



John Battaglia, D. Min.
PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102
573-355-4161//Twitter @johnabattaglia
John.battaglia@capitolcom.org

“A Surprising Joy”

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

Tuesday, January 29, 7:00-7:55 AM in HHR #5

(hot breakfast provided)

Capitol Commission is non-partisan and non-denominational

Introduction

The introductory chapter 1, is designed to sum up the central ideas, words, and themes encountered in Chapters 2-5. Life of faith, whole-hearted devotion to God, Life is hard, wisdom, prayer, caring for the poor, self-control, dangers of wealth to mention a few. While the letter of James speaks of works, the book is about a surprising joy, and genuine faith; a place where one’s words, walk, and works align in actions and attitudes.

1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

Jerusalem church: made up of at least 25,000 members led by James, the half-brother of Jesus, self-designated as the “servant of Jesus Christ, God and Lord”. Position, title, and rank important recognitions to leaders, not to James, he claims the virtue of humility. He placed his life in submission to God; and why not, his half-brother Jesus led with humility all the way to the Cross.

‘who humbled himself and became obedient unto death’ (Phil. 2:8).

Thomas Aquinas: humility is *“submission to God and a consequent moderation of ambition to keep it within the bounds appointed for each individual by God”*

Martin Luther: humility *“it is a joyful acceptance of God’s will.”*

A. Ritschl: humility is *“complete resignation to our unconditional dependence on God.”*

Christ, the title: “anointed one” Jesus is the deliverer to save the people of Israel. Jesus, the King, who for the Jews were looking.

Christ, the name: Jesus, the divine Lord, believed by James and Jewish-Christians.

The “diaspora” is literally the “scattering”, “dispersion”, or “sowing” of seed. It refers to the fact that after the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel (10 Tribes) and after the exile of Judah (2 Tribes), ethnic Jews/Israelites were “scattered” throughout the Middle East and in subsequent centuries were even further into Europe and North Africa.

James’ letter is to Jewish Christians, as well as, Gentile Christians. Both camps relate to his teaching. Their purpose is salt and light to the Gentiles (Acts 8:1, 4).

1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers/Sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds.

A command given: regardless of what happens to you count it a joy. One cannot stop what happens to us, but we can choose how we will respond to what happens to us: Faith or Fear, Joy or Sad. What if difficulties, are gifts? A radical thought; it is off the beaten path. What is one to do with the unwelcomed, unexpected, the unusual trials in life? They seek wisdom to know what to think, and what to do. James is not negating sorrow in pain. He is presenting a reality that sorrow and joy co-exist for the person of faith. Our testing offers opportunities for joy. They help us endure, to prove our faithfulness. Wisdom, the gatekeeper widens the way.

1:3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

James is aware of the pressure and persecution against believers that threaten their faith, bodies, and life. James directs them to a different perspective. View your problems as an environment that proves genuine faith. Proving of faith produces endurance and maturity, as a way of helping them regard testing as joy; tied to the hope of the return of Christ to earth and His exaltation above all.

¹ Cross, F. L., & Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.). (2005). In *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd ed. rev., p. 809). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

² Cross, F. L., & Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.). (2005). In *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd ed. rev., p. 809). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.



John Battaglia, D. Min.
PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102
573-355-4161//Twitter @johnabattaglia
John.battaglia@capitolcom.org

“A Surprising Joy”

Silver and gold, when heated in the furnace, proves authenticity, and draws out the dross.

1:4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James’ usage of perfection is the completeness or wholeness of the person who is “perfect,” implies integrity. “Lacking” is the opposite of wholeness.

Testing has a purpose, and if not aware, impatience can defeat that purpose. A fast food society’s tendency chooses quick satisfaction and comfort over long-term obedience.

Maturing of the believer is simply becoming what God intends that a human being should be. Goal both prescribed and made possible for believers by Jesus.

Without challenges maturity is not developed. Immaturity leads to one ill equipped for service to God.

1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

God gives with no strings attached. Wisdom generally deals with skill, understanding, giving guidance, and education. Anyone can obtain that. God’s wisdom is from above; it cannot be purchased. It is divine wisdom.

In wisdom, God created the universe and humankind (Psalms 104:24).

“The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens” (Proverbs 3:9).

Wisdom is obtained by asking. God gives, again, and again. His nature is to give; He is a generous God. He takes pleasure in giving.

1:6-8 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Faith is required for asking it demonstrates trust in the character and promises of God. Conversely, the “doubting” is a wavering of commitment to God (Rom. 4:20). To doubt God’s character is to accuse God of injustice. Judges God’s promises; the opposite of faith.

Imagery of a doubter is like a wave in the sea blown by the wind and tossed back and forth. A wave changes, has a lot of movement, shapes, you cannot trust it. So is the doubter’s ways, he/she is unstable. He/She is a fence-sitter unwilling to commit wholeheartedly to faith in Christ, clinging to their non-Christian habits. Vacillating their thinking and actions pending the subject matter, situation, what they might lose.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matthew 6:24).

Doubting is normative when hard times emerge. Christ-followers might question whether their situation is God’s will. Is He applying discipline, is He leading one on a deeper journey of faith and joy. One obtains faith only by going outside the borders of natural understanding.

It is easy to follow Jesus when all is well. Not so easy, when sickness enters your body; when finances dry up; when marriage is fractured. That is when the single-minded, wholehearted, and devoted follow of Christ does not fail in their commitment to God and His purposes.

“Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for GOD’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track. Don’t assume that you know it all” (Proverbs 3:6).

Proverbial wisdom concerns itself with the knowledge of how to live properly, with morality, with the reverence of God, with the virtues of integrity, discipline, and justice and to show by way of contrast the failure in life that awaits the fool.³

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:9).

³ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Wisdom, Wisdom Literature*. In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 2150). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

