on behalf of his people as they pursue steadfastness in the face of their own trials.

Whole-Bible Connections. James 1:12 says, "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." The Apostle John wrote in Revelation 2:10, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown life." John and James both reference the "crown of life" as a means of encouraging believers in the face of trials and persecution. God is wise in what he brings his children to, he is gracious in leading them through these trials, and he promises eternal reward for those who endure through the trial. This is a promise that stretches across Scripture.

Theological Connections. The sinfulness of man is not a pleasant topic to discuss, but the reach of the sinfulness of man is evident in James 1:12-18. In our sinful nature, we can distort a sanctifying test from God into a temptation that could lead to sin and death. This ought to be a warning to all of us that believe we have ourselves and our sinful nature figured out. We can distort even good gifts from God that are intended for our growth and pervert and misuse them to serve our sin-prone desires.

Praise Connections.

I ASKED THE LORD THAT I MAY GROW

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and ev'ry grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer,
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favored hour
At once He'd answer my request
And, by His love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart
And let the angry pow'rs of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part.

Yea, more with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Humbled my heart and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this," I trembling cried;
"Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?"
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set thee free
And break thy schemes of earthly joy
That thou may'st find thy all in Me."

John Newton (1779)