

New Testament Recovery Version
Study Guide
For Vital Groups

Series III- 1Thessalonians to Revelation

THE EPISTLES OF
JAMES-JUDE

Week 1 James 1:1-1 Pet. 1:12

I. Key Verses:

- James 1:3 Knowing that the proving of your faith works out endurance.
- James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.
- James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of freedom, and continues in it, becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his doing.
- James 2:24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.
- James 4:7 Be subject therefore to God; but withstand the devil, and he will flee from you.
- James 5:8 You also be long-suffering; establish your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near.
- 1 Pet. 1:7 So that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT ReV p.1090, 1110)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE PRACTICAL PERFECTION OF CHRISTIAN

—James 1:4-5, 12, 25, 2:24; James 1:4 note 1, 5 note 1, 25 note 2, 2:24 note 1.

Further Reading: Life Life-Study of James, Msg. 1.

IV. Life Supply:

In [James] 1:2 James says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, whenever you fall into various trials.” Here we see that the first virtue related to practical Christian perfection covered by James is that of enduring trials by faith.

Persecution is a suffering. However, trials are not merely a suffering, for trials are a suffering that serves the purpose of trying or proving us. We may use final examinations in school as an illustration. Students know that final examinations can be a real suffering and trial. But such a trial is actually a help to the students. If there were no final examinations in school, the students would probably be careless concerning their studies. But when they know that a final examination is coming, they concentrate on their studies with much diligence. Therefore, a final examination helps a student learn the necessary material. For this reason, the parents of those who are students should be grateful for the final examinations, knowing that this helps their children to profit from their education.

God uses trials to perfect us. If we see this, we shall thank God for perfecting us through trials. Trials not only help us in the matters of our spiritual education and the experience of life, but also help us with our character and our behavior in our daily living. Before you believed in the Lord, you may have been like a wild lion. But after a period of time of trial, the “lion” has been tamed. I can testify that God has used trials to “tame” me and thereby to perfect me in a practical way in my Christian life.

In 1:2 James even encourages us to “count it all joy” whenever we fall into various trials. The reason we can count it a joy when we fall into trials is that these trials perfect us. Notice that in 1:2 James speaks not only of trials but of “various trials.” This indicates that we should count all trials a joy, not just certain trials. On the one hand, we do not like trials, opposition, and persecution. But on the other hand we should count it all joy when we experience such things because God uses them to perfect us. (*Life-Study of James, Msg. 1*)

Week 2 1 Pet. 1:13- 5:14

I. Key Verses:

- 1 Pet. 1:15 But according to the Holy One who called you, you yourselves also be holy in all your manner of life;
- 1 Pet. 2:4 Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious,
- 1 Pet. 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- 1 Pet. 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you a model so that you may follow in His steps;
- 1 Pet. 3:18 For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God, on the one hand being put to death in the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the Spirit;
- 1 Pet. 4:14 If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.
- 1 Pet. 5:8 Be sober; watch. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT ReV p.1110-1111)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND ITS SUFFERINGS

—1 Pet 2:19-21; 1 Pet. 2: 19 note 1, note 2, 21 note 2, 23 note 1.

Further Reading: Life-Study of 1 Peter, Msg. 28.

IV. Life Supply:

Christ lived a life of suffering, a suffering life. Now we are His partners living the same kind of life. According to the book of Hebrews, we are not only partakers of Christ but are also His partners (Heb. 3:14). We cooperate with Him in living a life of suffering. We follow Him along the way of suffering. This means that what Christ suffered, we also suffer. Therefore, when we suffer for Christ in this way, our sufferings are counted by God as the sufferings of Christ.

We should not be discouraged because we must suffer as Christians. These sufferings are positive and very precious. What a privilege it is to experience the sufferings of Christ! Paul could even say that he made up what was lacking of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His Body, the church (Col. 1:24). He also speaks in Philippians 3:10 concerning the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Today we should be Christians, followers of Christ, who undergo the sufferings of Christ. We need to participate not only in the riches of Christ, but also in the sufferings of Christ. If we take this point of view, we shall be encouraged whenever we suffer for Christ. We may even welcome this kind of suffering. Yes, we may face fiery ordeals, but these are the sufferings of Christ in which we have the privilege to participate.

The reason the persecutions we suffer are the sufferings of Christ is that we suffer in the name of Christ. According to Peter's word in verse 14, we are blessed if we are reproached in the name of Christ. Do not think that it is a curse to be reproached in the name of Christ. This is to be blessed. However, it may be a curse if people appreciate us too highly. Regarding this matter, we need to have a change of concept.

The more we suffer and are persecuted, the more glory there will be upon us. This is truly a blessing. I can testify that the more I am persecuted and evil spoken of, the more I am empowered. Persecution and reproach does not hold me down. On the contrary, it lifts me up. Therefore, we should rejoice when we are reproached in the name of Christ, because the Spirit of glory is resting upon us. (*Life-Study of 1 Peter, Msg. 28*)

Week 3 2 Pet. 1:1-3:28

I. Key Verses:

- 2 Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
- 2 Pet. 1:19 And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;
- 2 Pet. 2:9 The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trial and how to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,
- 2 Pet. 3:9 The Lord does not delay regarding the promise, as some count delay, but is long-suffering toward you, not intending that any perish but that all advance to repentance.
- 2 Pet. 3:12 Expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements, burning with intense heat, are to be melted away?
- 2 Pet. 3:15 ...even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you,
- 2 Pet. 3:16 As also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things...

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT RcV p.1145)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE DAY OF THE LORD

—2 Pet. 3:8-13; 2 Pet. 3:12 note 3.

Further Reading: Life-Study of 2 Peter, Msg. 12.

IV. Life Supply:

If we have at least a general idea concerning the Lord's coming, we shall know why Peter says that the day of the Lord will come as a thief. Not only will the Lord Himself come as a thief, but even the day of the Lord will come in this way. The coming of that day will be hidden, not open.

We have pointed out that in 3:10 Peter says that in the day of the Lord the heavens will be burned. This will take place after the millennium. The day of the Lord will come before the millennium, but the burning of the heavens will be after the millennium. This is the reason we say that here Peter passes over the millennium, a period of a thousand years, and regards the burning of the heavens and the earth as the last matter that will take place in the day of the Lord.

All things, both in the heavens and on the earth, have been defiled by the rebellion of Satan and the fall of men. Although all things whether on earth or in the heavens have been reconciled to God through Christ by His blood (Col. 1:20), the heavenly things having been purified by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:23), they still need to be cleared up by being burned up in God's governmental dealing so that they may become new in nature and appearance in God's new universe (2 Pet. 3:13). Thus, what kind of persons ought we, the children of the holy God, to be in holy manner of life and godliness; that is, what kind of transformation ought we to have to live a life in the manner of God's holy nature and godliness to express Him so that we may be qualified to match His holy government? How wonderful that the divine power has provided us with all things that are needed to live such a life in the holy manner and godliness (1:3).

While we live a transformed life in a holy and godly manner, we are expecting, awaiting, and hastening the coming of the day of God. Knowing that God is so holy as to dissolve all things, we ought to be in a holy manner of life and godliness as we expect and hasten the coming of the day of God. Not only do we expect the day of God—we would hasten it. (*Life-Study of 2 Peter, Msg. 12*)

Week 4 1 John 1:1- 4:6

I. Key Verses:

- 1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
- 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;
- 1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.
- 1 John 3:9 Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God.
- 1 John 3:24 And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT ReV p.1170)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE DIVINE LIFE

—1 John 1:1-4; 1 John 1:2 note 3, 3 note 2, note 3, note 4.

Further Reading: Life-Study of 1 John, Msg. 5, 8.

IV. Life Supply:

The flowing of electricity is a good illustration of the fellowship of the divine life. Electricity flows from the power plant into a building. The electrical current connects the power plant to the building. Furthermore, in a lighted ceiling of a particular room in the building, the individual lights are connected to each other by the flow of the electrical current. Apart from the flow of the current, the lights in the ceiling are separate. But through the flow of electricity, the lights are brought into a “fellowship” with one another, for they are all in the one flow of electricity. This is an illustration of the fact that the apostles and the believers enjoy fellowship together in the divine life.

When we are in the divine fellowship, we are in the light, and when we are in the light, we are exposed by the light. The divine light is much stronger than an x-ray. This light exposes whatever is wrong in our being. As we walk in the light and practice the reality in the light, the light shines within us, upon us, and through us. Exposed by this shining, we realize that we are wrong in many matters. We may see that we are wrong in our thoughts, emotions, motives, and intentions. We may also see that we are wrong with certain brothers and sisters. Because we are exposed in this way, our conscience is condemned. In order to deal with this condemnation in our conscience, we need the cleansing of the Lord’s blood. It is when we are in the fellowship and under the light that we see our failures, mistakes, wrongdoings, impure motives, and evil intentions. But at this very juncture, the blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses us from every sin.

In 1:1-7 we see a cycle in our spiritual life formed of four crucial things—the eternal life, the fellowship of the eternal life, the divine light, and the blood of Jesus the Son of God. Eternal life issues in the fellowship of the divine life, the fellowship of eternal life brings in the divine light, and the divine light increases the need of the blood of Jesus the Son of God so that we may have more eternal life. The more we have of eternal life, the more of its fellowship it brings to us. The more fellowship of the divine life we enjoy, the more divine light we receive. The more divine light we receive, the more we participate in the cleansing of the blood of Jesus. Such a cycle brings us onward in the growth of the divine life until we reach its maturity. (*Life-Study of 1 John, Msg. 5, 8*)

Week 5 1 John 4:7- Jude 25

I. Key Verses:

- 1 John 4:12 No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
- 1 John 5:6 This is He who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood; and the Spirit is He who testifies, because the Spirit is the reality.
- 1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we might know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.
- 2 John 4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.
- 3 John 8 We therefore ought to support such ones that we may become fellow workers in the truth.
- Jude 20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,
- Jude 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT ReV p.1170, 1208, 1214, 1219)

III. The Light of the Truth:

PRACTICING THE DIVINE LOVE

—1 John 4:4-12, 3:11, 14-18; 4:7 note 4, 8 note 1, note 2, 12 note 4.

Further Reading: Life-Study of 1 John, Msg. 27, 28.

IV. Life Supply:

Love is the essence of God's nature. When we have Him as our divine life, we have the nature of this life, which is love. We Christians, the children of God, have a life that aspires to live rightly with everyone and everything and also aspires to love others. We have such an aspiration because of the divine nature within us.

In 3:16 John says ... that Christ laid down His soul life, His *psuche* life, for us, not His divine life, His *zoe* life. For Christ to lay down His soul for us means that He laid down His human life on our behalf. Now we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers. This means that, if necessary, we should die for them. We have within us such a loving life that longs to die for others and is able to die for them. The divine life within us, the *zoe*, longs to love others and even die for them if necessary. We are able to do this because we have the divine life.

The livelihood of the world in verse 17 refers to material things, to the necessities of life. In verse 18, deed is versus word, and truth versus tongue. Tongue denotes the play of vain talk. Truth denotes the reality of love. Truth denotes sincerity, in contrast with tongue, as deed with word. Truth here denotes the genuineness, the sincerity, of God as a divine virtue becoming a human virtue as an issue of the divine reality. Therefore, the truth in this verse is the reality of God becoming our virtue.

John says that we should not love the brothers merely in word or in tongue, not merely telling the saints that we love them. This is not love in truth, love in reality. To love the saints in truth or reality means to love them in the divine reality that becomes our virtue, something that is honest, faithful, sincere, and real. We should love the brothers in this way. Of course, this kind of love in truth includes a love that supplies the needy ones with material things or money when necessary. We should not love the brothers with vain words; we should love them in truth and even with our livelihood. (*Life-Study of 1 John, Msg. 27, 28*)