

The Difference Maturity Makes

Jonathan Rue

James 1:1-18

04.19.09

'What Difference Does God Make?' Series

We're beginning a new series tonight called What Difference Does God Make?

SLIDE:
What Difference Does God Make Graphic

For the next several months, we're going to be going through the book of James and seeing what kind of practical difference God makes in our real life. Because you might say, "OK, I believe in God, I believe that God exists, I might even have placed my faith in God, and opened up my heart for a relationship with him, but so what?" You believe in God, you have faith in God—So what?

SLIDE:
I believe in God...so what?

What difference has knowing God made in your life? Do you still yell at people? Do you still get angry and fly off the handle? Do you still envy what others have? Do you still cheat on your taxes to try to keep even more money for yourself? Do you still struggle with the same kinds of destructive habits that you struggled with before you believe in God? Are there any external markers of God's activity in your life that others could point to and could see? Unfortunately, we live in a time where there is such a great divide between faith and real life.

SLIDE:
The great divide between faith and real life

The faith has become something of an internal private personal belief that in no way needs to touch my actions, my habits, my lifestyle. Faith has become compartmentalized off into something that we do on Sunday, not something we practice on a daily basis.

Neil Postman, in his book, Amusing Ourselves to Death, makes the claim that television has created in our culture a low information to action ratio. People have become accustomed to learning good ideas, but then not having to act on them. You can watch cooking shows and be a terrible cook. You can watch Bear Grills on Man vs. Wild as he climbs cliffs without ropes, constructs a shelter

in the freezing cold with nothing but a stick and a piece of twine. You can watch him fish in ice holes with his bare hands and eat beetles, but if you ever got caught in the forest all alone...you would die! You would have no practical knowledge of how to survive in the wild. Camping to you means renting an RV with a DVD player and a microwave oven.

You could watch HGTV and Trading Spaces and watch other people decorate their homes beautifully while you're sitting on your fold up chair and your nappy couch with pizza stains on it and a plastic milk crate for a coffee table.

You can watch the biggest loser and find out all about how to exercise properly and the right foods to eat while you are scarfing down your doughnuts and half gallon of triple chocolate chunk ice cream.

In today's culture, it is so common to think that we know about something because we've taken in some information about it, but it never translates into action in our life. So, we can come to church and come into relationship with God and have this cultural assumption that as long as I am learning things about God, somehow I'm automatically growing into maturity. That it's just a matter of time. That as long as I log in my church hours, as long as I punch the clock, after a few years, I'm going to be spiritually mature. Well, nothing could be further from the truth than the assumption that spiritual growth and Christian maturity is automatic. And if you've been in the church for any amount of time, you know that there are people that are very advanced in age, but are very young in maturity. You can be an old Christian, but be an infant in Christ. And for a one year old to act like a baby, that is fine. But if a 29 year old is acting like a baby, we have a serious problem on our hands. You can have tons of knowledge of the scriptures and be able to quote verses off the top of your head and yet still be filled with jealousy and rage and envy and greed.

Well, as we open the book of James for several months, we're going to hear about how God can make a difference in your life to bring about spiritual growth and maturity. Tonight we're going to look at James, chapter 1, and I've called tonight's talk, "The Difference Maturity Makes." Let's pray.

Well the first verse of the book of James begins like this.

SLIDE:

James 1:1 (TNIV)

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

So we see that the book of James is a letter written from James to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations. So, it's not written to a specific church as many of Paul's letters were. This letter is written to what is called the Diaspora, the Jews that scattered from Jerusalem under persecution and went to other places all

over the Mediterranean world. This happened after persecution broke out in Jerusalem. We read about this in Acts 8.

SLIDE:

Acts 8:1-3 (TNIV)

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

So we see an outbreak here that happened in Jerusalem, and it's after this that James is writing to those Jews that are scattered throughout the Mediterranean world as a result of this persecution.

We can't know for sure which James is writing this. There are 2 likely candidates. There are only 2 men named James that have the stature, the first hand experience with Jesus to be able to write with such authority that it was received into the Christian canon of scripture. There is James, the son of Zebedee, who was one of the 12 disciples of Jesus and was martyred in 44 A.D. It's possible that he wrote this letter. However, church history is virtually unanimous in agreeing that the author of this letter was James, the brother of Jesus. James the Lord's brother is mentioned quite often in the New Testament. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, James became a leader in the church and he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and presided over the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15.

So James begins his letter and he is going to bring instruction and teaching to Jewish Christians who are trying to live out what it means to follow Jesus in the context of foreign countries, foreign nations, where they are persecuted, where they are mocked, where it is difficult for them to integrate into society and also to practice their faith. These are people that know hard times. These are people for whom it is not easy to be a follower of Jesus. There's great cost and there is great pressure to conform to cultural values and societal norms. And so to these believers in Jesus, James writes this.

SLIDE:

James 1:2-18 (TNIV)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 Those who doubt should not think they will receive

anything from the Lord; 8 they are double-minded and unstable in all they do.

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

12 Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

So in this opening text, James gives us a roadmap for how God makes a difference in life.

SLIDE:

James’ roadmap for how God makes a difference in life

It just isn’t the case that if we believe in God, automatically we are rocketed into spiritual maturity. God does occasionally bring dramatic conversions and breaks off addictions and brings radical healing to somebody’s body, to somebody’s soul, but the way that God moves most often is through the slow and methodical discipline of spiritual growth. And this is what James is beginning to outline here. And so we begin by seeing that the destination of faith, where we are headed is toward maturity.

SLIDE:

The destination of faith: maturity

And we see this in verse 4.

SLIDE:

James 1:4 (TNIV)

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

The goal of the Christian life, the goal of following Jesus is not that we might have an insurance policy for the afterlife—that we can live however we want, that we can still remain infantile in our faith, in our living out the teachings of Jesus that we can have any kind of lifestyle we want and just know that when we die, we will get to see Jesus. James says, no, that's not the goal of faith. The goal is that we might become mature and complete in Christ. There are scriptures throughout the New Testament that remind us of this again and again. Hebrews 6 tells us this.

SLIDE:

Hebrews 6:1-2 (TNIV)

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

The writer of Hebrews is saying; let's move forward in our relationship with Christ. Let's move forward in our faith, not being stuck back at the entry point of faith. The entry point, what gets you in to relationship with Jesus is simply believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he died for your sins, and that he was resurrected to new life by the power of God. When we receive his forgiveness, when we receive what Jesus did for us on the cross, that is the entry point in to relationship with God. And what James is saying and what the author of Hebrews is saying, ok great, now we've made a good start, but let's not stop there.

Let's go forward into maturity, not laying the same foundational stones of basic Christian teaching. Let's not keep having to lay that same foundational stone of coming back in repentance to God. God, I'm sorry I went my own way again. God, I'm sorry I went my own way again. God, I'm sorry I went my own way again. Some of us will spend 10, 20, 30 years laying that foundational stone of repentance. And in doing so, we never get to build the structure that God intended for our lives to be. We never get to become the person that God intended for us to grow into. We're stunted with our feet stuck in the starting blocks. The writer of Hebrews uses a metaphor of milk and he says in chapter 5, verse 12.

SLIDE:

Hebrews 5:12-14 (TNIV)

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is

not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

See, the forgiveness of Jesus is milk. The great and wonderful truth of the gospel, that there's nothing we have to do to gain relationship with God except receiving what Jesus did for us and turning toward him. That is the sweet milk of the gospel. But the teaching about how to build righteousness into our lives, through constant use, train ourselves to distinguish good from evil. That, that's meat.

John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement, used to say, "the meat is in the street." Some of the deepest truths of God's word and the deepest truth that you're ever going to know about who God is, is going to happen when you get out into the street and start to live out your calling as a man or woman of God. When you start to serve people in a food pantry. When you start to brush shoulders with the poor, when you start to serve people that are sick and dying in the hospital, when you start to lead a small group and teach people about God's Word. *Then you start to learn the meat of righteousness.* And in verse 14 here the writer of Hebrews is saying that we don't automatically even distinguish good from evil. We have to train ourselves through constant use, train ourselves to distinguish good from evil.

Now we have an enemy of our souls. There is another team on the field. There are spiritual forces in this world that are seeking to lie, steal and destroy. That's what the scriptures say. And so we find ourselves in a world that is not neutral. We're not on a neutral playing field. We are on a playing field charged with tension between God and all of the forces of good and between Satan and all of the forces of evil.

And Satan loves to disguise himself and to bait his hook with lovely, tempting things that look so good. But when we take a little nibble, he yanks on the hook. And so money can be a really good thing in life. You can provide for yourself, for your family, pay your school loans, you can buy a house. These are good things, but they're not neutral. Money is not a neutral thing. It's a thing that we must learn through constant discipline to distinguish good from evil in how we use our money, because Satan wants to capture our hearts with greed. Sex is a good thing, it's given to us by God. It's meant to be enjoyed in the context of a marriage. But Satan has twisted sex so much in our culture, that so many people are lured into degrading and destructive expressions of this good gift of God. And so we can't ever hope to be able to, by ourselves, distinguish all of the good from the evil in this world. We depend on God's Holy Spirit and we have to be connected into community with people who are also following God. This is not something we can do on our own. We need to do it in community and this is why Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4.

SLIDE:

Ephesians 4:11-15 (TNIV)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ.

In all things, God wants us to grow up. That's what maturity is all about. Not just physical growth. It's not just eating your spinach or your Wheaties and growing up physically. God wants you to grow up in all ways. He wants you to grow up in your thought life. He wants you to grow up in the way that you spend your money. He wants you to grow up in the way that you relate to other people around you. He wants you to grow up in your sex life. He wants you to grow up in your ability to carry some weight, some burden of this life. So, the goal, the destination on James' roadmap, where we're headed is maturity in Christ.

So now James tells us that the road to maturity comes by way of perseverance.

SLIDE:

The road to maturity: perseverance

We see this in verses 2-4.

SLIDE:

James 1:2-4 (TNIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

So we see that it's perseverance that finishes the work of maturity and brings us to completion, so that we're not lacking in anything. Now why is this? Why do we need perseverance in our lives to bring maturity? Can't maturity come from another way? Can't I get maturity more quickly than having to persevere through life? Well James shows us here that perseverance is a *necessary gateway* for us to go through in order for us to get to maturity. There just isn't any way around it. You can't slip through another door. You can't take another short cut. You've got to start at the beginning, go through the middle to come to the end.

And this is because a mature faith is not the same thing as a simple, naïve faith.

Simple faith is a beautiful thing. When the first moment a light bulb goes off in somebody's mind and heart, and they get it. They understand what Jesus did for them. They understand that there is nothing they need to do to earn their way to God. They don't have to go to church for 10 years and go through confirmation class and be able to recite the Apostles' Creed from memory and be able to give a 9 point summary of Paul's argument in the book of Romans. All they need to do is to come to Jesus and receive his forgiveness. I love to see that simple faith get switched on in a person's heart. But that is not the same thing as a mature faith, a seasoned faith, a faith that has been through a lifetime of sorrow and loss and pain and hardship and still clings with fervor to the goodness of God. See there's no way to come to a place of maturity in faith unless you persevere. One way to experience perseverance is...

SLIDE:

Perseverance: when you thought things would be different, but you press on anyway.

See at the beginning, you think coming to faith is going to look a certain way. It changes your life and you have a great hope and vision for what that looks like. But as you begin to walk it out, you realize that life looks a lot different than what you thought it was going to look like. You realize that faith in Christ looks a lot different than what you originally thought it looked like. And perseverance means in that moment of realizing it's totally different than what you thought you signed on for, pressing on anyway, a pushing through and saying, I still am going to place my faith and my trust in Christ.

Another way to experience is when you go through a trial and remain faithful to God.

SLIDE:

Perseverance: when you go through a trial and remain faithful to God

We'll talk about this in a minute, but part of perseverance is going through something really hard and not turning around and turning away from God, but remaining faithful to him. When we persevere through trials, it demonstrates a quality and a substance and a maturity to our faith that just isn't possible if nothing was ever difficult for us. If nothing was ever hard for us, if our relationship with God was the easiest thing in the world, we would never be able to demonstrate the kind of maturity that we can when we go through difficult things.

And perseverance is when you make it to the end and reach the goal.

SLIDE:

Perseverance: when you make to the end and reach the goal.

The New Testament talks often about the Christian life being like a race. And we see in Hebrews twelve:

SLIDE:

Hebrews 12:1-2 (TNIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Faith is not a sprint, it's not a 100 meter dash. Faith is a marathon. And we are to run the race, the marathon of life, with perseverance, so that we cross the finish line and receive our reward. Hebrews 10:36 says this.

SLIDE:

Hebrews 10:36 (TNIV)

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

We don't get the reward for our faith unless we persevere. You could run the fastest 100 meters of anybody in the world, but if it was a marathon that you're running and the finish line wasn't for 26 more miles, you don't get a prize for how quickly you ran that 1st hundred meters. You don't get a prize for how well you ran the first 1000 meters. You only get a prize for how well you complete the race, and that's why perseverance is so important in developing Christian maturity. I've known so many people that have all of the zeal and the passion and the heart of following after Jesus. They want to change the world and they want to do it now, but they lack maturity. They haven't had opportunity yet to persevere and so when things get tough and things get hard, it crushes their passion, it calms their zeal and they're left desperately trying to cling to a shred of faith in Christ.

If we are to grow into maturity and have God make a difference in our lives, we have got to be people that do not give up but that persevere in life. Now, the road to perseverance, James says, comes through the testing of our faith.

SLIDE:

The road to perseverance: testing of faith

And we see this in verses 2-3.

SLIDE:

James 1:2-3 (TNIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

So, the way that perseverance comes is by the road of testing. Most of us don't like this word at all. Testing brings up images of anxiety before a final exam where you have to spit out all of this information that you were supposed to have learned, even though you skipped half of your classes and didn't read any of your books. And we might debate the value of testing or the methods of testing, but one thing holds and that is that God is going to want to test your faith to see if there is substance and quality underneath the words and beliefs. And the way that God tests us comes in many forms. But the way that James is talking about here is he's saying that the road of testing comes through trials. This is a major way that God tests us through trials.

SLIDE:

The road of testing: trials

So he says in verse 2.

SLIDE:

James 1:2 (TNIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds

What an odd phrase to use. Why in the world would James say consider it pure joy when you encounter trials of many kinds? Trials by very definition are things that are terrible, are things that are the opposite of joy, that are awful, that are painful, that we don't like to go through. But he says consider it pure joy. He says this for two reasons. The first is because Jesus suffered trials, and so when we suffer, we are in some sense participating with Christ in suffering. When we experience trials because of our faith, when we are persecuted, when we are mocked, when we are mistreated because of our faith, we are participating with Christ in his sufferings. In Hebrews 12, verse 2, it says:

SLIDE:

Hebrews 12:2-3 (TNIV)

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

So the first reason is that we're participating with Jesus and the second reason is that by enduring trials, we are gaining opportunity to persevere, which in turn grants us opportunity to grow in maturity.

SLIDE:

James 1:2-3 (TNIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

We have opportunity to grow through trials in a way that is simply not available to us if life was easy, if we never had any difficulties, if it was all roses all the time. And verse 12 tells us of the reward that we gain by going through trials.

SLIDE:

James 1:12 (TNIV)

Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

So there is great reward by going through trials for Christ's sake. Now I want to say something about what kind of trials James is talking about. James is talking about trials that come to you not because of what you have done, but because of your faith in Christ or because of circumstance. So, if because of your faith in Christ you lose your job or you are mocked and humiliated. Or in other countries, you are jailed or killed for your faith in Christ. Or if things happen in your life where a loved one dies or you come down with a debilitating disease, something that's outside of your control, it's a trial that you're enduring to test your faith in God, to test your trust in the goodness of God, when things in life get difficult and hard.

But what James is *not talking about* are the trials that might come when you turn away from God, when you deliberately turn your back on God and point your life directly into destruction. When you point your life toward alcoholism, when you point your life toward drug addiction, when you point your life toward porn addiction and unbridled sexual expression with whomever, wherever. When we voluntarily choose to turn away from God in rebellion, *that* does not count as the trials in which we need to persevere in which to gain Christian maturity. The Bible has a different word for those kinds of trials: *sin*. Sin is the result that comes when we pursue our own selfish desires unchecked by the Holy Spirit,

Look at the progression James lays out in verse 13,

SLIDE:

James 1:13-15 (TNIV)

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Our own evil desires carry us away into the grips of sin, which then leads to death. This is not the trials that make for perseverance, this is sin leading to death.

And God doesn't tempt us with sin, Satan does that and we do that. God tests us for righteousness. The difference between testing and tempting is that when God tests you, he's probing you to see that there is substance there, to see that you will pass. When you are tempted by Satan, the motivation of the tempter is that you might fall, that you might be taken down into sin and death.

Now, when we are tempted by the evil one, not by God, but by the evil one, there are two things that we should pray. Our common prayer when we go through a trial is, "God take me out of this trial." "God rescue me." "God deliver me." "Take this away from me, God." And that's an ok prayer, but that's not the prayer that James tells us to pray. The two prayers that James tells us to pray is number one, "God help me to not quit, help me to persevere and to not give up." And the second prayer is, "God, help me not to sin. Help me resist the evil desires of the enemy of my soul."

Those are the two worst things that can happen to us as we go through our Christian life. The two things that can totally take us out is if we number 1: give up. If we don't persevere, if we don't press through when trials come, when disillusionment comes, when the pain comes. If we don't persevere under trials, we will be taken out, and we won't reach the finish line. And the second thing that will take us out is sin. When we get tempted and get lured in by the evil one, and we fall into sin, sin, James says, gives birth to death. And so James's road map for how God makes a difference in life begins by setting up the destination that we're headed toward in our faith and that's toward maturity. And so James says that the road to maturity begins with perseverance and the road to perseverance comes from the testing of our faith and the testing of our faith comes on the road of trials.

And now I want to say a word about the vehicle that God give you to continue on this car metaphor. Some of you, I know are just loving this. You're picturing yourself as a 66 Mustang convertible. Some of you are more earth friendly like a Prius. Anyway, the vehicle that God gives you to go on this road headed toward the destination of maturity, the vehicle that God gives you is you.

SLIDE:

The vehicle God gives you: you

When we put our faith and trust in God, God does not somehow replace who we are with somebody different. When we come to God, God takes us. He receives the person that we are. We don't have to make ourselves better to come to God. We come to God as we are, and the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and begins to transform us, but it is us that God comes into. He doesn't replace us with

himself; he adds himself into us and begins the slow methodical process of maturity. And so the raw material that you've got to work with is you. And this is the problem, right? This is why we're so frustrated. When we come to Christ and we put our faith in him and we have these lofty expectations that everything in our life is going to change and that we wake up the next day and discover that we have the same habits and desires and needs and wants that we had before. The same brokenness, the same destructive patterns of sin. God does do something miraculous at the moment of conversion, at the moment of *regeneration*. God does begin the process of new creation so that Paul can say that those in Christ, we are a new creation. But, what God is doing in the new creation is creating a new *YOU!* And, furthermore, God is not finished recreating us and creating us new and fresh. There is so much of our old self that is still stuck onto us. So that's why in verse 2, James says:

SLIDE:

James 1:2 (TNIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds

You are going to face trials. You. And so to help equip you on this road, God wants to give you an upgrade. The car came off the lot, stripped down in a stock version...it's kind of like my car. It doesn't have anything power on it, no power windows, no power steering, manual transmission and here you are setting off on this twisting, winding road of life full of hairpin turns, on the edge of cliffs and so the upgrade that God wants to give you is wisdom.

SLIDE:

The upgrade God wants to give you: wisdom

We see this in verse 5.

SLIDE:

James 1:5-8 (TNIV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 Those who doubt should not think they will receive anything from the Lord; 8 they are double-minded and unstable in all they do.

So James is saying when you begin the Christian life, you do not have wisdom, you're clueless. You just don't know how to follow God correctly. You don't know how to discern right from wrong. You don't know how to make the kinds of choices that God would have you make, but God desires to give you wisdom if you would just ask for it. And when we ask for God for good things that He would give to us, we should believe that he actually is going to give them to us, that he

is a good God, that he has the capacity, the resource and the desire to give us good things like wisdom. And it's not just wisdom that God has to give us. Verse 16 tells us:

SLIDE:

James 1:16-18 (TNIV)

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Every good gift comes from God's hand. Everything that's good in life. So James says, don't be deceived, don't slip into the deception that says that God does not have good things for you, that God has only bad things for you. Punishment. And anger and wrath. No. James says God has good things for you. His wrath has been taken care of by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and so God has wonderful good gifts to give to you, to equip you to live out the road of suffering and trials and perseverance so that you might come to a place of maturity and completeness in Christ.

The Difference Maturity Makes

Jonathan Rue

James 1:1-18

04.19.09

'What Difference Does God Make?' Series

I believe in God...so what?

The great divide between faith and real life

James' roadmap for how God makes a difference in life

The destination of faith: maturity (v. 4)

The road to maturity: perseverance (v. 2)

The road to perseverance: testing of faith (v. 3)

The road of testing: trials (v. 2, 12)

The vehicle God gives you: you (v. 2)

The upgrade God will give you: wisdom (v. 5)