

ECCLESIA  
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST  
Pastor Luther H. Holmes, Jr.  
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Bible Enrichment Series

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**NINE TESTS EVERY BELIEVER MUST FACE**  
**LESSON 5 – THE SELF-WILL TEST**

**KEY CHAPTER: James 1:1-12 (Message Bible)**

**1** I, James, am a slave of God and the Master Jesus, writing to the twelve tribes scattered to Kingdom Come: Hello!

**Faith Under Pressure**

**2-4 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So, don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work, so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.** <sup>5-8</sup> If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who "worry their prayers" are like wind-whipped waves. Don't think you're going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open. <sup>9-11</sup> When down-and-outers get a break, cheer! And when the arrogant rich are brought down to size, cheer! Prosperity is as short-lived as a wildflower, so don't ever count on it. You know that as soon as the sun rises, pouring down its scorching heat, the flower withers. Its petals wilt and, before you know it, that beautiful face is a barren stem. Well, that's a picture of the "prosperous life." At the very moment everyone is looking on in admiration, it fades away to nothing.

**12 Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.**

## Introduction

We are living in a time that most of us never would have expected or predicted. Now more than ever we recognize that we do not know what tomorrow holds.

In times like these the question must be asked, how should we, as followers of Jesus, respond during these unusual and uncertain times?

Tonight, we turn to the book of James where we have this reminder: that while trials are certain and come in all shapes and sizes, joy is possible as we recognize God's purpose and provision in the midst of our trials.

## Context

James was the half-brother of Jesus, and he was a pastor in the church in Jerusalem in the years following Jesus's return to Heaven. ***James is writing to real people, in a real situation.*** These are people who are facing real trials. As individuals and as a church we must strive to have a view toward joy in the midst of unexpected situations. We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we can trust that God will use our trials to accomplish His purposes. As we navigate uncertain times, we must trust His plan, submit to His work in us and go to Him in faith asking for wisdom.

The first phrase of verse 2 provides a call that frames the entire section that follows. James is calling on believers who are facing trials to consider their trials with joy. On its own this may seem like a call to unsubstantiated happiness, but the verses that follow reveal the reason saints can truly, *count it all joy*.

We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that our trials have a purpose (1:2-4) As we face trials, we can have this hope: That God is using our trials to make us perfect and complete. The call for joy or rejoicing in the knowledge that God uses trials to bring us to maturity is a theme throughout the New Testament (≡; Romans 5:1-5)

How can we endure with joy?) Jesus endured the cross with joy as his motivation (Hebrews 12:2) While Jesus endured the cross with joy, He still experienced pain, grief and sorrow (Matthew 26:37-39). Enduring with joy does not mean we don't experience pain, but it does mean that we have hope

and purpose in the process. We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that God provides wisdom for the journey. In times of difficulty, we become acutely aware of our need for wisdom. It is easy to feel lost or unprepared. God does not leave us alone to find our way through our trials, He generously and graciously gives wisdom to those who ask in faith.

God is ready and willing to give wisdom, but there is a qualifier, we must ask believing that He will give it. We must trust that He will hear and answer our request. The person who doubts is described as double-minded and will not receive wisdom from God.

In this series, we will examine “Nine Tests Every Believer Must Face” knowing that they’re all working together for our good. The nine tests for our learning are:

- ✓ The Wilderness Test. (alone in storms)
- ✓ (2) The Test of Time (just waiting and waiting)
- ✓ (3) The Motivation Test (Doing the right things for the wrong reasons?)
- ✓ (4) The Failure Test (We all fail if we try to do something)
- (5) The Self Will Test (Are you stubborn in your ways?)
- (6) The Discouragement Test
- (7) The Misunderstanding Test
- (8) The Frustration Test
- (9) The Servant Test

**Tonight, we begin with Lesson Five**

## **THE SELF-WILL TEST**

**Matthew 26:36** (KJV)

*Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.*

**Matthew 26:37-38** (NLT)

*He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and he began to be filled with anguish and deep distress. [38] He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me."*

**Matthew 26:39 (NLT)**

*He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine."*

**Matthew 26:42 (NLT)**

*Again he left them and prayed, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away until I drink it, your will be done."*

**Matthew 26:44 (NLT)**

*So he went back to pray a third time, saying the same things again. Yet I want your will, not mine. Your will be done*

Please note that Christ is saying the same things again, and ending with  
**YET, I WANT YOUR WILL, NOT MINE.**

**THE SELF-WILL TEST**

Self-will is defined as **PLEASING ONE'S SELF**...especially in opposition to the wishes or desires of others.

- Another word for Self-Will is STUBBORNNESS self-pleasing, arrogant, overbearing

***Titus 1:7** (NLT) An elder must live a blameless life because he is God's minister. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or greedy for money*

**Dangers of Self-Will**

- Self-Will brings destruction into the life of an individual.  
***Prov 1:32** Sin and self-satisfaction bring destruction and death to stupid fools.*

- Self-will stems from PRIDE and produces pride's limitations.  
***Neh. 9:16** (KJV) But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,*

***Proverbs 16:18** (GW) Pride precedes a disaster, and an arrogant attitude precedes a fall.*

- Pride blinds us to our own weakness
- Pride keeps us from seeking help
- Pride keeps us from making amends to people
- Pride causes us to blame others for problems
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### **A self-willed person cannot be TRUSTED**

- A person that cannot be TRUSTED cannot be used.
- A person that cannot be used cannot be promoted.
- A person that cannot be promoted is stuck with himself

### **Self-Will stems from UNBELIEF**

- *2 Kings 17:14 (KJV) Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.*

### **Self-Will is exhibited in:**

- A refusal to listen to God
- A refusal to submit to Authority
- A refusal to receive Instruction
- A refusal to receive Correction
- A refusal to sacrifice for OTHERS

## **RECOGNIZING THE SELF-WILL TEST**

- When God asks us to do something that is contrary to our own desires or opposite of our plans...we are entering the SELF-WILL Test.

### **Examples of Self-Will Tests**

- Abraham to offer Isaac on an altar
- Jonah to preach to Nineveh
- Naaman to dip seven times in Jordan
- Peter to cast his nets on the other side
- Christ asked to face Calvary

### **Why the Self-Will Test**

- To reveal our own PERSONAL ambitions that are contrary to the purposes of God.
- To reveal our SELFISHNESS
- To break our SELF-WILL

## **People stuck ON themselves are stuck WITH themselves**

- A Self-Willed person is inflexible
- A Self-Willed person is inconsiderate
- A Self-Willed person is in constant conflicts
- Most problems in relationships are due to Self-Will

***2 Cor. 12:20 (NIV)** For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.*

## **Most Church issues and splits are the result of SELF-WILL**

### **Even an ANGEL became a DEVIL because of self-will**

- *Isa 14:12* How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
- *Isa 14:13* For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
- *Isa 14:14* I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

## **The Self-Will Test Reveals the Level Of Submission of the Individual**

### **Everyone must answer to SOMEONE.**

- Life is full of people telling you what to do—
- If everyone only did what he or she wished...chaos would reign.
- Self-will is the opposite of SUBMISSION—the placing one's self under the authority of another.

### **Submission to the will of God is what Christianity is all about.**

- "The Bible can be summed up in one word—SUBMISSION."  
T. F. Tenney

### **Submission**

- *1 Peter 5:5* Younger—submit to the elder
- *Hebrews 13:17* Obey them that have rule over you and submit yourselves

- *Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands*
- *James 4:7 Submit yourselves to God*
- *1 Peter 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*
- *1 Peter 5:5 Be subject one to another*

### **The Self-Will Test screens out would be leaders**

- If you cannot submit to others, you cannot LEAD others.
- If you cannot submit to authority—no one will submit to your authority.

### **THE SELF-WILL TEST WILL ENSURE HEAVEN IS A PERFECT PLACE**

No one but those who have submitted themselves to God and others...will enter.

- ***Jude 1:16** (Msg) These are the "grumpers," the bellyachers, grabbing for the biggest piece of the pie, talking big, saying anything they think will get them ahead.*
- ***Jude 1:17-19** (Msg) But remember, dear friends, that the apostles of our Master, Jesus Christ, told us this would happen: **18** In the last days there will be people who don't take these things seriously anymore. They'll treat them like a joke, and make a religion of their own whims and lusts. These are the ones who split churches, thinking only of themselves. There's nothing to them, no sign of the Spirit!*
- ***2 Peter 2:10** (Msg) God is especially incensed against these "teachers" who live by lust, addicted to a filthy existence. They despise interference from true authority, preferring to indulge in self-rule. Insolent egotists, they don't hesitate to speak evil against the most splendid of creatures.*
- ***2 Peter 2:12** (Msg) These people are nothing but brute beasts, born in the wild, predators on the prowl. In the very act of bringing down others with their ignorant blasphemies, they themselves will be brought down, losers in the end.*
- ***2 Peter 2:17** (Msg) There's nothing to these people—they're dried-up fountains, storm-scattered clouds, headed for a black hole in hell.*

- *2 Peter 2:19 (Msg) They promise these newcomers freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, for if they're addicted to corruption—and they are—they're enslaved.*
- The Self-Will Test—everyone will encounter it in order to see if we are willing to be submissive to authority, especially when it is not convenient or self-serving.
  - **When we are willing to lay down our lives in submission, then we have passed the self-will test.**