

Book of James

Synopsis



Introduction

Book No	59
Name	James
Written By	James
Testament	New
Category	Epistles
Date Written	Approx. 49 A.D
Place Written	Jerusalem
Audience	Jewish Christians
Purpose	To expose hypocritical practices and to teach right Christian behavior
History Covered	NA
Chapters	5
Verses	108
Key Verse	Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. (2:18)
Key People	NA
Key Places	❖ Jerusalem

Purpose of the Book

“Jesus is the answer!” . . . “Believe in God!” . . . “Follow me to church!” Christians also make great claims but are often guilty of belying them with their actions. Professing to trust God and to be his people, they cling tightly to the world and its values. Possessing all the right answers, they contradict the gospel with their lives.

With energetic style and crisp, well-chosen words, James confronts this conflict head-on. It is not enough to talk the Christian faith, he says; we must live it. “Dear brothers and sisters, what’s the use of saying you have faith if you don’t prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can’t save anyone” (2:14). The proof of the reality of our faith is a changed life.

Genuine faith will inevitably produce good deeds. This is the central theme of James’s letter, around which he supplies practical advice on living the Christian life.

James begins his letter by outlining some general characteristics of the Christian life (1:1-27). Next, he exhorts Christians to act justly in society (2:1-13). He follows this practical advice with a theological discourse on the relationship between faith and action (2:14-26). Then James shows the importance of controlling one’s speech (3:1-12).

In 3:13-18, James distinguishes two kinds of wisdom—earthly and heavenly. Then he encourages his readers to turn from evil desires and obey God (4:1-12). James reproves those who trust in their own plans and possessions (4:13–5:6). Finally, he exhorts his readers to be patient with each other (5:7-11), to be straightforward in their promises (5:12), to pray for each other (5:13-18), and to help each other remain faithful to God (5:19-20).

The book’s call for ethical living based on the gospel provides its relevance. James gives a practical exposition of “pure and undefiled religion” (1:27). His two fundamental emphases are personal growth in the spiritual life and sensitivity in social relationships. Any faith that does not deal with both personal and social issues is a dead faith. The message of James speaks especially to those who are inclined to talk their way to heaven instead of walk their way there.

This letter could be considered a how-to book on Christian living. Confrontation, challenges, and a call to commitment await you in its pages. Read James and become a doer of the Word (1:22-25).

Overview

- ❖ 59th book of the BIBLE, 20th in the New Testament, 15th of the 21 epistles 1st of the 7 epistles written by different authors
- ❖ James:
 - Was the Lord's brother. Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19
 - Was one of the "pillars" in the church in Jerusalem.
 - He was a central figure at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15.
 - According to Josephus, James suffered a martyr's violent death in A.D. 62
- ❖ The Book of James is addressed to Hebrew Christians outside of Palestine, "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." 1:1
- ❖ The Book of James may be one of the earliest writings in the New Testament.
- ❖ There is no mention of Gentile Christians or their relationship to Jewish Christians.
- ❖ James does not mention the issues that were discussed during the Acts 15 council at Jerusalem.
- ❖ There are about 15 indirect references to the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of James.
- ❖ James is the proverbs of the New Testament.
- ❖ In the Book of James:
 - "Faith" occurs 12 times.
 - "Works" occurs 13 times.
 - "Doer" occurs 5 times.
- ❖ James has a lot to say about faith.
 - Faith without works can not be called faith at all.
 - Faith without works is dead, and a dead faith is worse than no faith at all.
 - Faith must work.
 - Faith must produce.
 - Faith must be visible.
 - Faith displays itself in works.
 - Faith is more than mere words.
 - Faith is more than knowledge.
 - Faith is demonstrated by obedience.
 - Faith overtly responds to the promises of God.
 - Verbal faith is not enough, and mental faith is insufficient.
 - Faith must be there, but it must be more, it must inspire action.

- Faith endures trials.
- Faith obeys the Word. It will not merely hear and not do.
- Faith helps control the tongue.
- Faith gives one the ability to choose wisdom that is heavenly and to shun wisdom that is earthly.
- Faith gives one with the ability to resist the devil and to humbly draw near to God.
- Faith waits patiently for the coming of the Lord

Hebrew Names of GOD used in James

❖ JEHOVAH-SABAOTH

Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

Beginning in the first verse and continuing throughout the letter, James recognizes the lordship of Jesus, referring to himself as the Lord's "bondservant," or slave. That term is applicable to all Christians, because all true disciples of Christ acknowledge His sovereignty over their lives and willingly commit themselves to His service. Christ is the object of our faith (2:1), the One in whose name and by whose power we perform our ministry (5:14, 15), the Rewarder of those who are steadfast in the midst of trials (1:12), and the Coming One for whom we patiently wait (5:7–9). James identifies Christ as the "glory" (2:1), referring to the Shekinah, the glorious manifestation of the presence of God among His people. Not only glorious Himself, He is the divine Glory, the presence of God on Earth (see Luke 2:30–32; John 1:14; Heb. 1:3).

Of considerable interest is the close parallel between the content of this letter and the teachings of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. Although James does not quote any statement of Jesus exactly, there are more verbal reminiscences of the Lord's teachings in this letter than in all the rest of the New Testament epistles combined. These allusions indicate a close association between James and Jesus and give evidence of the strong influence of the Lord in the author's life.

Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

The letter specifically mentions the Holy Spirit only in 4:5, which states the indwelling Spirit's strong desire for our undivided loyalty, jealously brooking no rivals.

The activity of the Holy Spirit may be seen in the ministry to the sick described in 5:14–16. In light of other biblical terminology connecting anointing with the Spirit (see Is. 61:1; Luke 4:18; 1 John 2:20–27), anointing with oil is best understood as symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in the Greek the definite article used with the word for “faith” in 5:15 particularizes this faith, suggesting that James is referring to the manifestation of the gift of faith (1 Cor. 12:9).

Mega Themes of James

LIVING FAITH

James wants believers not only to hear the truth but also to put it into action. He contrasts empty faith (claims without conduct) with faith that works. Commitment to love and to serve others is evidence of true faith.

Living faith makes a difference. Make sure your faith is more than just a statement; it should also result in action. Seek ways of putting your faith to work.

TRIALS

In the Christian life there are trials and temptations. Successfully overcoming these adversities produces maturity and strong character.

Don't resent troubles when they come. Pray for wisdom; God will supply all you need to face persecution or adversity. He will give you patience and keep you strong in times of trial.

LAW OF LOVE

We are saved by God's gracious mercy, not by keeping the law. But Christ gave us a special command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:19). We are to love and serve those around us.

Keeping the law of love shows that our faith is vital and real. When we show love to others, we are overcoming our own selfishness.

WISE SPEECH

Wisdom shows itself in wise speech. God holds us responsible for the results of our destructive words. The wisdom of God that helps control the tongue can help control all our actions.

Accepting God's wisdom will affect your speech. Your words will convey true humility and lead to peace. Think before you speak and allow God to give you self-control.

WEALTH

James taught Christians not to compromise with worldly attitudes about wealth. Because the glory of wealth fades, Christians should store up God's treasures through sincere service. Christians must not show partiality to the wealthy or be prejudiced against the poor.

All of us are accountable for how we use what we have. We should not hoard wealth but be generous toward others. In addition, we should not be impressed by the wealthy nor look down on those who are poor.

Life Lessons in James

Truth	Lesson
<p>Growing in Godliness</p> <p>Godly living is a primary focus in the Book of James, which gives us practical instruction about living and growing in godliness. James has been called “the Proverbs of the New Testament.”</p> <p>Study and apply its wisdom, guidelines, and concrete principles to your everyday life. By God's grace, seek to live in righteousness and peace in all that you say and do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Love all people regardless of social or economic status. Love others the way Jesus loves you, unconditionally. ❖ Guard your mouth. Speak carefully, realizing that words have the power to wound and to cause division and strife. Use words to bless, encourage, and bring life to others. ❖ Understand that pride, insecurity, self-centeredness, and lust are often the underlying source of aggressive behavior, conflict, and disagreements. ❖ Humble yourself before God and others, and He will give you grace. ❖ Submit to and obey God. Resist, stand against the Devil, and he will flee. ❖ Speak well of others; bless them with your words. Do not condemn or slander others. Leave judgment to God. ❖ Acknowledge your total dependence on God in all you say and do.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Be faithful to do the good God shows you to do. Do not commit the sin of omission. ❖ Do not allow riches to corrupt you, but use wealth to honor God.
<p>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</p> <p>James makes clear the principle that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot say we love and serve God and then live ungodly lives. Wholehearted devotion to God, expressed practically through good works, is the kind of life to which the Book of James calls us. Take time now to rededicate your heart and life to loving, following, and obeying Jesus.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Confidently place your full love in God. He is always reliable because He never changes. ❖ Every gift He gives is good and perfect. ❖ Choose to devote yourself fully to God rather than to your own selfish and worldly desires. ❖ Devote yourself to the Lord, and godly wisdom and righteousness will begin to grow in your life.
<p>Pursuing Holiness</p> <p>The Book of James challenges all believers to live holy lives. Jesus died for our sin, not so that we could go on sinning, but His death set us free so that we have the power and freedom to choose not to sin. We are to live in holiness because we have been made holy by grace through faith in Jesus. Live in the joy and freedom of holiness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that temptation to sin is not from God. Sin begins with unholy desire and lust, which, if allowed to continue, produces sinful behavior. Sin, allowed to grow, will lead to death. Respond quickly to conviction of impure attitudes, thoughts, motives, and wrong behavior. ❖ Confess it and ask for forgiveness. Diligently pursue a holy thought life and lifestyle. ❖ Draw close to God and He will draw close to you. When you are in His presence, do not be surprised if you are convicted of sin. Embrace conviction; its purpose is to free you from sin.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Embrace sorrow over sin; it leads to repentance and forgiveness. Humble yourself and God will lift you up.
<p>The Walk of Faith</p> <p>Faith is to be expressed through good works. Faith is not simply an idea separate from real life. Rather, faith is to produce in us right living, right motives, right thinking, and right relationships.</p> <p>Our good works confirm that faith is alive and active in us. Seek to live your faith daily in practical ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Let joy reign when you are surrounded by many trials and tests. ❖ Know that tests and trials will result in endurance and patience. ❖ Patiently endure trials, knowing that the result will be maturity, a faith that lacks nothing. ❖ Freely ask for wisdom. Be assured God will give it in abundance. ❖ Understand that anger can lead to sin. Listen and think before you speak. Do not allow your temper to flare quickly. Keep anger under the control of the Spirit. ❖ Let your faith be evident to all by your good works. ❖ Wait patiently in faith for the coming of Jesus. ❖ Pray for a mighty outpouring of the Spirit on the church. ❖ Pray for the sick with faith, anointing them with oil. If you are sick, call the elders or pastor of your church to come and pray for you.
<p>Being a doer of the Word</p> <p>Obedience to the Word of GOD brings about the work of GOD. We are to hear the Word and do the work. To hear and to do nothing is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ evaluate in that areas do you claim faith while your actions declare unbelief. acknowledge those areas ❖ decide to act on the faith you have ❖ practice today what you proclaim

<p>one sign of a deceived heart. Faith acts. To believe is to do</p>	
<p>Learning to avoid partiality</p> <p>Some may argue that preferring the rich and famous is only human but the BIBLE rejects partiality. GOD is not an exalter of persons neither should HIS children be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ be uninfluenced by a person's social status ❖ show love to all without partiality ❖ differentiate between sinful partiality and due honor (Rom 13:7)
<p>How to tame the tongue</p> <p>Nothing can cause more damage than the tongue. Keeping our speech under close control is a discipline believers must develop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ avoid presumptuousness. Do not take position of being a teacher until GOD has placed you there. You increase your liability for judgement if you do ❖ bridle your tongue. Monitoring every word we speak may seem cumbersome at first but it will serve to advance righteousness ❖ speak well of others. Criticism, slander, backbiting and gossip are bitter waters which issue out of demonic worldly wisdom
<p>Steps in developing humility</p> <p>True faith is humble and humility is the opposite of the proud selfishness and self centered ambition that characterizes this present evil age. Self centeredness is the essence of worldliness. Therefore to be a self centered person is to be at enmity with GOD. James calls for believers to humble themselves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ renounce strife. Refuse unnecessary argument and personal strife. Seek to be at peace with others, preferring them to yourself ❖ renounce rebellion. Submit yourself to GOD. Renounce the devil and reject all his suggestions ❖ be quick to confess sin. Nothing more effectively humbles a man that to admit sincerely that he is a sinner

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ renounce slander. Rather speak highly of others even to your own discredit ❖ express continued dependence upon GOD. An independent spirit wars against godly humility ❖ do the good you know to do regardless of the cost. Not to do so is sin
<p>The dangers of money</p> <p>The consistent scriptural witness is that money though necessary and a blessing from GOD can be a dangerous commodity. Things we think we own may really own us. GOD calls us to put material goods into proper perspective and to use them wisely under HIS direction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ recognize the fact that all material possessions will perish and have no eternal value ❖ avoid unnecessary acquisition. Acquired wealth can bring unwelcomed problems to your life ❖ embrace simplicity. Simplicity and poverty are not the same. Simplicity is simply acting responsibly with what GOD gives you

Praise Points in James

- ❖ Trials, which are opportunities for growth in character (1:2-4)
- ❖ Wisdom from above, which is given to all who ask god for it (1:5; 3:17)
- ❖ His promise of the crown of life (1:12) and of the lord's certain return (5:8)
- ❖ Whatever is good and perfect, for it is from the creator (1:17)
- ❖ His blessings that come with the integrity of living out our faith (1:25)
- ❖ The privilege of being called a friend of god (2:23)
- ❖ The grace of god's nearness when we sorrow and are in deep grief over sin (4:6-10)
- ❖ Healing and forgiveness from God, who answers prayer (5:16).

Worship Insights in James

Since worship is an integral part of the Christian life, James's concern for true religion touches vitally on worship, too. Religion might be defined most broadly as "the acknowledgment of and reverence for a higher power." Worship is a particular action or spiritual discipline by which that religious attitude is expressed. Through individual and corporate prayer, preaching, teaching, healing, confession, and various rites at

church assemblies, God and his people commune in the dialogue of worship. This worship is righteous and true!

The call to righteous worship pervades this powerful letter. James urged his audience to make righteous responses to God's Word (1:20-27). He told them that worship gatherings that show partiality to rich people over poor people violate God's law (2:1-13). Worship that does not produce good works of mercy and obedience is dead (2:14-26). We cannot offer praise to God while cursing people with our tongues (3:1-12). To draw close to God, we must get rid of jealousy and anger and show sorrow for our sin (4:1-10).

Every step in life should be bathed in prayer, asking for God's will to be shown and done (4:13-17). Righteous worship never separates love for God from justice and compassion for one's neighbor (5:1-6). We must wait patiently for God's purposes to be attained and not try (with pious oaths) to manipulate God (5:7-12). Finally, James tells his readers that the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results (5:16).

The concern of James, very simply, was that the faith and worship of God's people conform to God's just, righteous, and merciful character.

- ❖ True or righteous faith is evidenced by growth in endurance (1:3, 12), wisdom (1:5), and humility (1:9-10).
- ❖ True or righteous faith is evidenced by good conduct (1:19-27) and by good works (2:1-26).
- ❖ A controlled tongue will pronounce blessings rather than curses (3:1-12).
- ❖ True wisdom from above will bring a harvest of peace (3:13-4:4).
- ❖ True or righteous faith will exhibit trust in God's will (4:13-17) and patience in tough times (5:7-11).
- ❖ True or righteous faith will show prayerful concern for redemption of the lost and healing of the sick (5:13-20).

An Outline of James

I. How to Live with Faith and Trials: [Jas_1:1-27](#)

A. Greetings: [Jas_1:1](#)

B. How to Profit from Trials: [Jas_1:2-4](#)

C. How to Obtain Wisdom: [Jas_1:5-8](#)

- D.** How to Be Rich and Poor: [Jas_1:9-11](#)
- E.** How to Overcome Temptation: [Jas_1:12-15](#)
- F.** How to Receive Good Gifts: [Jas_1:16-18](#)
- G.** How to Communicate: [Jas_1:19-21](#)
- H.** How to Become a Doer: [Jas_1:22-25](#)
- I.** How to Be Authentically Religious: [Jas_1:26-27](#)

II. How to Live with Faith and Works: [Jas_2:1-26](#)

- A.** How to Avoid Partiality: [Jas_2:1-7](#)
- B.** How to Fulfill the Law of Love: [Jas_2:8-13](#)
- C.** How to Make Faith Work: [Jas_2:14-26](#)

III. How to Live with Faith and Wisdom: [Jas_3:1-18](#)

- A.** How to Live as a Teacher: [Jas_3:1](#)
- B.** How to Tame Your Tongue: [Jas_3:2-12](#)
- C.** How to Live with Wisdom: [Jas_3:13-18](#)

IV. How to Live with Faith and Humility: [Jas_4:1-17](#)

- A.** How to Pray Without Pride: [Jas_4:1-3](#)
- B.** How to Become Humble: [Jas_4:4-10](#)
- C.** How to Escape Judgment: [Jas_4:11-12](#)
- D.** How to Plan for the Future: [Jas_4:13-17](#)

V. How to Live with Faith and Reality: [Jas_5:1-20](#)

- A.** How to Succeed in Spite of Riches: [Jas_5:1-6](#)
- B.** How to Be Patient: [Jas_5:7-11](#)
- C.** How Not to Swear: [Jas_5:12](#)
- D.** How to Pray for the Sick: [Jas_5:13-18](#)
- E.** How to Restore a Backslider: [Jas_5:19-20](#)