

James 1

Today we're going to begin a study on the book of James. We've just gone through the book of Hebrews. And the book of James comes right after the book of Hebrews. And what you'll find, the more that you study scripture, is that God has the books in exactly the order that he wants them. The book of James comes right after the book of Hebrews, because that is where he wanted it to be. So we're going to see a lot of similarities between the two, we're going to James covering some of the same things that the book of Hebrews covered.

And if you're listening to this on audio, and you haven't gone through that study on the book of Hebrews yet, then you may want to consider going back and doing that before starting on James. Because I am probably going to be referencing back quite a bit to things that we talked about in Hebrews. There will probably be some things that we've already covered in some depth in Hebrews that I'm not going to go into in detail in James, because we've just talked about it.

Now, the first thing that I discussed at length when we began studying Hebrews, before we even got into the text of the book itself, is the nature of the book. How it is different than most of the other NT epistles. We talked about how Hebrews was not written to the Gentile church at a particular location, but instead to the Hebrews, not the Gentiles, and not at a particular location, but just in general. So it wasn't written to people based on geographical location, but to a group of people based on ethnicity. Hebrews, descendants of Abraham.

And that is also true of the book of James. The book of James is also written specifically to Israel, and not to the Gentile churches. And it's not written to a particular geographical location, either, but just to the Hebrews, wherever they are.

And when we went through the book of Hebrews we talked about the reasons why that was significant. For one, just the fact that he was writing to the Hebrews meant that he was writing to people from a God-fearing, religious background, who had come to Christ out of that God-fearing religion. And we'll see that play a part in the book of James as well.

But one of the most fascinating implications was that the book of Hebrews was written not only for those people in the first century, but that God also had a purpose for that admonition in the future, when Israel is grafted back in. In the intervening 2000 years, Israel hasn't had the Levitical religious system, the temple system, in operation. And yet much of that admonition that Paul was giving them was in reference to that system. So there was only a few short years that the book of Hebrews was really relevant for them at that time. But the Bible tells us that the time is coming again when the temple will be built, and the Jewish religious system restored. And so at that time the book of Hebrews will again be very prescient for the people of Israel.

And the book of James is in a similar vein. It also contains admonition that is prophetic, that has a special purpose in a future time. Just like the book of Hebrews, the book of James contains exhortation that was only relevant for the Hebrews for about a generation or so, but since the end of the first century it's not as specifically important for them. There is still some great general stuff that we can glean from it, but there are aspects of it that will carry a special significance for Israel during the tribulation.

Now, another thing that we talked about before we started on Hebrews was who its author was. And so I suppose we ought to do the same thing here.

There are several different men named James in the NT. The most familiar is probably James the son of Zebedee, James the brother of John, who was one of Jesus's disciples.

But he isn't the one that wrote the book of James. He was martyred fairly early on, one of the first apostles to be killed.

Acts 12:2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

So Herod had him killed with the sword.

He wasn't still around by the time that the book of James was written. So it wasn't him.

Now, Jesus also had another disciple whose name was James, James the son of Alphaeus. And it doesn't talk about him much, just lists his name along with Christ's other disciples. The last time that he's talked about is in Acts 1:13, when the disciples returned after Christ's ascension. And we don't hear anything from him after that.

But later on in Acts, there is a third man named James, who becomes very prominent. He was a chief man within the church in Judea.

Galatians 2:9 [Paul says,] And when **James**, Cephas, and John, *who seemed to be pillars*, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

So, James was one of the pillars in the church in Judea. And notice the order that Paul lists them in. He puts James before Cephas, before Peter. So James was the lead guy in the Judaeen church, even more than Peter was. Peter was the apostle to the circumcision, he was ordained by God to reach as many people of Israel as he could. So Peter was the chief apostle and missionary, he's the one God put in charge of that work, but the chief elder of the church was James, overseeing those Jews that were already in the faith.

When Peter was miraculously released from prison, here's what he said:

Acts 12:17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto **James**, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

So Peter said, that James needs to know that I'm OK. Go show these things to him and the brethren. So James was the chief man among the brethren.

Later, when they were having a dispute over whether the Gentiles needed to keep the law of Moses, Paul made his argument, and Peter made his argument, but it was James that gave the final word:

Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace, **James** answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets;

So James said that Simon Peter's experience of giving the gospel to the Gentiles was indeed in agreement with scripture, and so they should follow God's will and tell the Gentiles that there was no reason to keep the law.

And so once James had spoken that, they all agreed:

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

So they clearly looked up to James, and when he said that this was what they should do, and showed them the scripture, then it pleased them all to do it.

And so later on, when Paul visited Judea again, it says:

Acts 21:18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto **James**; and all the elders were present.

So James was clearly the chief elder, the chief bishop within the church, and all of the other elders were present with him.

But how did this James get to be the chief guy? How did he get that calling, when he wasn't really one of the disciples?

Well, we know that Peter received his calling from Christ after Christ's resurrection. And so did Paul. Christ commissioned them after he rose again. And I think that the same thing happened to James. I think that James was commissioned by Christ to watch over the church in Judea. Paul talks about the different people that Christ appeared to after his resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of **James**; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

So Christ appeared to Peter personally, when nobody else was present. And much, much later he appeared to Paul, and made him apostle to the Gentiles. But it says that after Christ had appeared to Peter, that he also appeared to James personally.

So just as Christ had a special commission to give to Peter, and to give to Paul, it is clear that he also had a special commission to give to James. Not to make him an apostle to go out and reach Israel or the Gentiles, he had Peter and Paul for that. But to make him the chief shepherd and bishop of the Judaeian church.

So James was a very special guy.

And how did he get to be that, why did Christ choose *him*? He wasn't one of the 12 disciples, how did he get saved, how did he get to be a part of that?

Well, actually, he wasn't a disciple, he was closer to Christ than that. He was one of Jesus's brothers.

Paul says:

Galatians 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save **James** *the Lord's brother*.

So Paul said that James was the brother of Christ.

Mark 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of **James**, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

So it talks about how Mary and Joseph had other children after Mary had Jesus. And James was apparently the eldest.

And so after Christ's death, within the early church, Mary wasn't known as Mary the mother of Jesus. James was now her eldest, and so she was known as Mary the mother of James:

Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of **James** the less and of Joses, and Salome;

We just read how it said in Mark 6 that Mary was the mother of James and Joses, and so that is what she was known by. She was called Mary the mother of James.

And it said that he also had another younger brother, besides Joses, named Juda. And so in the book of Jude, Jude also introduces himself as the brother of James:

Jude 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of **James**...

So this James who wrote this book is one of Jesus's brothers. And Jesus appeared to him after his resurrection, and apparently called him to be the shepherd of the church in Judea, the bishop of the circumcision. And so he became a chief elder within the Judaeian church.

And so it is natural that we find him here writing, as we said, to the Jewish Christians, rather than to the churches among the Gentiles. Because he was a minister to the churches of the Jews.

So that gives you some background to understand who this man is, who he is writing to, and why he is writing to them, why God would call him to write this epistle. He's writing to people that he feels that Christ has given him a special charge over, and so God has inspired him here to give them some exhortation. They probably know of him, and he probably knows many of them. He's ministered to them personally.

Verse 1

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

SERVANT

So James introduces himself here, not as an apostle. Not like Paul always does, "Paul the apostle." He doesn't say "James the apostle." Because he wasn't really an apostle. God didn't give him a ministry for the most part of spreading the word of God, of speaking the word of God.

So he wasn't really an apostle. Instead he calls himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."

He could have introduced himself as "James the bishop appointed by God, and the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Though I'm sure he really needed no introduction. Everybody knew who James was.) But he doesn't describe himself that way. Instead he just calls himself a servant. The servant of God and of Christ.

That's what defined him. That is what defined who he was. That is what made his message important, that is why his readers should listen to him. Because he is God's servant. Being the Lord's brother doesn't mean anything, being an elder who saw Christ after his resurrection doesn't mean anything. But the fact that he is serving God, that he's still serving him, and that he is writing to them within that capacity, as God's servant, at God's direction, is the reason that they should listen. That is the authority behind this. The fact that it is being written by a servant of God, who has directed him to shepherd his people.

So we're going to see some differences between the book of Hebrews and the book of James. Even though both of them are written to Israel.

Because the book of Hebrews was written by an apostle, to declare the gospel, to declare the word of God. The book of James is written by a shepherd, an overseer, to give more-practical direction in regard to everyday living, rather than theological doctrine.

We saw Paul give them a little bit of direction like that at the end of Hebrews, and that's basically where James is going to pick up and tell them some of the same things.

It is interesting to note though, that in Hebrews Paul didn't start out by calling himself an apostle either. Remember how we said that that was fitting because he was the apostle to the Gentiles, not the apostle to the Hebrews. So Hebrews was not really written as part of an apostolic ministry that God had ordained at that time, it wasn't written by the apostle to the Hebrews. It was a special and distinct message that God had for his people, that was supplied separate from the general apostolic ministries that he'd ordained for that time.

And the book of James is similar in that James is not so much an apostle as a shepherd. God is again speaking to Israel here, but not through Peter the apostle to the circumcision. But through James, his servant, and overseer of the church in Judaea.

TWELVE TRIBES

So he says "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting."

Now, in passing I'd just like to point out how James says that there are twelve tribes in Israel. Some people like to talk about the "ten lost tribes." If that was true, then James would be writing to the three tribes, or the two tribes. But he is writing to the twelve tribes, because there never were ten lost tribes. That's totally a myth, totally unscriptural.

The Bible is very very clear, in the OT, that all of the tribes would return to Israel before Messiah appeared. And in the NT we find people from other tribes in the land of Israel, not just of Judah and Benjamin and Levi. So it is clear that that prophecy was fulfilled, and that at the time of Christ, all twelve tribes were considered to be present, none were considered lost.

So the idea of the ten lost tribes is a myth. Its clear that people from the ten tribes of the northern kingdom assimilated with the Jews during their exile in Babylon, or upon their return to the promised land. And so they were one people. Just as the Bible said that they would become one people, in Ezekiel 36 and 37.

So when James was writing, he was writing to all twelve tribes.

SCATTERED ABROAD

But note that they are no longer assembled together in Israel. James calls them “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.”

So that is why James is having to write to them. His flock has been scattered abroad. They are no longer in one single location where he can oversee them. And so he has to write his admonition and exhortation to them in an epistle, instead of giving it to them directly.

So, recall how we said that the book of Hebrews was clearly written prior to 70 AD and the fall of Jerusalem and scattering of Israel. And so in that letter Paul told the Christian Hebrews to not tie themselves down to an earthly city, but to go forth without the camp, to not be afraid to leave Judaea.

And so apparently many of them did, they took Paul’s advice, and so now James is writing to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Jerusalem has likely fallen at this point, and so they’ve had to flee Judaea for the most part, and been scattered throughout the world.

And so do you see how James fits together with Hebrews as admonition for Israel during the tribulation? The book of Hebrews was talking to them when they were still in Judea, and the temple system was still in operation, as it will be in the first half of the tribulation. But now James is writing to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, just as Israel will have to flee into the wilderness and throughout the world during the second half of the tribulation.

And so Hebrews gives admonition for the Hebrews focused on the first half of the tribulation, and James is for the second half, when they are scattered abroad. And we are going to see that very clearly in the later part of James.

So during the tribulation there is going to be a lot of persecution coming on Israel, especially during the second half. And they are going to be scattered abroad. And they are going to need this kind of exhortation to stay in the faith, to remain true, and to have patience, as they wait for the return of Christ.

And as they need wisdom during that time, they need to ask for that wisdom in faith. If they are going to be double minded, if part of their mind is that they should serve Christ, but they also want to join with the antichrist or the whore, then they aren’t going to receive wisdom from God. If they want to be made perfect through their trial and patience, so that they can stand before Christ when he comes, then they need to not waver in their faith, but hold fast. And then they can ask for wisdom, receive it, and be made perfect and entire, wanting nothing. And when Christ returns, they will receive the hope of their patience.

Verse 2

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

TEMPTATIONS

So James just jumps right in here, and opens his epistle immediately talking about temptations. So they are experiencing temptations.

And if you think back on the book of Hebrews, this is something that Paul also wrote to the Israelites. He talked a good bit about temptations.

And what was his focus? What was the primary temptation and sin that he was talking about? It was persecution. He was admonishing them to stay in the faith, and not be tempted to sin by denying Christ, by quitting the faith, and going back into the Jewish religion. So the temptation was the temptation to leave the faith because of the persecution that was coming upon them.

And now James speaks of diverse temptations, because it isn't just the Jews that are persecuting them, it isn't just the Jewish temple system that they are under pressure to go back into. They are also experiencing trouble at the hands of Rome, and Gentile religions and philosophies are providing temptations for them as well.

Today we use the term temptation in very restricted sense. We use it almost exclusively to talk about being tempted to sin, being tempted to do something morally wrong, something wicked. But at a more basic level the term temptation doesn't have to carry that connotation. It can refer to any kind of testing or trying or proving. Any time that you are testing somebody, trying to prove them, whether they are genuine or not, that's a temptation. Any time that somebody is confronted with a situation that tests their mettle, that is a temptation.

Let's look at some examples, to give you a better idea of the way that the Bible uses the term temptation.

In the OT it often speaks of men tempting God. In fact, that is the primary way that the word is used in the OT, referring to God being tempted, not men.

That doesn't make a lot of sense if temptation always refers to sin. How could God be tempted to sin? But it wasn't that men were tempting God to sin, but that they were doubting him, and trying him, to prove him whether he was really who he was or not. And so they were tempting him.

For example:

Exodus 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they **tempted** the LORD, saying, *Is the LORD among us, or not?*

So it tells us exactly what they did that it called tempting the LORD. It was to question whether the LORD was really among them or not, and ask him to do something, to give them food and water in the wilderness, that they really didn't believe that he would do. They were tempting him, testing him, trying him, proving him, whether he was really among them.

Deuteronomy 4:34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by **temptations**, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

There are several different passages that call the signs and wonders that God did in Egypt temptations. Why? Because the Egyptians obviously didn't really believe that God was calling the Hebrews up out of Egypt. They refused to hear him and listen to his threatening. They continually doubted him and made him prove himself through plagues and miracles. And so in doing that they were tempting him. He would say, "I'm going to do this if you don't let Israel go," and they'd say, "Go ahead and try." And so that was a temptation that they placed before God, forcing him to prove himself by doing all of those wonders, until finally after many temptations

they gave up and let Israel go, they had to concede defeat, that they'd tried God, and he'd proved through all the temptations that he really was who he said he was.

Psalms 78:41 Yea, they turned back and **tempted** God, and *limited* the Holy One of Israel.

So to tempt God, to tempt someone, is to limit them. To say, "Oh, you can't really do that," and make them prove themselves.

Sometimes when a bunch of guys get together, they'll tempt one another to do stupid things, to show how dare-devil or how strong they are. Not necessarily wrong, but sometimes foolish. It is a temptation. Test you and see if your boasting is really true.

And so that is kind of what they were doing to God. They wouldn't take him at his word, they had to tempt him and test him, before they would believe. And the Bible doesn't commend them for that, it rebukes them repeatedly. They should have just believed God, but they had to tempt him.

And so, this passage might sound familiar:

Psalms 95:8 Harden not your heart, as in the *provocation*, and as in the day of **temptation** in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers **tempted** me, *proved* me, and saw my work.

Paul quoted that in Hebrews.

And there God says that they tempted him, and proved him, and saw his work. So they wouldn't just believe that he was going to care for them, they had to complain and provoke him, question him, tempt him, and make him prove himself, or else they were going back to Egypt.

And the first-century Jews were no better. They did the same thing to Christ as their fathers had done:

Matthew 16:1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and **tempting** desired him that he would *shew them a sign* from heaven.

So they wouldn't take Jesus for his word either, even though he spoke the truth. Even though they knew that no other man spoke like this man. They wouldn't know the power of God by the word, they wanted a sign. They wanted him to prove himself to them. And so they came to him, tempting him.

So those are various different passages that talk about tempting God. And though that isn't what James is talking about here, I think that they're helpful to get a better understanding of how the Bible uses the term temptation.

So now with a better idea of what temptation is, let's look at some passages that talk about men being tempted. And as I said, we find that mostly in the NT, we don't find a lot of that in the OT. So here are some NT passages that talk about men being tempted:

The Lord's prayer famously says:

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into **temptation**, but *deliver us from evil*: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Notice carefully what he says there. He didn't say lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from sin. Or lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from wickedness. But "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

So he was telling them to ask God not to put them in situations where they were tried by evil coming upon them. In other words, to not lead them into persecution and martyrdom. Because it was *his* kingdom that they were representing. And so they were to pray that his kingdom would come, and his will be done, not that his will would be resisted by men, and that they in doing God's will they would be lead to confront that resistance, and evil would be brought upon them. They'd be tempted, whether they were really going to follow God, to follow Christ or not, by persecution and trouble.

So they were to ask that his kingdom would come, and they would not be lead into temptation, but delivered from evil.

And that was a good prayer for that time, at the early part of Christ's ministry, when there was still hope that Israel wouldn't reject him as their Messiah. But after it became clear that they weren't going to accept Christ, Jesus frankly told his disciples that they were indeed going to suffer persecution, and that his kingdom was not yet going to come. That the power of the kingdom would remain in the hands of the Father, until a future time.

So they were in the end led into temptation, and put to death for their faith. Because they didn't waver. When tempted and tried, they were found faithful.

But not all people are like that. Some do fall away, as Jesus said in the parable of sower:

Luke 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of **temptation** fall away.

And if we wonder what it means there by temptation, we need look no further than the other epistles that contain the same parable:

Matthew 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when *tribulation or persecution* ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Mark 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when *affliction or persecution* ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

So temptation, a time of temptation, would be when tribulation and affliction and persecution arise for the word's sake.

So a man would be tempted by persecution.

Paul says:

Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and **temptations**, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

So Paul said that temptations befell him, because of the persecution that was brought upon him by the Jews.

Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were **tempted**, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

And so he talked about the OT saints being afflicted, tormented, persecuted, and tempted. It tested whether they were faithful or not. And they showed that they were.

That was the end of Paul's chapter all about the faith of the forefathers there. And so they stayed in the faith, they stayed true, and when they were tempted and tried, they were proved.

1 Peter 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold **temptations**:

7 That the *trial of your faith*, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be *tried* with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

So the temptation that it talks about men going through in the NT, is the trial of their faith. It is anything that happens that tests their faith, and tempts them whether they are going to follow God or not. It shows whether they really are in the faith, whether they really believe or not. It is a test, a temptation.

And so:

Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of **temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to *try* them that dwell upon the earth.

So the church, the saints, the believers, those that have kept the word, God doesn't need to test and try and tempt them. Their faith is manifest. So they won't need to go through the hour of temptation, the time of tribulation, that will come upon the earth in the end. Things will be brought upon the earth that will try men, but we don't need to be tried, so we'll be saved from that trial and temptation.

So when it talks about temptation in the NT, it is talking about our faith being tried and tested. Not necessarily by a situation that would cause us to sin by following our lusts. But usually in the sense of a situation that would cause us to want to quit the faith to escape evil that would come upon us at the hands of persecutors. It is a temptation that tests our faith, and if we fail the test, so to speak, it wouldn't be by doing something contrary to our faith, it would be doing something that would deny our faith, that would prove that we weren't really in the faith at all. It would be to leave the faith. The question after the temptation is, are they still in the faith or not? Do they have faith, or not.

And so that is exactly what James is talking about here. He says:

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
3 Knowing this, that the *trying of your faith* worketh patience.

So he is talking about their faith being tried.

In the same sense that the Israelites tempted God saying "Is the LORD among us or not", they are tempted to show whether they are in the faith or not. Their faith is being tried, whether it is really real, whether it is genuine.

So they are suffering persecution, they are falling into diverse temptations. Remember how he greeted them. He said, "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." He's writing to them as

the persecuted and scattered tribes. And so in opening he immediately begins by addressing that temptation, that persecution, that is coming upon them. That is what is defining their existence right now, that is the common denominator for most all of them. They are suffering persecution, they are suffering trouble. And so that is what he deals with right up front.

And the first thing that he tells them about their temptations that they are falling into, is that they should count them all joy. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." That sounds kind of unintuitive. Count it a joy when you are persecuted, when affliction comes upon you for your faith? That's not the instinctive reaction. But he explains to us why, he gives a reason:

Verse 3

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

So the reason to count it joy, when they fall into temptations, is because the trying of their faith will work patience. They know that, or they should know that. They should be joyful because they should know that through their temptations, through their faith being tried, patience will be wrought in them.

PATIENCE

But what exactly does he mean by that? What exactly is he talking about when he says "patience", that patience will be worked through their trials? Well, to fully grasp it, we need to look at other NT passages that talk about patience.

Now, the term patience is used in scripture very much the same way that we use it today. For example, in one place Paul asks his listeners that they would hear him patiently. So patience is waiting calmly and peacefully, enduring something patiently.

But many times the Bible uses patience in a particular context, in the same context that James is using it in here: talking about persecution.

And in fact it isn't just used that way in the NT, it is also used that way in the OT:

Psalms 37:7 Rest in the LORD, and wait **patiently** for him: *fret* not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
8 Cease from *anger*, and forsake *wrath*: *fret* not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.
10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.
11 But the *meek* shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.
14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.
15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.
16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

So in that Psalm the righteous are encouraged, despite the persecution and wickedness of the wicked, to wait patiently for the LORD. Not to fret themselves, or give in to anger and wrath or evil, but to rest in the LORD, and wait patiently, knowing that the meek will inherit the earth. So they should be patient in their sufferings, knowing that God will one day destroy the wicked, and they will receive the inheritance.

So even there in Psalms we see patience used in the context of enduring persecutions. And that is how it is very often used in the NT as well.

For example, we already looked at the parable of the sower, where it talked about those that in time of temptation fall away. But it contrasted that with those that don't fall away, but have patience:

Luke 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of *temptation* fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with **patience**.

So you're not supposed to fall away in a time of temptation, when affliction and persecution arises, but instead to bring forth fruit with patience. To endure the temptations when they come, and to keep bearing fruit. And it calls that, patience.

Does this hearken back to Hebrews for you?

This is the same things that Paul talked about there, and he used the term patience the same way:

Hebrews 10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye *endured a great fight of afflictions*;

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by *reproaches and afflictions*; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of **patience**, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

So he spoke of how they need patience, as they endure reproaches and afflictions, while they are waiting for Christ.

And he reminded them of how when he had come to them before, they had been going through a great fight of afflictions, but they were joyful, they were joyful in aiding him in his ministry,

despite the fact that it was a reproach to them, because they knew that they had in heaven a better substance.

In other words, he connected their patience that they showed before to the fact that they were looking forward to what they are going to receive in Christ, and that it was because of that hope that they were able to bring forth fruit in their affliction. And he tells them that they need to continue to do that, and have patience as they wait for the coming of Christ. To not give up the confidence that they have in that hope, but to keep believing in it, to keep having faith, and keep bringing forth fruit, with patience.

And that is very much like what James is telling them here. He's telling them to count it all joy when they fall into temptations, because when their faith is tried, it works patience.

So James is speaking of patience here in that same context of them continuing to hold fast and bring forth fruit, because of their faith, their faith in the coming kingdom of Christ. And so they should count it joy when their faith is tried, because it gives them an opportunity to bring forth fruit with patience, it works patience.

It not only shows the proof of their faith, but increases their patience, increases their joy and hope in the kingdom of God and the coming of Christ.

Let's look at a couple more passages that talk about patience, that will help you understand that better.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in *tribulations* also: knowing that *tribulation worketh patience*;

4 And **patience**, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

So Paul starts off there talking about their faith, and how wonderful it is, how wonderful the grace of God is that they have access to through it, and how it gives them the hope that one day by that grace they will be made partakers of the glory of God.

So they have this wonderful faith that gives them this glorious hope. But then he adds that there is something else, that is even greater than that. Not only that, not only do we rejoice in our faith, the things that we've received from God by faith, and in the hope of the glory that we will receive, but beyond that, we also glory in tribulations.

Why? Because we know that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.

So the end result there is hope. In the end, through tribulations, our patience works hope.

But didn't he say that we already had hope? He said that we already rejoice in hope of the glory of God, through the grace that we've obtained by faith. We already have that hope by faith, why is the tribulation and patience so valuable?

Because it increases our hope.

It increases our hope, that he said we rejoice in.

And so if there is an increase of hope, there is an increase of rejoicing. If something increases your hope, if something works hope in you, then it should increase your joy, it should work joy in you. Because that hope is our rejoicing. That hope in the glory of God.

And so since patience is something that does that, that works hope in us, then when tribulations, and afflictions, and persecutions arise for our faith, we rejoice, because that will work patience in us, which will work hope.

You see, patience has to work hope, because when you are patient, you're waiting for something, right? So when we are enduring, though patience, we're enduring and bringing forth fruit because of something that we are waiting for. And the more tempted our faith is, the more we have to endure, the more patient we have to be, the more we will look forward to and anticipate what we are waiting for. And that anticipation is what the Bible calls hope.

And so when James tells the Israelites to count it all joy when they are tempted, when their faith is tried, this is why. Because the trying of their faith works patience. It causes them to look at what they are having faith in, that extends to the future, a future hope that they have, and to anticipate it. It causes them to be patient, to be waiting, and to endure through putting more and more hope in the coming of Christ.

In other words, when their faith is tried, it causes them to see the promise of Christ's coming kingdom and the resurrection as even more precious. And that orientation, of hoping in Christ, that practice of living in reference to that, living as one waiting for that, is what the Bible calls patience.

That patience is something that is worked in us through temptations, through tribulations that test our faith, through persecution.

And Paul said in Romans that it wasn't just something that is worked in us, but that patience also works other things in us as well.

And so James says:

Verse 4

James 1:4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

So James said that the trial of their faith works patience, but that patience also works in them.

And so he told them to count it joy when temptations came upon them, because it would work patience in them. But also he wants them to be mindful that patience is not something that is worked alone, that it isn't the only end goal. And so as patience is being worked in them, they also need to let the patience work in them. They should rejoice that patience is being worked, but they also need to be sure to let patience continue to do *its* work, to let patience have her perfect work. They need to let the patience finish its work, and complete its work. So that they will be complete, and perfect, and entire, wanting nothing, not lacking anything.

So there is apparently a danger, that when going through temptations, and patience is being worked in you, that you'd cut it short of finishing its job. That it wouldn't get to have its full work. And so you wouldn't have had the complete experience, and it would leave you wanting in some areas.

So James tells them to joy in this, but not to think that its a silver bullet, that its a cure-all, that just because they are experiencing temptations that they are being made perfect. They have to

be sure to let patience have her perfect work, if they want to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Now, do you know how to do that? I'm not sure that I know how to do that.

And James anticipated that we might not know. And so he's going to explain himself, he's going to expound on that some in this epistle. But first he says this:

Verse 5

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

So how do you know whether patience is having her perfect work? How do you let it make you perfect and entire?

You don't know?

Well, if you lack wisdom, ask God for some. If that is one thing that you are wanting, if that is one thing that you are lacking, then ask God for it.

And James gives encouragement here to those who would ask God for wisdom. For some reason James felt it necessary to reassure us that those that ask God for wisdom will receive it. He doesn't want us to be hesitant, he doesn't want us to be timid about it.

And so he tells us that God gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. God's not restrictive about giving wisdom to us. He doesn't just give a little bit, he's not miserly about it. He doesn't restrict it to just particular people. He gives it to all men freely.

He gives it to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.

Now, to upbraid somebody, is to disparage them, to rebuke them, for something that they are lacking. For something that they don't have or didn't do. When you tell somebody how stupid they were that they didn't know that, that's upbraiding them. When you go on about how somebody is unable to accomplish something, that they are too weak to do it, that's upbraiding them. You're criticizing them rather forcefully, you're upbraiding them.

And James encourages the Hebrews that they can ask God for wisdom, because he won't upbraid them. He won't rebuke them because they are fools. He will just freely give them the wisdom that they need.

So James, in his experience as a shepherd of the church, must foresee that some people who need wisdom from God, don't ask for it, because they are scared to, and don't think that he will give it to them.

And now that he is no longer able to guide them in every thing, and share his wisdom with them, he wants them to be emboldened to ask God for the wisdom that they need. Because he gives it freely to all men. They don't need to fear that he'll reject them. He won't upbraid them. So they can ask, and know that they will receive.

Now, I've spent all my life asking God for wisdom. To me, that's just something that you do. You want wisdom, it is good and its useful, so you ask God for it. And he gives it to you. No doubt about it. God gives people that ask for wisdom, wisdom.

But I can see why God felt it necessary to have James say this this way, and encourage people not to be afraid to do that. I can see why people might be hesitant, why they might think that God might not be interested in giving wisdom to them. Or it just might seem like a daunting thing to them. Ask God to give you wisdom? That almost seems prideful, doesn't it? "Make me wise."

But James says, you ought to be wise. And if you aren't, if you lack wisdom, then you need to ask of God. Because you are going to need it. When you are falling into temptations, and your faith is being tried, you're going to need that wisdom. Because it is going to help you to stay in the faith, to stay true, and to let patience have her perfect work, so that you can be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. That is God's plan for us, and that is something that tribulations work in us, but without wisdom, it won't be achieved. So asking God for wisdom is a duty of the Christian, without which he will not be able to become what God wants him to be, and his temptations will be in vain.

Verses 6-7

James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

But, there's a caveat. You have to believe that you are going to receive the faith when you ask, or else God won't give it to you. Right? If you aren't sure whether God is going to give you the wisdom, then he won't. Isn't that what it says?

Well, that's what I thought, until I looked at it closer, and then I realized that that's not what it is saying at all.

This word wavering here might ring a bell for you, because it's only used one other place in the Bible, and that is in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a *true heart in full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not *forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

26 For if we *sin willfully* after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

So he told them to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering. And what was he meaning by that? Well, look at the context that it was in. He was talking about two alternative options: you stay in the faith, you hold fast your profession, you continue to believe on Christ; or, you sin willfully, you forsake the brethren, you leave the faith, and you will be judged and damned.

By telling them not to waver, he was telling them to stay in the faith, and not let their persecutions move them so that they thought about leaving, or actually did leave.

And that is the same context that we have here in James. James is talking about their persecutions, and is telling them to endure with patience when their faith is being tried. So when he tells them to "ask in faith, nothing wavering," what is he telling them? He's telling them the same thing that Paul told them in Hebrews. He's telling them not to waver in their faith, "do I believe Christ, or do I not believe on him, am I going to fall away...?"

He's telling them not to ask for wisdom, if they are wavering in their faith, if they aren't really committed, if they aren't having patience worked in them at all, if instead of having patience they are falling away. In that case, the wisdom isn't going to do you any good, its purpose was for patience to have its perfect work, but if patience isn't even able to be worked in you, then the wisdom isn't important anymore, and God isn't going to give it to you. You don't need it, you're not asking in faith, you are wavering.

And so what he is telling them, is if they are going to ask for wisdom, to ask with their mind made up. Not just to be dabbling in Christianity and see this verse that says that God will give wisdom to all men liberally, and they should ask for some, and say "I think I'll ask for some," and expect to receive it. If you do that, you're not going to receive it. You must ask in faith.

So James isn't telling us to play this little game that we play where we say, "Well, I'm not sure if I'm really believing that God is going to give me wisdom, maybe that's why it doesn't seem like I'm receiving it, maybe I just don't have enough faith." Some of us have tendency to do that. And it discourages us from asking for the wisdom that we need, because we aren't sure whether we believe enough to receive it.

And that's the opposite of what he's telling us to do here. James isn't telling us to be sure to believe that God is going to give us wisdom. Of course he's going to give us wisdom. He gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not. But he doesn't give it to maybe-I'm-a-Christians, he doesn't give it to people who aren't standing fast in the faith, who aren't having patience worked in them through the trial of their faith, because they aren't truly in the faith. He only gives it to people who are holding fast without wavering.

Verse 8

James 1:8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

So he's talking about somebody who is of two different minds. Not somebody who just isn't quite fully believing that God will give them wisdom. He's talking about people who want to follow Christ on the one hand, and on the other hand want something else. They are wavering in their faith.

And he says that somebody like that is unstable in all their ways. They are like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. They aren't holding fast to the anchor of the soul, they are allowing themselves to be tossed around by circumstances. They aren't staying in the faith, they are being moved about by persecution.

Do you realizing that all of this imagery that he is using here, is used to refer to unsaved people, is used to refer to people who will be damned? It isn't a way of describing people of faith, who endure unto life eternal.

Remember how we went through Psalm 1 and it talked about the chaff that was driven with the wind? Remember how we talked about that, how the winds of public opinion, the winds of changing things on this earth drive people to and fro? And that is the same thing that James is saying here. Don't be moved by these light afflictions. If you're being moved by them, it's too late to ask for wisdom. Or it is too soon, it's premature, you need to first make up your mind, ground yourself in the faith, and then ask for the wisdom to endure and let patience have her perfect work.

And so this being tossed in the wind is imagery applied to the ungodly. And waves are often used to refer to the wicked as well. Here's what Jude, James's brother had to say about people that he compares to waves:

Jude 1:8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

So they are fools, they don't know these things, they don't have wisdom.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of **winds**; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Do you see the reference to Psalm 1 there?

13 Raging **waves** of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

So Jude made it very clear, that these people who are carried about of winds, who are like waves of the sea, are reserved to the blackness of darkness forever. They aren't in the faith, they are brute beasts who have no wisdom, they refuse the wisdom that the good Lord gave man, and he will give them no more when they ask. And they will be eternally damned.

So that is the kind of people that James is talking about here. Jude was describing the worst of them, but James is talking about the same kind of people, who kind of want to be a part of this, but kind of don't. They are double minded, and they are unstable in all their ways, they will not endure and remain in the faith, they will fall, and they will not be saved.

And so the scattered flock of Israel needed to know that in their persecutions they should rejoice for the patience that it will work in them; that they should be careful to let patience have its perfect work; and that if they want that, but need wisdom, then they can ask of God and receive it freely; and that if they are going to ask for that wisdom, then they need to be sure that they are in the faith, not wavering, but holding fast. That they are going to endure, and let patience have its perfect work, not cut it off by leaving the faith. But if they do rejoice, and endure, and ask God for wisdom, they will receive it, and they will be made perfect and entire, wanting nothing.