

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

January 6, 2019

Am I a Good Hearer?

by Frank Himmel

We sometimes ask if a preacher is a good speaker. Let's reverse that and ask ourselves, Am I a good hearer?

The Bereans were. "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Bereans teach us two things good hearers are not.

First, *good hearers are not prejudiced*. Some people decide what they believe before ever opening the Bible. Some are so wedded to what they have been taught that they will not even consider the possibility it might be wrong. Some start with what they want to do, then formulate their view of various passages to make them justify that conduct. Jesus accused His generation of closing their eyes and hearts to the truth (Matthew 13:15). Might He say that about me?

Second, *good hearers are not gullible*. Paul came to Berea preaching that the Scriptures predicted a suffering Messiah, and that Messiah is Jesus. That was a new concept to most. The Bereans, while open-minded enough to consider the possibility, were not so gullible as to just accept anything from a persuasive speaker.

They wanted to verify Paul's assertions by reading the Scriptures for themselves. They did what Paul urged us all to do: "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, NIV).

The Bereans also teach us two things good hearers are.

First, *good hearers are zealous*. Do we appreciate what was involved in their "examining the Scriptures"? Few if any of them had their own Bible. They would have used the

synagogue copy. It was a large, cumbersome set of scrolls. It was not divided into chapters and verses as our Bibles are, so finding specific references would have been an arduous task. And they had no concordance or Bible dictionary. The fact that they continued such studies day after day reflects their zeal to know the truth. What about us, with our myriad of Bible study tools? Do we have their zeal?

Second, *good hearers are doers*. V. 12 says, "Therefore many of them believed..." Good hearers take the message to heart. They apply it to themselves. They act on it, putting it into practice daily.

Resolve this year to be a Berean, a good hearer. ■

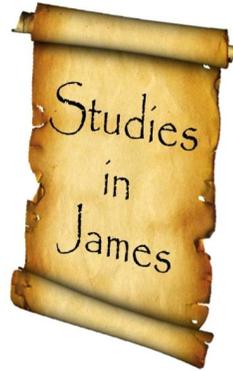
(The concept for this article is from Bobby Thompson.)



Christians on Trial

by Frank Himmel

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2).



James’s opening sentence tells us a lot about his book: it is a book about doing, and doing it will not always be easy!

This verse reveals four things about trials.

First, Christians will have them. Some preachers claim that if you follow Jesus your problems will all go away. James knew better! Following Jesus will rid us of sin’s self-inflicted wounds, but we still face life’s challenges; and along with them we have the added burden of opposition. James’s word rendered *trials* is used in two senses: a good sense of testing or proving something and a bad sense of maliciously enticing one to sin. In many cases there is little practical difference: while God is allowing us to be tested to help us grow, Satan tries to use those same challenges to make us fail.

Second, trials come in a variety of shapes and sizes. James notes that they are various, literally many-colored. They may be physical, either through disease, injury, or just aging. They may be financial. They often

The new year brings new adult Bible classes. On Sunday mornings our theme will be “*Useful to the Master*,” taken from Paul’s illustration of cleansed household vessels (2 Timothy 2:21). It is a study of some characteristics we must have to be useful vessels. On Wednesday evenings we will be studying the fascinating book of *Hebrews*.

Make this the year that you make and keep the resolve to come to Bible class regularly. See you there!



come through personal relationships—at home, in the neighborhood, at school, at work, even at church! What James says applies to them all.

Third, we “fall into” them (NKJV). This is the same word Jesus used in His story of a man who fell among robbers while traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30). James says trials are a blessing, but he does not encourage us to seek them out, to needlessly invite hardship into our lives. Trials will find us often enough on their own! At times they seemingly come out of nowhere. And they may come in bunches: “when it rains, it pours.”

Fourth, we are to consider it all joy when trials come. Why should we do that? How can we do that? We’ll look for answers next week. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Howard Moore	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Josh Baucom	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Steven Turner	
CUP	John Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Carlos Garcia	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	J B Williams
CLOSING PRAYER	Brian Wilson	Albert Harrison Sr