

# Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 17, James 1:5-15

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This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 17, James 1:5-15.

Now, we want to move on to the second subunit here in the first main unit of James 1, and that is a response to lack of wisdom.

The first was the response to trials, which is rejoicing. Now, the response to lack of wisdom is prayer, the prayer of request for wisdom, chapter 1, verses 5 through 8. We, of course, did a detailed observation of this very passage, but here we're doing a detailed analysis of it. We note that it begins with the occasion 1:5a: if anyone lacks wisdom, which of course is the cause, therefore, that is the cause for the effect, let him ask God and let him ask God in faith, not doubting.

So that leads, of course, to these two exhortations. Now, we note here that this paragraph begins with the catchword or the stitch word lack. The preceding paragraph ended with lacking in nothing, it's lepo, lacking in nothing.

And now he says, but if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. This indicates that this is James' way of indicating that a connection exists between what he has just said regarding response to trials, rejoice, and what he now says with regard to wisdom. The gift of wisdom enables one to meet trials with joy, enables one to stand the test, and enables or allows steadfastness to have its perfect work.

There does seem to be here really this notion of instrumentation, precisely because in this passage wisdom is presented as a divine gift. And this divine gift set in the context of divine demand suggests that it is a divine gift that allows the divine demands or enables the divine demands to be realized. Wisdom, according to this passage, is the beginning of the process, because this wisdom is acquired from God.

It is not the end of the process. It's not the end of the process that is described in verse 4, because the end of that process comes through the chain of steadfastness and perfection, whereas wisdom here is described as being acquired by God, not as a result of a process, but acquired by God simply by asking of God. So, it's the beginning of the process, not the end of the process.

It is a presupposition for this process in verse 4 to work over against standing at the result end of the process. That's why we say that wisdom then is the means; you have instrumentation, which is a means for responding appropriately to joy as is

demanded here in verses 2 through 4. Now, as I say, this connection is indicated by the context here but is also indicated by Old Testament and intertestamental connections. Both the wisdom tradition, for example, Job, and the apocalyptic tradition, for example, the Testament of Joseph or 4 Maccabees or the Qumran material, make it clear that wisdom is the means, is a divine means for fulfilling the divine demands and especially the divine means for fulfilling the demands of endurance.

This is a common Jewish notion. This kind of wisdom helps both to understand or know the true character and potential of trials, that's a reality, to understand the true character and potential of trials, the reality, and also to act on this knowledge, to know the reality and to act on the reality. The perception of and acting out of reality is the essence of wisdom.

Now, we note Peter David's comments on this passage; he says that wisdom is a possession that enables a believer to see history from the divine perspective and, I would add, to act on this perception. The venerable bead put it this way: How am I able to see trials in their true light? It needs a higher wisdom. Now, the main point of this paragraph, of course, is that this kind of wisdom is acquired by the prayer of faith.

It is acquired by prayer to God, and hence it is a divine gift, not inherent in humans or even in Christians. It is not automatic in the Christian life. It does not come with the Spirit.

Incidentally, in terms of theological implications, this reminds us that not everything we need to perform the Christian life is implicit within the event of conversion itself, that there is acquisition, that there is grace acquisition that comes subsequent to conversion, and makes endurance and perseverance possible. So, it is a divine gift, not inherent in humans or even in Christians, but is supernatural and transcendent. The reference to praying to God for this wisdom may be an allusion to Solomon, the representative wise man, and the story of his acquisition of wisdom in 1 Kings chapter 3. He prayed for wisdom.

This wisdom cannot be found in anyone else but God and cannot be acquired by any other means than by prayer. It is both a divine and a gracious gift. Now, that's why I say that's the significance that it can be acquired only through prayer.

It is a gracious gift. This is really part of the larger biblical understanding that all ultimate needs or the meeting of all ultimate needs come from God alone. Now, this notion of wisdom as a divine reality that can be had only by appealing to God explains this relation to meekness in James.

For example, in 3:13, who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life, let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom and, for that matter, by humility as well. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rank growth and wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word that is able to save your souls. This stands over against worldly wisdom that far from being meek is self-centered and self-sufficient.

3:14, but if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

This worldly wisdom emphasizes a sense of our own power, importance, and potential and is thus linked to selfishness and self-aggrandizement. Now, in this process of speaking about the acquisition of wisdom, James introduces the issue of effective prayer, a concern elsewhere in this book, even in passages later in the book that do not relate it specifically to wisdom. But he's interested in the whole business of prayer as such, and that is introduced here in a general way in our passage.

This, of course, is developed in 4:1 through 10 and in 5:13 through 18. Apparently, James had a concern to address the issue of why prayers are not answered. Thus, what he says in 1.5b through 8 has application to prayer in general, but it is specifically related to prayer for wisdom.

He begins with wisdom here because that is the most urgent need that persons need to pray for. Now, as I say, he goes ahead and says, here begins the first exhortation, which is to ask God with emphasis upon the praeae, that is to say, God, the direction of prayer, which is divine, the divine aspect, which he substantiates this, which he substantiates both by a description of the character of God, who gives generously and without reproaching, and the result, it will be given to him. So, we begin here by noting something about prayer and the character of God.

We note that James begins with theology, that is to say, with the doctrine of God. The reason why one should ask God is because of the character of God, especially God's character as giving one. Notice the participle, who gives generously and without reproaching.

Now, two things are said about God here. First, he gives generously. That's the way the RSV translates it.

The word is haplos. There are actually two possibilities for the meaning of this word. This involves preliminary definition, incidentally, as well as word usage.

There are two possibilities. One is generous. That's the way the RSV translates it.

That is the extent of giving. He's not tight-fisted. The other possibility for the meaning of this word is simply.

That is to say, with simplicity rather than complexity. That is wholeheartedly. The first has to do with the extent of giving, and the second with the attitude towards giving.

That is to say, in terms of simply, wholeheartedly, without mental reservation, without hesitation, without calculation, without divided mind, comprehensive desire to give. I actually think that here, the second definition, simply, wholeheartedly, without mental reservation, without hesitation, with the undivided mind, and comprehensive desire to give, fits better within this context where the issue is not the extent of giving but the desire to give. But really, of course, both may be involved and are related to each other because a wholehearted desire to give will result in extravagant giving.

Now, also, it says here with regard to God, this verse declares that he gives without reproaching. By which he means without grumbling or complaining. An ididzo is a verb here.

Without grumbling or complaining or reproaching. God will not respond to our asking in a way that in the slightest extent, to the slightest extent, demeans us, or with the slightest indication of his disapproval. He will not respond to our asking him in a way that in the slightest, to the slightest extent, demeans us, or with the slightest indication of disapproval.

God's commitment to his people is total. His commitment to giving is total. There is not a speck of reserve in God's desire to give.

Now, this may stand in contrast to human givers, especially the wealthy who are described in 1:9 through 11, and more especially in 5:1 through 11, who hold back wages that properly belong to those who labor for them. I might just say in terms of implications, which lead really in the direction of application, there are two things I think that we can, two things among many others that we could take away from this description of God here and his attitude towards giving. One is that this argues against a kind of foxhole faith, a kind of attitude that bargains with God in order to get from God what we desperately need.

We do not have to bargain with God. As a matter of fact, it's an affront to God and an expression of deep-seated suspicion of a lack of complete goodness on the part of God to even think about bargaining with God for the gifts that we need from him. I think it also argues against an idea that God somehow does not want us to ask for all things that we need or even properly desire.

My own father, who has been dead now for some years, but who had a, I must say, and I appreciate this about him, had a very healthy attitude towards the sovereignty of God. But I think what he thought here was wrong is that it is improper, it's actually an affront to God, to go to God in asking God for things that are not absolutely necessary or essential, things that are of concern to us but are not of world-shaking significance. Here, really, the suggestion is quite the opposite, and that is that God delights in us and in our asking him for what we need and even what we desire within a proper compass.

Now, he also deals here with prayer and the character of the prayer. So, ask in faith, he says, not doubting. This moves from a focus on the prayee, God, to the prayer.

And, of course, it deals especially with the manner of human prayer. He substantiates this, this time both in terms of the character of the doubter and the result; even as he substantiated this exhortation by appealing positively to the character of God and the positive result, he now substantiates this exhortation by describing negatively the character of the doubter and the negative result. Don't let that person assume that he will receive anything from the Now, this balancing of the prayee with the prayer and the character of God with the character of the prayer implies a relational and personal and synergistic model of prayer over against a magical or mechanical or ritual model of prayer.

Prayer and receiving answer to prayer is neither holy God nor holy human, but involves a dynamic relationship between the two. The issue is not form of prayer, but interpersonal dynamics as they pertain to prayer. The contrast, and note here, he says, the contrast is, let him ask in faith with no doubting.

Again, you have a contrast that particularizes. So, let him ask in faith, well, what that means specifically is no doubting, and by the way, exclusive scope, no doubt at all. That is to say, there is to be no internal debate within the mind or the heart of the person, of the prayer, going back and forth in judgment.

This contrast indicates the character of this faith. It is to have no trace of doubt whatsoever. This doubt points to a basic and essential distrust of God.

That's the meaning of the acronym I hear, of doubt here, a basic and essential distrust of God. The context makes that very clear, especially a distrust of God's goodness and His absolute givingness, His absolute commitment to giving. It is not doubt regarding receiving a specific thing.

Note that the doubter is described as one who supposes he will receive what he has asked for. It is possible to doubt and to presume upon God at the same time. You have a contrast here between true faith and supposition.

No, this is a basic distrust of the person of God. The whole attitude of this person towards God is divided. This person has no real faith in God at all because this person separates confidence in receiving what is asked for from confidence in God.

Now, this person is described as one who is double-minded. Note the description of the double-minded man in 4:8. Again, the importance always of interpreting passages in light of broader book context. But this is not the only time that *dipsuxos*, double-minded, is mentioned by James.

He actually expands upon it in 4:8. Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. Notice you have parallelism here so that men of double mind is parallel with sinners.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you men of double mind. Be wretched and mourn and weep, he says to the double-minded. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection and the like.

So, the double-minded person in 4:8 is a sinner, impure or corrupt in heart with dirty hands, an enemy of God. Going back, by the way, there in that context to 4:4. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wishes to be a friend to the world of the world makes himself an enemy to God. The double-minded man then in context, is described as the enemy of God, not the friend of God, but the enemy of God, who attempts to find security in both the world, if you try to be a friend of the world and a friend of God, who attempts to find security in both the world and God, and for that reason is described as double-minded and in need of profound repentance.

This person is entirely out of tune with God, who is one. This person is double-minded, a walking civil war, and is out of tune in terms of character with a God who is one, which, by the way, in James is a fundamental teaching or a fundamental conviction, the fundamental truth with regard to God. James really is operating, in a sense, the whole book of James operates on the basis of the theology of the Shema.

Here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God. James emphasizes that God is one, not just in the sense that there is no other God, but that God is one in Himself, that He is unified, that He is complete, that He is whole, and that He is one in purpose. God is not double-minded, but this person is double-minded and, therefore, is entirely out of tune with God and has no real relationship with God.

The basis of answered prayer is a relationship of faith that makes a person a friend of God. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. So, the basis of answered prayer is the relationship of faith that makes a person God's friend and causes that person to relate to God as Father.

1:17. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, he says there. So, really, there is no middle ground, as far as James is concerned, between faith and no faith.

A person who doubts is essentially out of faith and is caught upon to repent, as we saw there in chapter four. Now, he moves on then to the next paragraph, the next subunit here, and this is really what we talked about in terms of joy and trials, to the response to the lowly exploited position, boast, and exaltation. Now, once again, he begins with the exhortation and moves to the substantiation.

So, the exhortation is found really in verse nine, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation. And then you have the substantiation because, like the flower of the grass, he will pass away. And he then goes ahead and substantiates that by way of comparison with the natural world.

For the sun rises with the scorching heat and withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beauty perishes, so will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Now, the writer, we note, begins with a kind of double exhortation in verses nine and ten regarding the attitude towards poverty and wealth. And incidentally, I think when he moves here to verses nine through eleven, he's actually talking about one type of trial, which is a trial of poverty, and about two temptations, two types of temptations that relate to poverty and wealth.

There is temptation implicit in poverty, and there is also temptation implicit in wealth. But he begins with a double exhortation here regarding his attitude towards poverty and wealth. The first part of this double exhortation is the exhortation to the lowly brother.

Notice he refers to him as a lowly brother. This person is a brother, a Christian. What he says here then does not apply to the poor in general but to the Christian poor.

Now, the term poor, *ptous* here, usually means low or humble. It is thus both broader and narrower than poor. It really raises a question of translation here, whether this should be translated poor or, of course, and actually, the RSV does translate this as lowly and the like.

And I think that's an absurd translation. The thing that introduces tension here is that you do not have a perfect contrast. You have a contrast, but the members are not exactly coordinated because he contrasts lowly with the rich.

Really, the opposite of lowly is not rich but haughty. And the opposite of rich is not lowly but poor. So, very interesting that he uses the word *tapeinos* here in contrast to the rich.

And that's why I suggest here that tapeinos is both broader and more narrow than poor. It is broader in that it involves attitude versus status. A person can be humble without being poor, of course.

A person can be lowly without being poor. So, it is broader than poor in that sense. But it is also narrower than poor because one can also be poor without being lowly.

Now, it is clear that the economically impoverished are primarily in view here since this lowly brother is contrasted with the rich. The use of the term tapeinos, which stands here in contrast to the rich, indicates that there is a connection between poverty and humility, lowliness. A poor person is more likely to reject human power and potential and to submit to God and to others.

And this is important to James. Hence, we note the great value that James places upon meekness. 1:21, receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.

3:13, by his good life, let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom and humility, which is also important to James. 4:16, the tongue is a, well, let me see here, 4:16, yes, in terms of humility, but he gives more grace. Therefore, it says that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

And in 4:10, humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. And those who are poor also are more likely to have faith, not only to reject human power and potential and to submit to God in meekness and humility, but also are more likely to have faith. Later, James will insist that God has chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him.

Note that both faith in God and love of God are linked to poverty. And in the biblical tradition, especially the Psalms and the wisdom tradition, a connection is often made between poverty and piety so that the poor person is synonymous with the pious person and the like. So, in the Old Testament, it's not unusual for poor and righteous to be used practically interchangeably in passages.

And the reason is that piety is understood primarily as trust in God. That's what James picks up on this later in chapter 2 when he says that God has chosen those who are poor in this world to be rich in faith. That piety is understood primarily as trust in God, as faith in God.

Find this, for example, in Psalm 86:1 and 2:2. And the poor are more likely, humbly, to place their trust in God because they do not have anything else much in which to place their faith, in which to find security. In a sense, the condition of poverty thrusts



the poor back upon God. They do not have much else in which to put their faith, much else in which to find security, so they are thrust back upon faith in God.

Now, in the Old Testament, of course, it was quite clear that although this connection between poverty and poverty is often made, it is not an absolute one. It is possible, given the profound corruption of the human heart, for persons who do not have much else in which to put their faith or their confidence or their security to find something else besides God to do so. So, it's not an absolute sort of connection, and that's, by the way, I think why you do not have a perfect sort of contrast here.

James wants to emphasize loneliness and humility, and he relates loneliness and humility to material impoverishment, but he doesn't want to make an absolute identification between the two. But he does want to indicate the connection between the two. Now, the fact that tapeinos, over against a word which means poor like ptokos, stands here indicates that poverty per se is not good or necessarily redemptive, but rather a humility and loneliness of spirit are.

This loneliness of spirit is related to poverty but is not identical with poverty. Poverty tends to lead to loneliness of spirit but does not necessarily result in loneliness of spirit. By the way, in this regard, it's important to remember what James will say in the second chapter of his book, where the relatively poor assume the role of oppressors of those who are poorer even than they are, where someone who is poorer than the worshippers in the Christian congregation comes in, and those who are themselves relatively poor mistreat and oppress those who are abjectly poor.

So, James is primarily concerned with the attitude of loneliness, but he connects this attitude to the state of poverty and sees a clear, though not absolutely necessary, connection. Now, those Christians who find themselves in a lowly position are called upon to act. This is the exhortation.

They are to boast in their exaltation. You note the implicit contrast we have here. The lowly are even now in an exalted position.

They are to boast in their exaltation, and this is the present tense. Not future tense, but present tense, although it is, of course, the exhortation that has a kind of future orientation, but there's no suggestion that he has in mind primarily eschatology here. They are even now in an exalted position.

This points to the radical reversal of values in the eschatological message of the New Testament. Those things that are viewed by the world as of no account are the most valuable things in the kingdom, and linked to that, it points to the radical reversal of fortunes in the New Testament that you have in the New Testament as a whole. Those who are poor and pushed down now will be exalted to the highest station at the eschaton and live even now in light of an anticipation of that future exaltation.

So, you have both the notion of reversal of values and the reversal of fortunes that is part and parcel of New Testament eschatology. Really, by New Testament eschatology, I mean here realized eschatology, the presence of the kingdom even as it is here now. Now, this points, of course, to the limits of the present age.

James is exhorting those Christians who find themselves in a lowly position now to view life from the eschatological perspective of the reversal of values. This is present eschatology. God has turned values on their head.

What the world, what human beings in general see as valuable and honorable is seen as invaluable and shameful in the sight of God, and the reversal of fortunes over against a worldly perspective that assumes that ultimate reality resides in the superficial appearances of the here and now. This is God's way, this business of, in a sense, mocking human valuing and human sense of fortune. This is God's way of pointing to the fleeting, penultimate, and relatively second character of the present age.

Thus, the lowly are caught upon, as we say, to act. They are to boast or glory in their exaltation over against a false and immediate exaltation of the wealthy. This means that, first, they recognize the true and ultimate exaltation.

What is the exalted position in God's eyes and view themselves and their loneliness from that point of view over against a false and immediate exaltation of the wealthy, rejecting superficial appearance and that which is fleeting over against that which is real, that which lasts? But it also means that they commit themselves entirely, including emotionally, to the true and ultimate exaltation that they experience now and which will be completed at the eschaton, that they orient their whole lives around this truth of God's exalting the lowly. Now, of course, it also involves here, specifically avoiding covetousness and the desire to possess.

This is part of, we're trying to unpack what's meant by this exaltation. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation specifically involves avoiding covetousness and the desire to possess, which is always a temptation on the part of those who find themselves without, avoiding the temptation to become rich, 4:1 through 10, of coveting. Also, it involves, more specifically, enduring with joy and steadfastness the oppressions and afflictions that are inherent in this lowliness, verses 12 through 15.

And it involves waiting for the vindication of God against those who would exploit them over against assuming a violent and vengeful attitude towards their exploiters, which James will pick up on and bring the changes on in 5:6 and again in 5:7 through 11. Now, at this point, let me just say this notion that they are to exalt in their exaltation by waiting for the vindication of God against those who would exploit them, who rob them, who take advantage of their poverty and their vulnerability

over against assuming a violent and vengeful attitude toward their exploiters, as I say, he develops this in chapter 5, verses 6 and 11, does involve, of course, a kind of difficulty. It may lead to passivity and acquiescence in the face of social oppression.

Where is a desire? Where is a call for social justice in the face of this kind of oppression of the poor and the vulnerable? Simply wait for God to act. Many would take exception, of course, to this counsel of James, saying that this is a way of keeping the poor in their place, of allowing injustice to continue unabated on its way in the world. But here, in chapter 5, the emphasis seems to be upon rejecting a violent sort of response.

In fact, James is concerned with addressing the issues of poverty in significant ways, and I think this is suggested, for one thing, in chapter 2, verses 14 through 17. What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So, faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. Here, he indicates that true faith will express itself in caring for the poor, that is to say, addressing the issue of the needs of the poor, and addressing the problem of poverty.

The implication, I think, is quite clear that one addresses the problem of poverty, expresses faith by addressing the problem of poverty, to be sure, by giving to the poor, which, of course, is what is mentioned here, but also by addressing and by meeting head-on those realities in society that produce poverty in the first place. So, in the end, it seems to me, if you look at James as a whole, he has really little patience with a kind of passivity in the face of social injustice that simply waits for God to act and does nothing in the meantime, but actually one that, out of faith, does act to bring about positive change and the kind of positive change that actually addresses at its roots the issue of poverty. Now, he goes ahead also here and exhorts the rich, let the rich exalt in his humiliation.

Now, the interpretive issue here is whether the rich here is also a brother, a Christian. He says here in verse 9, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and let the rich in his humiliation. Notice that he doesn't say rich brother, but on the other hand, the contrast may suggest that we are to supply brother.

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and, as a corollary of that, the rich brother in his humiliation. Now, I could go into a great deal of detail with regard to this, but let me just mention here that biblical scholars increasingly are understanding the significance of what's called a phraseological point of view. That is to say, the way certain words are used within a book.

It so happens that the word rich, which in Greek is *plutos*, the word rich in James is never used by Christians. But when James wishes to speak about Christians who have means, he talks about them in ways that avoids the word *plutos*. So, on that basis, I would say that *plutos* here in this passage has to do with the non-Christian rich.

For example, he will say in 2:6, is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the honorable name which was invoked over you? Throughout James, *plutos* rich is reserved for non-Christian oppressors, wealthy oppressors. When in James, in the book of James, James wishes to describe a Christian of relative means, he avoids the use of *plutos*. Therefore, I think, as I say, that he has in mind the non-Christian rich here, which, by the way, I think is suggested by the way in which this person is described in the immediate context.

The sun rises with the scorching heat and withers the grass, his flower fades, and his beauty perishes. So, the rich man will fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Now, there, of course, is an element of irony and contrast in all of this.

The rich are to boast in humiliation. That is, they are to recognize that they are to boast in the fact that they have nothing to boast about. That's what he means when he lets the rich boast in his humiliation.

They are to boast in the fact that they have nothing to boast about. They are to boast in the fact that precisely as persons who have means, they are brought low. As rich, they are brought low.

They are to embrace the fact that wealth is not a source of boasting, but in the value structure of the kingdom, it is a source not of pride but rather of humiliation, which involves, specifically, one that they should entirely cease their exploitation of the poor. This is part of what's involved in letting the rich man exalt in his lowliness or his humiliation. The specific content of this, according to the broader book context, is that they should entirely cease their exploitation of the poor, 5:1 through 6, which James may well consider to be typically a corollary of wealth, and two, that they should cease their presumption regarding the future, 4:13 through 17.

Now, I do think that in 4:13 through 17, he's talking about the Christian wealthy. In this passage, he does not use the word *plutos* or wealth, but nevertheless, he talks about the danger of wealth here in terms of presuming upon the future. Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow, we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and gain, whereas you do not know about tomorrow.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that. As it is, you boast in your ignorance.

All such boasting is evil. So, they should cease their presumption regarding the future, recognizing that in spite of their wealth, God is still the one who is in control of every facet of their lives. The deception of riches or wealth is that because they have control over material things, they are inclined to believe that they have control over everything.

James wants to correct that and insist that their future belongs to God. The third thing that's involved, more specifically on the basis of the broader context in terms of this business of the wealthy, of the rich, exalting in loneliness or humility, is that it involves their recognizing the value that God places upon the poor and orienting their attitudes and actions towards the poor around God's favor towards the poor. As he says in 2:5, God has chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him.

Fourth, it involves their giving sacrificially and sharing sacrificially with the poor, 2:14 through 17. Not simply saying, go in peace, be warm and filled, but rather giving them the things that are needed for the body. There's responsibility towards the poor.

Now, the exhortation to the wealthy and also to the lowly is substantiated here in verses 10 and 11, 10b through 11. This passage speaks of the meaninglessness of wealth and contrasts temporary beauty with imminent and sudden and certain destruction. The comparison with the beautiful flower, almost certainly the Euprepeia, probably what we would know as an Amaranth and Kiklamen, indicates the allure of wealth and of the life of wealth and of the life of the wealthy, both materially and socially.

It's a thing, or appears to be superficially a beautiful thing, this life of wealth, the life of the wealthy, materially, what one experiences and enjoys materially, but also the social standing that it affords on the surface. But such beauty is superficial. It will not survive the penetrating rays of the sun.

Thus, James points to the meaninglessness of wealth in the face of death. He does this here. He will develop it in 4:14. What is your life? He will say in 4:14. For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

He's really talking about death as a judgment upon the rich. Death serves to relativize radically the value of wealth. He compares this business of the meaninglessness of wealth in the face of death to the withering of the sun, which points to the power of God and the judgment of God.

The course of the sun and its heat are presented as certain and natural. God's judgment is reflected in the natural processes, including the process of death. Again,

4:13-17. This judgment of God manifested in death itself points to the eschatological judgment that God will bring upon the haughty rich.

The fact that death is a judgment upon the autimacy of wealth actually anticipates the end-time judgment of the rich who exploit the poor, according to 5:1-11. So, he says here in verse 11, so will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Again, he talks, he emphasizes the suddenness of the passing away. And probably here, of course, as I say, the suddenness of death.

Now, this leads us then to the next subunit here, which is a response to trials. He goes back to how he began with a response to trials and rejoicing. Now, he comes back to response to trials, endure in verses 12-15.

Here, he begins with a beatitude, really, makarios. Blessed is a man who endures trial. And again, the word here is peirasmon.

Here, he brings hupomeneo and peirasmon, these two key words in this portion of James 1 together. Is the one who endures, hupomene, peirasmon, trial. For, he says, he will receive a crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

So, the paragraph begins with a beatitude, possibly reflecting Matthew 5.11 and 12, the beatitudes there. And particularly, of course, in Matthew 5.11 and 12, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is a kingdom of heaven. There is indication, there is, of course, a good bit of echoing of the gospel tradition, especially Matthew's gospel in the book of, in the epistle of James.

And yet, it's a kind of echoing that suggests not so much that James knew the gospel, the writer of this book knew the gospel of Matthew, but perhaps was acquainted with the sayings of Jesus that found its way into Matthew as well. Here, the word makarios, which in the New Testament typically relates to the future, as well as the immediate context, indicates that future eschatological reward is emphasized here versus the present reward of endurance that was the emphasis in chapter 1 verses 2 through 4. I would also note the connection of this passage to 5.7 through 11, especially the end of Job, who was better off at the end of his trials, having remained steadfast through his afflictions, than at the beginning. As a matter of fact, we just remember what he says there in 5:11, Behold, we call those blessed who were steadfast, who palomino, same language that he uses here.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. So, again, this is an allusion to Job, who was better off at the end of his trials, having remained steadfast through his afflictions, than at the beginning. He had several times more children and cattle and wealth than he had at the beginning.

All of this points to the idea really of transcendent reward. The assurance of future eschatological reward described here provides a basis for the exhortation to present joy put forward, of course, in verse 2. Now, the word test, for when he has stood the test, dokimos, does not point to the process of testing as dokimeon. Notice the close connection between these two words, but they are two different words.

The word test here is dokimos. It does not point to the process of testing as dokimeon did in verse 3, but to a kind of exam, which one may or may not pass. It involves not so much purification as the process of testing back in verse 2 and verse 3 did, as not so much purification of the process of testing as evaluation.

That is divine approval at the end. Here, then, there is an emphasis on end-time reward. The crown of life, which is really, in Greek, it's a genitive of apposition, the crown which is life, the crown which is eternal life, eternal life understood as a crown and possibly as a victor's crown, the crown of victory.

Having finished the race, typically, in the Greco-Roman world, one received the crown of rooted celery and the like. And here he may have in mind, as I say, that kind of thing, although you probably have deliberate ambiguity of language because part of the eschatology of the New Testament is to emphasize that the righteous ones who will enter into eternal bliss at the end will experience eternal bliss in terms of co-regency with Christ, will reign with him. Those who conquer also as a reward for their conquering will reign.

Incidentally, people, Christians, often pious Christians, often speculate about what we will do in heaven and the like. But one thing that's not often mentioned in those kinds of pious speculations is rule or reign, but that is a major emphasis within the New Testament as a whole. Now, this business about passing the test, he who endures trial for when he has stood the test will receive the crown of life, implies that God does not know how persons will respond or if they are fit to enter eternal bliss except as they actually respond to trials and temptations.

God must be satisfied as to their fitness for eternal reward. That, incidentally, is a major theme within the Scriptures. You know, when we were talking about summarization, we used as an example Judges the other day, and particularly Judges chapter 2. I just want to remind you of what God is quoted as saying there in 2:21, I will not henceforth drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, that by them I may test Israel, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did or not.

The implication of this is very clear, and that is that God really does not know what people will do until they are confronted with this kind of testing, so that God tests in order that God will know really their hearts. And as I say, you have this in other places, including, by the way, Genesis 22, where God tested Abraham to see how he

would respond to this demand to sacrifice his son Isaac. And you remember what the angel of the Lord, who really speaks the word of the Lord, says in the wake of Abraham having performed well, having begun the process of sacrificing Isaac, now I know.

Now I know. Now, of course, this stands in some tension with the whole doctrine, which is certainly a Scripture one, of the omniscience of God, that God knows all things. And as a matter of fact, there are a number of passages in the Scripture that talk about God looking upon the heart and God knowing the heart and the like.

But I think what you have here in terms of biblical anthropology is actually the notion of the dynamic complexity of human personality that really reflects the personality of God, and that is that there is a kind of serendipitous, a kind of mystery, a profound mystery that belongs to personality as such, that God has so created a human personality that God Himself does not know truly what is fully what is in the depths of human personality, that is to say, the personality of a human being, except as that person is put to the test and the depths of that person's heart are brought to the fore in the crucible of testing. The technical philosophical way of putting it is that God may not possess mental knowledge, as it were. That is to say, God knows what people will do, but He doesn't know what people will do.

He doesn't really know what we would do if we were confronted with a situation that we will never be confronted with. Although in His foreknowledge, He knows what we will do, only as we are tested, as we are put to the test, and the like. I don't really think that this points to any diminishment of the sovereignty of God or the omniscience of God, but what it does point to is the decree of God, the will of God to create human beings who are truly persons and reflect the personal character of God Himself.

And one of the characteristics, one of the aspects of personhood is a kind of deep-seated complexity so that the character of the very depth of a person cannot be fully known even to God. God has purposed this. He has made us this way.

It cannot be known even to God, except as we are tested. And so you have the importance of the test. God needs to be assured that we are fit in the depths of our being for eternal reward.

And the test is a way, this test is a way in which He satisfies Himself in that regard. Blessed is a man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test, when he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. Now what we call the *crux interpretum*, the crucial interpretive issue here of this entire first part of the segment, involves the ambiguity of *perismus apeiratos*, of test, of trial or test on the one hand and tempt on the other.



This word *peirasmus* can be translated as either trial or testing, as, say, external afflictions or temptation, the luring towards sin. Now, a number of interpretive possibilities have been put forward here, but probably, at least in my judgment, the writer is playing on the ambiguity of the word itself. And in the process, James does two things.

First, he employs the word in two distinct senses, trials and temptation, trials on the one hand, temptation on the other, that is to say, luring to sin. But secondly, he uses the ambiguity within the word itself to point out the connection between trials on the one hand and temptation on the other. Now James has been arguing all along that the experience of trials is morally significant and for that matter, morally determinative.

There is a command associated with trials: endure trials, meet them with joy, and make positive use of them versus falling away because of trials. Thus, the experience of trials carries within it the possibility of sinning. Beyond that, there is always within trials the temptation to sin, or, better, there is always within trials the occasion for temptation.

There is the occasion for temptation within trials. There is always within trials a temptation to sin, not to endure, but rather to disobey the command of God. So, verse 13 continues, let no one say when he is tempted.

Notice trial, *peirasmus*. Now, let no one say when he is tempted, *peirasthai*, using the same word in a different sense, but connecting the two. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God.

This, of course, is the exhortation. Let no one say when he was tempted, I am tempted by God because he says by way of substantiation, God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one. That's what God does not do.

That's where temptation does not come from, but then he goes ahead and talks about where temptation does come from. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

Trials, in other words, may come from God and testing may come from God. That's what the Old Testament asserts. That's what Genesis 22, 1, a passage that James manifestly is acquainted with, asserts.

God tested *peirasthai*, God tested Abraham. Trials may come from God, testing may come from God, but temptation, that is the drawing towards sin, God does not do. He has no part in the matter.

One cannot blame God for that inclination, which, of course, is a real and ultimate threat in experiencing trials. The main point is that God is in no way to be blamed for temptation. Responsibility for sin and even for temptation to sin is placed squarely on the shoulders of the person.

Now, James gives two reasons, a substantiation of why God cannot be the source of temptation. Negatively, he says, God is not tempted to evil. This is verse 13b.

God is untemptable of evil. Probably, in context, the point is this, to lure someone to sin, that is to tempt someone to do wrong, would be an evil act. And far from actually committing evil, God cannot so much as be tempted to do evil.

In other words, God is not even tempted to tempt us. The conclusion, then, is that God tempts no one. If God cannot even be tempted to tempt us, then the argument is from the lesser to the greater, *argumentum a minori ad maius*; God certainly does not tempt us.

But positively, He does substantiate this by talking about where temptation does come from. Here, James refers to Jewish theology. This is where the historical background is really essential because he refers here to Jewish theology, especially intertestamental and first-century Jewish theology.

Of course, James is a Jewish Christian book. He refers to Jewish theology, which was reflected in the New Testament, but which came to full expression in the intertestamental period. And here, this is why he brings in the notion of desire.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then temptation comes from our own desire, being lured and enticed by desire. Now, the idea of desire, which in Hebrew is *yetzer*, the notion of desire, or *yetzer hara*, evil desire, as he's drawing, as was prominent in Jewish theology, and he's drawing upon that.

Now, I would note here that desire, *epithumia*, in our passage is in the by desire. He's talking about being drawn by this *yetzer*, this desire, or *yetzer hara*, this evil desire. Now, this notion of *yetzer* meant undifferentiated, neutral desire.

In itself, it was neither good nor bad. Undifferentiated, neutral desire, which though, if not controlled, would go out of bounds and lead to sin. That's good old-fashioned Jewish theology.

This desire in itself is not necessarily evil, but it is endemic to human life and necessary to human life. It is that really which gives drive or impetus to life. But if it is not held in check by some other force, in Judaism, usually the Torah, the law, or the good impulse, it will lead to blatant sinning.

Now, this means then that sin finds its source within the persons themselves, this unchecked desire. James emphasizes that responsibility for temptation and sin belongs to the persons themselves. And consequently, he does not even mention the devil here.

Now, he's aware of the role of the devil in sin, as he'll make clear in 3:6, the tongue is an unrighteous member, world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell, which is almost certainly a metonym, metonymy for the devil. But he'll make this even more explicitly clear in 3:15, this wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. And in 4:7, even more clearly, submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

So, James does include in his theology of evil the transcendent power of the devil, but he does not want to introduce the devil here. He wants to lay the blame and the responsibility for sin and temptation of sin fully on the shoulders of the person. Sin finds its source within persons themselves.

Now, we note here that James engages in a chain. Notice how he, here in this, at the end of this first unit in James 1, he talks about describes a chain that is really the antithesis of the chain that he has described in verse 4. The chain there in verse 4 is, let steadfastness have its full effect, well, actually 3 and 4, you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But note the quite different chain we have here.

Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death. Again, you have a process; you have chain, causal chain, but here it's negative, the counterpart to the positive chain that we saw in verse 4. Now, let's just round this out. The first link in this chain begins with temptation.

Temptation, he says, involves being lured by this desire, being lured by this desire. The word here is *exokaminos*. Now, this word, let's translate it, lured, is really an imagery from fishing.

It is an image of a fish being drawn out of the water by a line, hooked and drawn in. The emphasis here, then, is on the lack of control. In this case, one gives in or submits to this desire.

One forfeits control to this desire, allowing oneself to be dragged along by this desire. Now, temptation also involves also being enticed, being lured and enticed. The word here is *deliazo*.

This comes actually from the realm of hunting. It's the image of an animal attracted to a trap by bait. The emphasis here is upon immediate pleasure, really the notion of being mesmerized by this desire, being mesmerized with no awareness or concern for the ultimate consequences.

It's the image of one who is dazzled by the allure of the object of his or her desire. This implies the great appeal and power of temptation, with no awareness or appreciation of the consequences. It blinds us to the consequences.

Now, this leads really to the second link here where he says, beyond, each person is tempted when he is lured, enticed by his own desire, then desire when it has conceived. Here, James changes the image from fishing and hunting to seductress to a prostitute, possibly drawn from Proverbs 1 through 9, especially chapters 5 and 8, and 9, where wisdom is presented as a noble woman, while folly is presented as a harlot, a whore, who entices naive young men into her chambers where she brings death upon them. The image really is that of having sex with a prostitute who actually has a child out of this desire.

James presents a desire that is out of control as a prostitute, or at least as a loose, wanton woman who gives birth to an illegitimate child, the child of sin. This leads to the third link. And sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

But here in this third link, James emphasizes that sin is not the end. For this child, sin, which is described as a child here, grows up. You have complete or full development of sin, apotaleo.

All the ugliness and destruction that is implicit in it at birth comes to full development and fruition. And at that point, it itself bears its own child, death, apocoel. And sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Apokoel, by the way, often pointed to a hideous birth, either socially, that is to say, an illegitimate child, or naturally, that is, the birth of a freak or a monster. So again, you have James beginning this main unit here in James 1 with a chain, a positive chain, verse 4, trial, endurance, life, ends though with a quite contrasting chain, desire, sin, death. The point is clear.

All persons are involved in a process. The issue is what kind of process, what kind of chain are you in? The chain of verse 3 and 4, or the chain of verse 15? Okay, let's pause here and come back to the rest of James 1 in the next segment.

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 17, James 1:5-15.