

Fact Sheet for **“How Will You Assay Out?”**  
**James 1:1-4**

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We have been six months in Jeremiah, a long 52-chapter book in the Major Prophets. Last week we were in the 5 chapters of Lamentations. Due to the nature of those books I covered large swaths of Scripture in each sermon.

Today we are beginning James, another 5-chapter book of the Bible. It is one of the NT letters, or epistles. But I'll be taking a different approach. We will be considering each verse, and not just large swaths of the book. Let's begin with a little about James.

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

Who was James? There are four men named James that are possibilities: 1 – James, an apostle, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John – But he was killed by Herod (Acts 12:1-2), 2 – James the son of Alphaeus, also an apostle, 3 – James, the father of Judas (not Iscariot, also an apostle)... The first three are all mentioned in Luke 6:12-16... Then there is a fourth... 4 – James, the half-brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55)

James, the brother of John, died before this book was written. Little is known about James, the son of Alphaeus, and James, the father of Judas. But James, the half-brother of Jesus, became the recognized leader in the Jerusalem church. And there are marked similarities in Greek between this letter and James' speech in Acts 15, the Jerusalem council.

James, even 6 months before Jesus was crucified, did not believe (Jn. 7:2-5). But, Jesus appeared specifically to James after Jesus had risen from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-8). When the angel released Peter from prison James was already a leader in the church (Acts 12:16-17). Paul met with James and others soon after his experience on the Damascus road (Gal. 1:18-19). Then, after 14 years Paul would again see James (Gal. 2:9). Later, Paul arrived in Jerusalem where he would soon be arrested. James was in the leadership (Acts 21:17-18). All this is to say that James, the half-brother of Jesus, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, was the author of this book.

**1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion (the Greek is pronounced “diaspora”): Greetings.**

What is the diaspora? When did it happen?

The diaspora referred to a transplanting of Jews to lands other than their own. The primary cause of the diaspora were the deportations in 722 B.C. and 586 B.C. James wrote to those who were Christians in the diaspora.

Now, let's move on to three verses that have been committed to memory by so many Christians.

**<sup>2</sup> ¶ Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.**

The Greek word translated “Count it” is in the linguistic form of a command. It is not a suggestion. It is not just a good idea. It is a command. Why, because doing this does not come naturally.

“**meet**” – literally “fall into”

“**trials**” – something that will test, try, or even tempt you to bring to light the quality of your faith

“**testing**” – This is a very different word than “trials”. It has the idea that you have been tested and passed the test. Your faith has been put to the test and has been proven in its quality. The same word is used in Romans 12:2 )“so that you may prove what the will of God is”).

“**your faith**” – How does your faith in God assay out? Is it untested? Is it weak? Is it rock solid? Is it somewhere in-between?

“**produces**” – literally “works down” – You could say that these trials can “work down” into your life something that is good...

“**steadfastness**” – “patience, endurance, fortitude, perseverance” – The word literally means to “remain under”.

*Example: endurance in walking, hiking, running.*

But here it is endurance in your trust in God, and in your God-honoring responses in the face of trials.

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

“**let**” – Again, a command

“**perfect**” – mature (The same word is used in 1 Cor. 14:20.)

Now, go over verses 2-4 again.

**2 ¶ Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.**

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

These three verses, two sentences, are much more than just, “Whatcha got? What are you made of? Or How strong is your faith?” These questions are only meant describe your current level of spiritual maturity. But there are imperatives, commands, in both sentences. There is something we have a choice about. God could have chosen to take every trial off our plate. But instead he directs some trials to come our way, and allows other to do the same. Each of these trials is an opportunity for us to grow in our spiritual maturity. This is why I didn’t title this sermon “How Do You Assay Out? This is why I titled it, “How Will You Assay Out?”

Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 10:13, a verse that uses the same word for “trial” or “temptation”.

Every trial that comes your way is an opportunity for you to grow in spiritual maturity. Count it all joy.