



Book of James on Discipleship

Chapter 1

Background :-

Writer – Most likely James the brother of Jesus **Date** – 50 – 60AD about 20 – 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection

Purpose in Writing – Letter written to Christian believers to encourage them to follow through their Christian commitment. Letter focuses on discipleship by revealing to believers the blessings, privileges and responsibilities of this new birth we have received through Faith in Jesus.

Read Ch 1 v 1 – 18

First 17 verses focus on our trust in God and how willing are we to see things from God perspective and point of view. Starts of with this wonderful promise that whatever we go through in suffering and trials will not be wasted, for God will deepen and mature our faith through the difficult times.

Challenge:- Calls us to rejoice and persevere in our suffering for God will give us the promised crown of life if we endure to the end.

Question – Do you think it is possible to rejoice and worship God in the midst of difficulties and hardship?
If so why do you think we often go in the opposite direction and complain and lose heart?

In Acts 16 v 23 – 25 we see how Paul and Silas sing praises to God while they are in prison. In history we read how Christians while persecuted, tortured and even killed in horrendous ways sang songs of praise and joy to God.

Question – Why do you think the early Christians who like us had never encountered the physical Jesus could praise and rejoice in him even in the midst of long term persecution and hardship?

How do you think we can develop this kind of faith that is not self pitying but sees the full inheritance we have as Christians?

James encourages us to focus on the God of our salvation who can and does use all things for the good of those who love him. He calls us to focus on the God who will deepen our faith through hardship and who will fully reward us for simple trust, perseverance and obedience.

Question – When you go through trying times where is your focus?
Is it on your circumstances and pain, or is it on the promises, provision and words of God?

Second focus of these first 17 verses is on the prayer of faith. Verse 6 onwards gives us the conditions that prayers are answered. The focus is absolute trust and confidence in God and a complete belief that you have received from the Father what you have asked for.

Read Mark Ch 11 v 22 – 24, John Ch 14 v 11 – 14, Hebrews Ch 11 v 1

Question – What do you think these verses tell us about the sort of prayer and faith that sees God release his promises through?

Few quotes that people have made about faith:-

“ Faith is an action, based upon a belief that is supported by confidence.”

“ Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservations.”

“Prayer is the key to Heaven, but faith unlocks the door.”

James calls us to focus on the God who willingly meets the needs of his people and responds to our prayers of faith. Real faith is not only believing that God can do something but also that he **Will** do something.

Question : - How deep is your faith in a God that answers Yes to your prayers?

How do you think we can develop a deep faith which trusts God in every situation and has confidence to ask great things knowing God answers YES?

Read Ch 1 v 19 – 27

In these verse James makes it clear that being a Christian is more than just about reading God's word, hearing God's word in preaching, it is about obedience to God's word and practically applying it to our lives. He says that a make of a true disciple is that they not only understand the obligation and responsibility to obey God's word, but do it.

Read – Matthew Ch 7 verses 24 – 27

Both of the above passages make it clear that unless we are doers of the word not just hearers then we do not develop a firm foundation for our faith and we do not enjoy a secure Christian life. Without action we deceive ourselves and live powerless Christian live because we do not follow the prescribed way of growing close and intimate with God. James says that the word is like a mirror because it reflects back to the person who they really are and how they are living before God. It shows us our sins, compromise, weaknesses and also our dependence on God. If we are proud of heart, living in compromise or sin then we run away from the truth of God's word and try and change what it says.

Question – What is it that stops living by the word of God?

How do you think we can spur each other on to a more radical obedience to God's word?