

SESSION ONE

*Living in the Midst of Adversity (James 1:1-18)*

“ . . . the book of James has found a place in Scripture not only because it provides us trustworthy contours of our understanding about God but also because it illumines our walk before God especially when considered an integral part of an inspired whole.”

~ R. W. Wall, “James,” in *DLNT*, 556

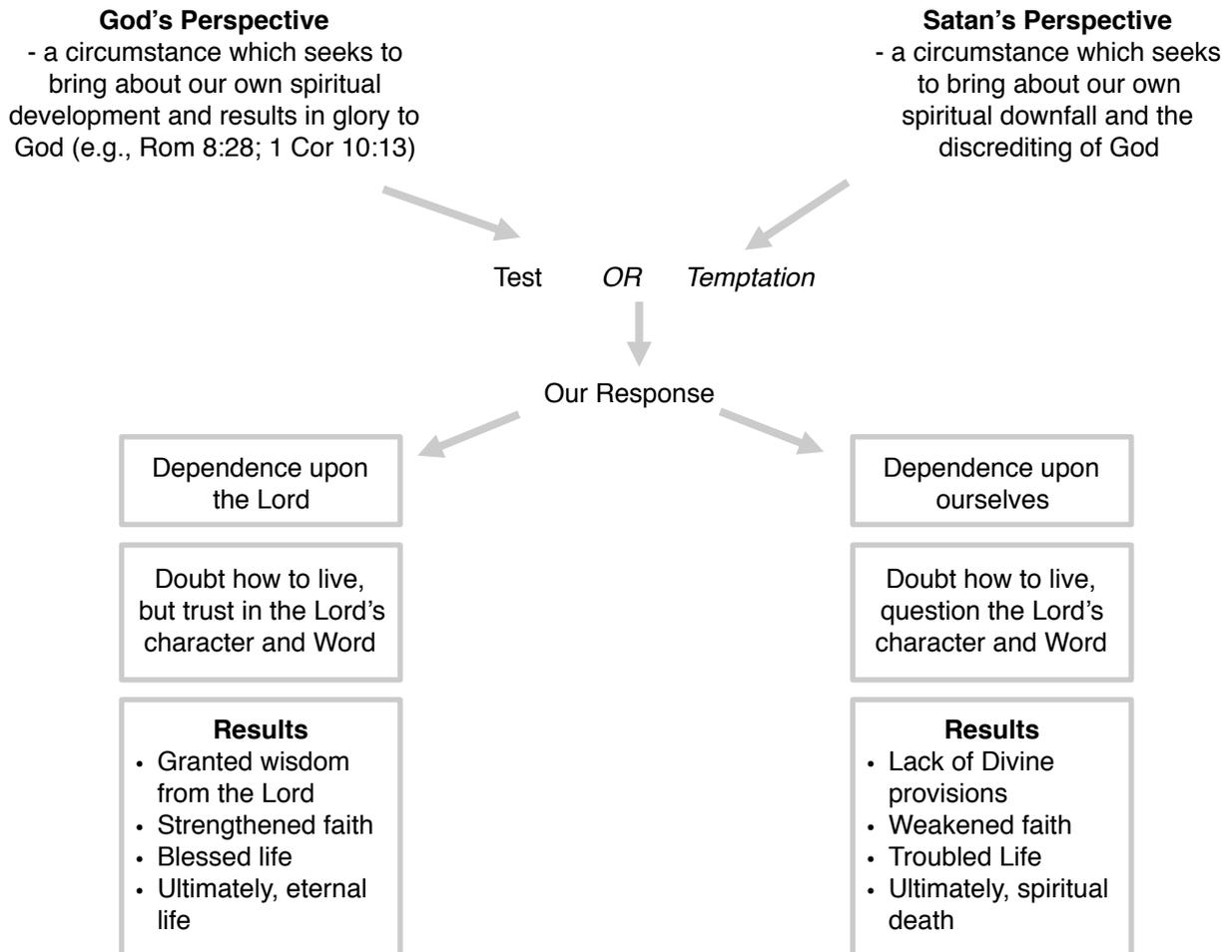
I. Overview

For many within the Church, doubt is a good friend of faith. One individual states: “Far too often doubt is portrayed simply as an enemy rather than a potential friend; as something mature Christians should not suffer from, rather than a vital means by which Christians mature.”

However, do the Scriptures indicate that doubt is acceptable before the Lord? Are there any dangers? And if dangers do exist, how can we overcome doubt?

II. The Content

A. Question #1: When is doubt acceptable before the Lord?



Answer: Circumstances of life create doubt as we seek to navigate through deep waters. We sometimes question exactly what the Lord might be teaching us and how He would have us to respond. Whereas, ungodly doubt faces the difficulties of life and questions the Lord's character and work.

B. Question #2: What are the dangers of doubting God?

1. To doubt God is to doubt His character (vv. 5, 17-18).

His character is the basis for assurance that the request will be fulfilled.

Note what James states concerning God's character:

Daniel 3:17 - "If our God whom we are serving exists, he is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will rescue us, O king, from your power as well."

2. To doubt God is to question His Word (vv. 5-6).

There exists a contrast between what they presume God does (vv. 13-15) and what He actually accomplishes (vv. 17-18).

Deuteronomy 6:16 - "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him in Massah."

"What we suffer from today is humility in the wrong places. Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition. Modesty has settled upon the organ of conviction, where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. We are on the road to producing a race of men too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table." ~ G. K. Chesterton

Isaiah 40:6-8 - "For all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." (also, cf. 1 Peter 1:24-25).

3. To doubt God is failure to follow Him (vv. 6-8).

Taking up one's cross frees one's hands from clinging onto the concerns and questions of this world.

Jesus rebuked those who doubted; and He chided His disciples for having little faith (cf. Matt 6:30).

4. To doubt God is to miss a blessing (vv. 17-18).

Wisdom = ability to discern a time of testing and to react properly (cf. 1 Cor 1:24).

Six times James mentions that God is the giver—

Luke 11:13 - “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.”

C. Question #3: What steps can I take to overcome illegitimate doubt?

1. Reside in His Promises.

The Scriptures grant us a greater awareness of who God is, while reminding us of what He has done, is doing, and what He promises to do in the future. In so doing, we move towards a “full assurance” as we grow in our relationship with God.

Romans 4:21 - Abraham was fully convinced that what God promised, He was able to do.

What are some promises of God?

2. Request His Provisions.

James 1 calls for us to ask for wisdom. James never suggests that we ask God to remove the struggle or reduce the pressure.

3. Relinquish all Control.

James 1:21 -

Proverbs 3:5-6 (also, cf. Psalm 13; 1 Peter 5:7) -

“Let us then not rest in skepticism or doubts, but labour to come to a certainty in the things of religion . . . God knows whether we may be called forth to be witnesses to His truth; therefore it concerns us to be well grounded and confirmed in it. If we are doubting Christians, we shall be wavering Christians . . . Men first question the truth, and then fall from the truth.” ~ T. Watson, *All Things for Good*, 10-11