

**Seeing and Knowing:  
The Truth we need to be Triumphant  
James 1:22-27  
July 1, 2007  
FBC Waynesboro**

Well, it is the goal of our great God FOR HIS GLORY ALONE to give us all that we need to experience and express victory over temptation and right in the middle of our trials and tribulations. What we too soon forget in our kind of world must never be forgotten if we are going to receive what God wants to give us so that we can experience and express this victory. God did not design this world or your life for your comfort and convenience. He is not primarily interested in your pleasure or your pursuit of your purpose. His goal is not what you gain in this world; it is not even your good except as that good advances and enhances His glory. In order for God to perfect His purpose in us, He must send us into the fire and flames, He must deliver us into the dark night of the soul, He must accompany us down avenues that from our perspective are absolutely awful, but it is always in those places that we would not choose to go that He shows us what we must see and reveals to us what we must know if we are going to experience and express that overwhelming victory that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. I read again this week part of the story of Steve Saint whose father was one of five missionaries killed by the Waodani of Ecuador. Steve was later called to leave behind a very successful business career to serve among the Waodani; But there was a part of his story that I did not know; he and his wife had one daughter who one day came to him complaining of a headache. She asked him to pray for her and to hold her and while he was praying and holding her, she died in his arms of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. Yet, Steve Saint would say that it is the losses that God has used to show him what mattered most in life so that leaving behind success and status and all those things by which we define the "good life" had no meaning to him when he had them so letting them go was no issue. God had used his trials to shape him and to show him where he wanted him to go and what He wanted him to do. He does the same for us.

That is why at the very center of James one we have a beatitude about trials and temptations. Those who are sent into the

suffering of trials and temptations are called blessed. Mark Dever reminds us that in order for God to take us to the highest mountain He must first take us to the deepest depths. So at the center of chapter one is this critical word about the nature and character of trials and temptations. And on each side are three things that we must see and three things that we must know if we are going to see what God wants us to see and know what God reveals so as to experience triumph in the midst of tragedy. As we shall see tonight, this chapter is the foundation for the rest of the book; chapters 2-5 are simply a reflection upon and fleshing out of chapter one.

So, what is it that we must see. First, we must see that for the child of God, God is at work through the tough times to perfect His purpose in us for His glory, 2-4. The word “consider” is an accounting term better translated as “count” or “reckon.” It has to do with liabilities and assets. With the natural eye you and I would see trials and temptations as liabilities, but from the perspective of God for the people of God they are to be seen as assets. We are not to grieve over their presence though grief over the pain produced is very appropriate. We are to rejoice over their presence since it shows that God is at work in us to perfect His purpose in us for His glory. James makes it clear that the trials that come to us can be of many kinds and then in verse three he uses the word “know.” The word reaches far beyond intellectual, rational, logical awareness. It doesn’t mean that at all. It reaches place inside us where the Spirit of God lives and what we are being asked is to receive this truth as the Word of God to our hearts even when it does not make sense to our heads. Here is the truth: the testing that comes our way is used by God to develop and deepen our devotion to Him so as to make us complete, whole, fully developed. And what is that for the child of God? When we come that place where nothing or no one matters to us more than Jesus. He wants us to come to that place where we are consumed and controlled by Him and by Him alone, James 4:4-7a.

Here is the second thing that we must see, 5-8. We cannot see what God is showing us with our own wisdom. We must have the wisdom of God. But in order to receive the wisdom of God we must ask for it in faith without doubting. Two words here demand attention because they express the essence of this paragraph; they point to the problem in our period. Faith is simply the desire of the heart to live

our lives in devotion to Jesus; we want to hear from God through His Word so that we can do as He declares. Doubt has nothing to do with questions, struggles, concerns as they are related to the ways of God or the Word of God. Doubt here is defined in the image of the wave of the sea driven by the wind and by the word “double-minded” in verse 8. To doubt is to be double-minded and to be double minded is to be living life in such a way that it is clear to all who want to look that we are controlled by the ways of the world while communicating our commitment to the Word. It is to want a relationship with God which is defined and delineated by Him giving us what we need to live our lives as we please. Now listen to what God says about this kind of person: “this person will receive nothing from God.” He or she is far worse than an infidel because not only are they deceiving others they have deceived themselves.

So, God wants us to know that if we are going to have victory in the midst of trials we must see that God is using them to perfect His purpose in us and His purpose is for His glory. To see this we must have the wisdom that He gives that we cannot receive as long as our commitment is compromised. And then we must see that the ways of the world and the way of God are diametrically opposed, 9-11. Notice here that most of the words are to those who are monetarily and materially blessed because it is people in this position who are in the greatest danger of double-mindedness, deceitful living, 2:1-7 and doubting God in the midst of trials and tribulations since the most present danger for most people in this place is life directed toward what we want and desire for our own good.

Here is what you must know. First, God is good and He does that which is good in the lives of those who belong to Him, 16-18. The text says that our God does not change with the shifting shadows. You must get the background here. The hills were filled with the sites of the various gods. One for every need: rain, health, fertility, peace, prosperity etc. And the pagans believed that if they went and sat before the god long enough and often enough that when the shadow fell across them it was evidence that their god had changed his mind and had decided to be favorable to them. Aren't you glad that we have been delivered from such pagan thinking? We know as a child of God that our heavenly Father is kind and compassionate toward us. He does not change. Look at verse 18:

He chose to give us birth to bring us into His Kingdom, He is changing us even now by His word of Truth and He is going to complete in us what He has begun because we belong to that great communion of the saints that constitute the first fruits offering to Himself. Our God is good. And He does that which is good in the lives of His people.

Second, we must know that the good work that God does is through His Word that He has planted in us, 19-21. When we go through pain or when we experience problems or when we are perplexed what are we quick to do? Quick to speak, Quick to anger which is never an expression of our being right with God but reveals the moral filth and evil that is in us showing that the Word of God is not at work. We are quick to speak out against others when we are perplexed and even against God when we are in pain. But God calls us to listen in quietness and to learn His Word. If you are experiencing temptation that is tormenting you or tribulation that is tearing you apart you ought to run to worship every time you can and every time you be in Sunday School you ought to be there because your only hope of seeing and seizing the God is doing is through the work of His Word in your heart and life.

But there is one other thing here that is so critical. The Word of God that works in us also works through us to manifest itself in the lives of others, 22-27. It shows itself in three specific ways. First, it is seen in our speech. We bridle our tongues. We show that we have received the discipline that is necessary to exercise self-control. I loose it . . . I know I shouldn't say this but . . . I just can't help myself . . . all of these and more are testaments to a heart that is empty of the Word of God. You sow the Word of God in your soul and it will shape your soul and it will be heard in your speech. You will exalt the Lord and you will encourage your brothers and sisters. Second, it is seen in our service. Orphans and widows were the last and the least in their world. It is an amazing thing to me how the Bible has caught up to modern science. Psychotherapists in recent years have hit upon this amazing discovery that the clients that cope with their crises the best are those who get involved in helping those who have gone through the same crisis. James taught that in the late first century A.D. And it is not good psychotherapy; it is absolute truth. Who better can minister to someone in the grips of a marriage crisis than

someone who has been there? Who can help a person deal with grief better than someone who is grieving? And one of the greatest deceptions in our day is that dark teaching that we have to get ourselves together first before we can help somebody else. Would you tell me when you get there? You will never do better ministry than when it is done for the hurting out of hurt when all you have to give is the grace of God that has been given to you. Third, it is seen in our sanctification as we are more and more separated from the world.

Let me let this be the last word in this series. Not the final word for sure on these issues. If you listen to our world about how to respond to tribulations and temptations, it will lead you at best to confusion and most likely to chaos. God has spoken. Listen to Him. Let Him show you what He wants you to see and let Him reveal to you what He wants you to know. And do not ever forget: He did not design His world for our good as we understand it but for His glory as He makes it known. Whatever exalts His glory will always and forever be for the good of those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose.