

## **'BUILDING FAITH THROUGH TRIALS'** ***(Building Up the Body of Christ God's Way)*** **Studies in James**

### **'Slow Down!'**

Lots of these signs are to be found around Guam these days. Wherever there is road work or public utilities workers busy with improvements, a **'Slow Down!'** sign will warn you to reduce your speed until you're safely able to accelerate to the posted speed again. Failure to make that adjustment to your speed accordingly is both disrespectful and potentially dangerous. Sometimes prudence demands drivers to voluntarily go slower than the posted speed limit for some reason determined to be necessary by official authorities. The right to drive at the posted speed limit is temporarily suspended because of unusual road conditions or other extraordinary circumstances.

In the Christian life unexpected trials and tribulations interrupt a normal daily routine. Problems don't stop daily living, but they certainly should serve as signs from our heavenly Father to 'go slow' for the duration of the abnormal circumstances we are experiencing. Rather than be upset that we can't speed through life as usual, we should accept trials and tribulations as things God uses to remind us to trust Him, to draw nearer to Him, to search His Word more diligently and to live according to His biblical pace instead of the *rat race* pace the world puts upon us.

In stressful times we are bound to make mistakes and wander from God's will, if we don't *'Slow Down'* and insist on continuing *life in the fast lane* that's always telling us to put *the pedal to the metal*. *'Go Slow'* isn't punishment from our Father, it's really a blessing that leads to a simpler, quieter, happier lifestyle (*Matthew 11:28-30, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12*). The Holy Spirit through James told the first Christians to ***'be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath'*** (**James 1:19**) rather than be frazzled, frustrated and feisty when God allows trials into our life. The rest of Chapter One of James' letter teaches how to 'Slow Down' while you still progress in the Christian life at a decreased, safer, pace until God's Spirit, His Word and circumstances indicate that it is the *'End of the Trial Zone – Resume Speed'*. **PtL**

## **'Pot-Holes of Temptation During Trials'** ***(3 Deceptions to Recognize and Avoid During Trials)*** **James 1:16-27**

### **Beware of Settling for Deceptive Gifts**

***"Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."*** **1:16-18**

***"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."*** **1:19-20**

**When under the stress and pressure of tribulations the desire for relief is so strong that one is tempted to see decoys of the enemy as blessings from the Lord. This deception requires a Christian to lower his or her standards to accept something that seems 'okay' but certainly is far from God's 'perfect' will (Romans 12:2 / example: accepting someone as a boyfriend or girlfriend who claims to be a Christians, but is clearly not a committed disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ).**

- **What are the criteria for making sure an apparent gift is truly from God according to the above verses?**
- **What are the dangers of not waiting for God's perfect will and moving ahead despite warning signs to slow down to think biblically & humbly listen to counsel (Philippians 1:9-10)?**

## **Beware of Thinking with A Deceptive Mind**

*“Therefore **lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word,** which is able to save your souls.”* **1:21**

*“But **be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, **this one will be blessed in what he does.**”* **1:22-25**

Although true Christians know that it is correct to be patient and calm under trial and testing, there is a restlessness in our flesh to do what we want to do anyway and somehow justify our disobedience to ourselves, others and God. In v. 21, James calls for repentance of any outer disobedience (*filthiness*) and inner rebellion (*wickedness*) so humility, meekness, and teachability can prevail. **Why is this step of disciplined submission of our will so important to enduring trials?**

If our flesh is stirred up and craving to have its own way, it impairs our ability to ‘*receive with meekness the implanted Word*’ and let it deliver our soul from bad attitudes and bad behavior.

- **Talk about overcoming this struggle (Galatians 5:16-18).**
- **Discuss your personal experience sometimes (especially when going through a trial) when your Bible study is like the ‘man in the mirror’ analogy (vs 22-24).**
- **When a Christian is under trial has ‘Spirit-filled control’, he or she sees God’s Word as the ‘perfect law of liberty’. Talk about how this works and brings the Lord’s blessing upon you although you are going through some trial.**

## **Beware of Serving with A Deceptive Heart**

*“If anyone among you thinks he is religious and **does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.** Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”* **1:26-27**

When going through a period of trials and testing it is possible to keep looking like you are spiritually okay even if you aren’t. Then you talk from the heart to someone revealing the real you who is really just ‘pretending to be spiritual’.

- **To avoid this hypocrisy of outward religion devoid inward spiritual reality, what does James suggest doing in addition to Bible study?**
- **How will this help be a ‘doer’ of the Word and not just a hearer of it? How does helping the most needy people also help you endure and grow through trials?**
- **Talk about the importance of being involved in regular ministry during times of trial. Why does regular ministry help you grow in grace?**
- **What is the most important thing God has stressed to you in James Chapter 1? (Why?)**