

A Reader's Guide to Discipleship©: Readings in the New Testament

2009

The sufficiency of the scriptures for all things pertaining to life and godliness
(II Tim 3:16)

James: A study guide to prepare for the testing of faith

I. God's purpose for us is wholeness of character not just patience

A. Wholeness comes from testing of faith 1:2-4

B. We must seek wisdom for testing 1:5 – 8

1. recognize wisdom comes from God
2. faith is required to receive wisdom from God
3. faith is defined as single-mindedness of purpose

C. The rich and the poor will see testing differently from the outside 1:9-11

1. the low are made high and the high made low
2. the nature of riches are to fade away just as it is the nature of flowers to fade

D. But a full, rich life ("crown of life") is promised to all those who love God through their trials 1:12-18

1. Recognize testing comes from within us not from God 1:13-15
2. Recognize God's gifts are perfect and designed for our benefit 1:16-18

II. Keys to passing the test: quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger 1:19-20

A. Quick to hear = be a doer of the Word 1:21-2:26

1. set aside wrongdoing and embrace the Word which has been implanted in our life to set us free to do what we know ("perfect law of liberty") 1:21-25
3. self-control, selfless service, and purity demonstrate a life embracing the Word 1:26-27
4. self-serving obedience is not consistent with the royal law of love 2:1-11
5. the law of liberty sets the standard for our words and actions combining God's law with the mercy that we need to obey 2:12-13
6. faith cannot be tested properly without works (though it may be present) 2:14-26.

B. Slow to speak=control your tongue 3:1-18

1. be slow to claim a position of influence 3:1
2. if you can control your mouth you can control your body 3:2-3
3. the tongue has great influence 3:4-5
4. the tongue causes great destruction 3:5-6
5. the tongue is always inconsistent and impossible to control 3:7-12
6. wisdom is shown in meekness 3:13-17
7. peace is the most fertile ground for good. 3:18

C. Slow to anger=control your passions 4:1-5:6

1. selfish desires stir anger, never satisfy, bring syncretism with the world and therefore make us enemies of God 4:1-4
2. but humility brings grace, brings God near, and allows Him to lift us up 4:5-10 (note grace is conditional but God's grace is greater than His judgement)
3. Godly grief is antidote to selfish anger 4:9
4. avoid pride in our behaviour. 4:11-12
 - the law of love raises the bar such that only Jesus can judge
 - see John 8 the woman caught in adultery
5. avoid pride in our life and abilities 4:13-17
 - we are a vapour
 - we should be diligent to do what we know is right and leave rest to God
6. avoid pride in possessions 5:1-6
 - riches are corrupted
 - riches can cause personal harm and harm to others

III. Conclusions:

A. Practical points for personal growth

1. wait on the Lord 5:7
2. take responsibility for yourselves 5:8
3. don't focus on the failure of others 5:9
4. live by examples of truth 5:10-11
5. live by your word 5:12 (see Eccl 5:5)
6. live in the moment always looking to the Lord 5:13-15
7. live humbly, acknowledging your failures, and prayerfully 5:16-18

B. Always look to the good of others so that they may come to the truth 5:19-20

Summary; Faith is tested in trials as we fully live the law of love no matter what the circumstances. Wholeness of character will result as we control our tongue and our passions because we believe God is in control.