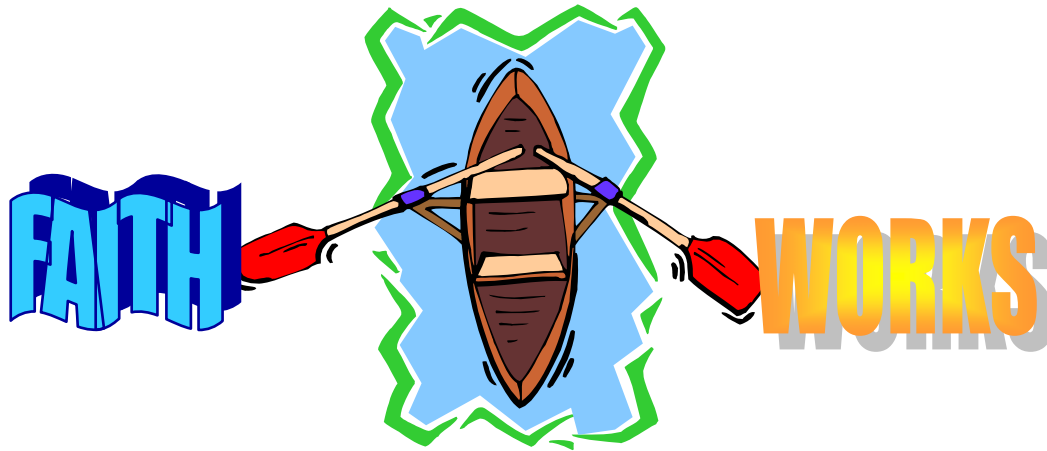
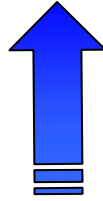


# THE LETTER OF JAMES



IT TAKES FAITH AND WORKS  
FOR DIRECTION AND CONTROL

Faith endures, obeys, gives, provides, and waits patiently.

Charles R. Williams

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# JAMES

## Introduction:

### A. What is the **identity** of James?

1. **James** is a variant form of the name *Jacob* (“heel-catcher, he whom God protects”).
2. There are four and possibly five men who are referred to as James in the New Testament.
  - a. **James the son of Zebedee:**
    - 1) The Bible speaks of his family (the brother of John): Matt. 10:2; 27:56; Mark 1:20; 15:40; John 19:25.
    - 2) The Bible speaks of his call to be an apostle: John 1:35-51; Luke 5:2-11.
    - 3) The Bible speaks of his apostleship: Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14.
    - 4) The Bible speaks of his death: Acts 12:1-3.
  - b. **James the son of Alphaeus:**
    - 1) The Bible includes his name among the apostles: Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18.
    - 2) Some suppose he is the same as James the Younger or Less.
    - 3) He is called the son of Alphaeus: Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:14.
  - c. **James the Younger:**
    - 1) His mother Mary, was present at the crucifixion: Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40, and at the discovery of the empty tomb: Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10.
    - 2) He is thought to be James the Less, the son of Alphaeus.
    - 3) Some believe this is a different James altogether.
  - d. **James, the Lord’s brother:**
    - 1) He was the oldest among the brothers of Jesus: Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3.
    - 2) He was a leader in Jerusalem: Gal. 1:19.
    - 3) He is usually mentioned only by his name (James).
    - 4) He was not in sympathy with the ministry and claims of Jesus at first: John 7:2-5; Mark 6:4; Matt. 10:34-37; Luke 14:26.
    - 5) He believed when he saw the resurrected body of Christ; 1 Cor. 15:7.
    - 6) He was a prominent leader of great influence in Jerusalem: Acts 15:12-21.

- 7) Jude identified himself by his relationship to James: Jude 1.
- 8) Josephus tells us that between the death of Festus and the arrival of the new governor, the high priest, Ananius, seized the opportunity to call the judicial council together. He charged James and others with violating the law. Because of this James was stoned to death. Some Jews protested and the high priest was relieved of his office.
- 9) His death took place about A.D. 62.

e. **James the father of Judas:**

- 1) He is the father of the apostle Judas (not Iscariot): Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13.
- 2) We have no further information about him.

B. Who is the **author** of James?

1. Most believe that it was written by James the brother of Jesus.
2. There are a number of similarities between the speech given by James in Acts 15 and this epistle (Acts 15:23 with James 1:1; Acts 15:13 with James 2:5; Acts 15:19 with James 5:19-20 and Acts 15:17 with James 2:7).

C. What is the **background** of the Epistle of James?

1. Some see it as the most Jewish book in the New Testament.
2. Although there is an atmosphere of the Old Testament in the book, there are also many parallels between this epistle and the words of Jesus.
3. This epistle contains more verbal reminiscences of the teaching of Jesus than all of the other apostolic writings.
  - a. This is especially seen in the Sermon on the Mount references: James 1:22 with Matt. 7:20, 24; James 3:12 with Matt. 7:16; James 2:5 with Matt. 5:3; James 4:11, 12 with Matt. 7:1; James 5:2 with Matt. 6:19; and James 5:12 with Matt. 5:34-37.
  - b. See also James 1:11 and Matt. 6:20; James 1:17 and Matt. 7:11; James 2:13 and Matt. 6:15; James 4:10 and Matt. 23:12; James 5:1 and Luke 6:24-25; James 5:2-3 and Matt. 6:20.
4. This letter also contains more references to Christ than most people recognize in just a casual reading of the book.

- a. Although the name “Jesus Christ” is mentioned only twice , the term “Lord” is mentioned no less than twelve times, and the term “God” is used some twenty times.
- b. Two of the twenty references for “Lord” refer to God: “the Lord the Father” and “Lord of Sabaoth” (3:9 and 5:4), but many of the other references for “Lord” unquestionably refer to Jesus (5:7-8; 1:12; 2:1; 5:11, 14, 15; 1:1).
- c. There are also indirect references to Jesus such as “Behold the Judge standeth before the doors,” 5:9.

D. What is the **date** of this letter?

1. Some believe that because there are no references to Gentile converts and it seems to focus entirely on Jewish converts, the dates of A.D. 45-48 are given.
2. Those who accept an early dating of the letter believe it was the first New Testament letter written.
3. On the other hand there are those who believe in a later date of 62 to 63 A.D.
  - a. Although it is true there is no discussion of questions about Gentile converts in James, it could mean that the issue had already been settled when he wrote his letter, which would be 20 years after the first Gentile converts.
  - b. If the later date is true, it could be that James is writing in response to perversions of Paul’s teachings in Romans, perversions which Paul himself recognized would be possible (Romans 6:1-2).

**NOTE:** With James Coffman’s comments, I am now more convinced that the book was written near the end of James’ life and was meant to correct abuses of Paul’s letter to the Romans. (See *James Burton Coffman Commentaries Vol. XI.*, pp. 10- 11)

E. What is the **occasion** of this letter?

1. If written early its purpose was to prevent backsliding on the part of the first Christians.
2. Some have also suggested it was written to help those who were scattered after Pentecost to encourage and establish them in their Christian lives.
3. Notice the phrase: “...which are of the Dispersion...” (1:1) which is usually a reference to Jews being scattered because of persecution.

4. On the other hand if the phrase "...to the twelve tribes..." which precedes it means Christians (Jew and Gentile), then the word "Dispersion" is in reference to Christians everywhere who were suffering because of their faith in Christ.
- F. What is the **theme** of this letter?

**FAITH WITHOUT WORKS CANNOT BE CALLED FAITH.**

**James 2:26**

**FAITH MUST BE VISIBLE.**

**VERBAL FAITH IS NOT ENOUGH.**

**MENTAL FAITH IS INSUFFICIENT.**

**FAITH MUST INSPIRE ACTION.**

1. Faith **endures** trials.
  2. Faith **understands** temptations.
  3. Faith **obeys** the word.
  4. Faith **produces** doers.
  5. Faith **displays** itself in works.
  6. Faith **controls** the tongue.
  7. Faith **acts** wisely.
  8. Faith **gives** us the ability to choose wisdom that is heavenly and to shun wisdom that is earthly.
  9. Faith **produces** separation from the world and submission to God.
  10. Faith **provides** us with the ability to resist the Devil and humbly draw near to God.
  11. Faith **waits patiently** for the coming of the Lord.
  12. Faith **stifles complaining** through troubles and trials.
- These twelve points are taken from the introduction to James in the *New King James Translation* by Nelson Publications.

# THE LETTER OF JAMES

## MAJOR OUTLINE

### I. Faith Will Endure Trials, 1:1-27.

#### A. The Christian can profit from trials, 1:1-11.

1. Christians will have trials and tests.
2. The testing of faith produces patience (endurance).
  - a. Patience will produce maturity.
  - b. Patience will produce completeness.
3. Christians will need wisdom to endure trials.
  - a. That wisdom must come from God.
  - b. That wisdom will be given by God without reproach
  - c. That wisdom must be asked in faith.
    - 1) Faith comes from the word of God (Romans 10:17).
    - 2) Therefore, wisdom comes from the word of God.
  - d. That wisdom must be asked with no doubting, otherwise, he will be driven by every wind of thought that comes along.
  - e. That wisdom results in stability and single-mindedness.
4. Christians will need the right attitude to endure trials.
  - a. The rich person must be humble with his riches and the poor must glory in exaltation in being a child of God.
  - b. The rich man must keep in mind that his riches will perish.
  - c. The rich must be reminded that their riches do not give them special privilege before God.

#### B. The Christian is blessed when he endures temptation and trials, 1:12-16.

1. If the Christian resists through the proving, he will receive the crown of life
2. If the Christian receives temptations, let him not blame God.
3. If the Christian sins because of temptations, he should understand how this comes about.
  - a. He allows himself to be drawn away by his own desires and is enticed (the thought).
  - b. He allows the seed of desire to be planted in his mind (the conception).

- c. He allows the desire to become action and gives life to sin (the birth).
  - d. He nourishes it so that it becomes full-grown and then it destroys (death).
- C. The Christian should understand that temptations do not come from God, but every good and perfect gift comes from God, **1:17-18**.
  - 1. He is the Father of truth and life, not darkness.
  - 2. He does not waver in His nature which consists of truthfulness and righteousness.
  - 3. He brought forth His own children by the word of truth so that they could be His first fruits.
- D. The Christian is in need of special qualities during trials, **1:19-20**.
  - 1. He needs to be a good listener.
  - 2. He needs to be slow in speaking.
  - 3. He needs to be slow in wrath because it does not produce the righteousness of God.
- E. The Christian needs to be a doer of the word and not just a listener, **1:21-25**.
  - 1. He needs to lay aside all wickedness as described in the word of God.
  - 2. He needs to receive with meekness the word of God that was implanted into his mind and which is able to save his soul.
  - 3. He deceives himself if he thinks he can please God by hearing the word of truth but not doing it.
    - a. The word of truth is the mirror into the souls of men.
    - b. The viewer of truth must not leave it and then forget what he saw regarding his moral and spiritual condition.
  - 4. He needs to look into God's perfect law of liberty and continue in it.
    - a. He should not be a forgetful hearer.
    - b. He will be blessed in what he does.
- F. The Christian needs to control his tongue; otherwise, his religion will be useless and he deceives himself, **1:26**.
- G. The Christian needs to live a pure and undefiled religion before God, **1:27**.
  - 1. This includes helping orphans and widows in their trouble.
  - 2. This includes keeping oneself unspotted from the world.



## II. Faith Harbors No Prejudice and Plays No Favoritism, 2:1-13

- A. The Christian's faith is based upon the attitude of our Lord, **2:1**.
  - 1. This was God's law in the Old Testament, Lev. 19:15.
  - 2. This is the attitude that Jesus portrayed in his own life.
  - 3. This is the attitude that Christians are to have toward others.
- B. The Christian should see others through the eyes of the Lord, **2:1**.
  - 1. The Lord does not judge a person's worthiness by his possessions.
  - 2. The Lord judges a person by the way he uses his possessions, abilities, time, talents, etc., not by the amount of what he has or doesn't have.
- C. The Christian is not to show partiality toward the rich and treat them as if they are greater in the kingdom and, therefore, deserve better, **2:2**.
- D. The Christian is not to treat the poor as if they are worth less than others in the kingdom, **2:3-5**.
  - 1. God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith.
  - 2. God has chosen the poor to be heirs of the kingdom
    - a. Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, and not many noble (well-born) are called by the gospel (1 Cor. 1:26-27).
    - b. Not many of those who are wise in this world, have great power, and are born into rich and noble families are interested in the good news of Jesus.
- E. The Christian dishonors the poor when he treats them poorly, **2:6**.
- F. The Christians are reminded of how they were being treated by the rich and powerful, **2:6-7**,
  - 1. The rich were oppressive to the poor Christians.
  - 2. The rich dragged them into courts (see Acts 13:50).
  - 3. The rich blaspheme the name Christian, the name by which they are called (See 1 Peter 4:16).
- G. The Christian should fulfill the **royal law** of loving his neighbor as himself, Lev. 18:19; **James 2:8-13**.
  - 1. If you show partiality, you commit sin.
  - 2. If you show partiality, you are convicted by the law as a transgressor, Deut. 1:17.

3. The Christian should make an effort not to stumble in this law just as much as he would make an effort not to stumble in any other law of God.
  - a. The Christian should make an effort not to commit adultery.
  - b. The Christian should make an effort not to murder, **BUT**
  - c. The Christian should also make an effort not to be partial; for, the One who made all these laws is God.
4. The Christian will be judged by the law of liberty.
  1. Show mercy and you will be shown mercy when judged.
  2. There is judgment without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.
  3. Mercy overcomes what we deserve in judgment.

### **III. Faith Produces Action and Obeys God, 2:14-26.**

- A. There is no profit in a faith that does not have works, **2:14-17**.
  1. That kind of faith cannot save him.
  2. That kind of faith cannot help others.
    - a. No wishful thinking, hope, or expressions of concern will ever clothe, feed, or house those in need.
    - b. It takes more than simple belief.
  3. That kind of faith does not profit anyone.
  4. That kind of **faith (without works) is dead**.
- B. There is profit when one's faith is shown by works, display, action, and wise acts, **2:18**.
- C. There is the fact that simple faith can be had by anyone, **2:19-20**.
  1. The demons believe there is one God, and they tremble because of that knowledge.
  2. The demons' actions, however, demonstrate that they do not "believe in" nor trust in Him as their God.
  3. The demons' actions speak louder than their words.
  4. The demons' believing that there is a God, but disobeying Him, demonstrates once again that **faith without works is dead**.
- D. There is the fact that Abraham was justified by works, **2:21-23**.

1. This happened when by faith Abraham offered up his son Isaac on an altar in obedience to God (Genesis 22:9-12, 16-18).
  2. This happened when Abraham's faith worked together with his works.
  3. This resulted in Abraham's faith being perfected (made complete) by his works.
  4. This resulted in the fulfillment of scripture that Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, Genesis 15:6.
  5. This resulted in Abraham being called the friend of God, 2 Chron. 20:7.
- E. There is the conclusion, therefore, that a person **is justified by works and not by faith only, 2:24-25.**
1. This is also seen in the life of Rahab the harlot when she received the messengers and sent them out another way.
  2. This demonstrates again that a person is justified by faith and works "working together."
- F. There is the conclusion that as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead, 2:26.**

### ILLUSTRATIONS:



**“Do not show partiality to the rich.”  
James 2:1-13**



**Faith without works is dead.”  
James 2:17, 26**



#### IV. Faith Makes Extra Efforts At Controlling The Tongue, 3:1-12.

- A. All teachers must use their tongues properly in teaching the truth.
1. They have a responsibility in teaching the truth.

2. They will receive a stricter judgment because of this responsibility.
- B. All of us stumble in many things.
1. To control the tongue and the words it speaks is to control the whole of a person.
  2. To control the tongue properly is an indication of maturity.
- C. All around us we see illustrations of how small things can accomplish great results.       **SEE CHART #3**
1. Look at the ships of the sea!
    - a. They are large and driven by fierce winds.
    - b. They are turned by a very small rudder.
    - c. The rudder is turned by the pilot of the ship (the mind) which in turn controls the direction of ship through good and rough times.
  2. Look at how a great fire is begun by such small sparks.
    - a. The tongue is a small member, but it boasts great things (talks big).
    - b. A little fire will destroy a whole forest.
    - c. The tongue of iniquity will contaminate the whole body.
      - 1) It sets on fire and destroys our very existence.
      - 2) Its flames are fed by the fires of hell (Gehenna).
  3. Look at how great beasts (birds, reptiles, creatures in the sea) are tamed by mankind.
    - a. No man can tame the tongue.
      - 1) The tongue is an unruly evil.
      - 2) The tongue is full of deadly poison.
    - b. The tongue can be tamed only to the extent man attempts or makes the effort to control it with his mind, heart, and will.
- D. Look at how the same source can produce two different results.
1. With the tongue we bless our God and Father.
  2. With the tongue we curse men who are made in the likeness of God.
- E. Look at the heart and you will see where the problem truly is.
1. Does a spring bring forth both bitter and sweet water at the same opening?
  2. Does a fig tree produce grapes?

3. Does a grapevine bear figs?
4. Does a spring yield both fresh and salt water?
5. Does the Christian heart of faith spout forth both balm and venom?

#### **V. Faith Listens to The Wisdom That Is From Above Rather Than to Devilish**

**Wisdom** And Thus Acts Wisely, 3:13-18.

- A. The wise person who has understanding will show by his good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.
  1. Those who are bitter with envy should not lie against the truth.
  2. Those who have selfish ambitions should not lie against the truth.
  3. Those who are Christians should not be proud and boastful nor should they be false to the standard of truth.
- B. The wisdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.
- C. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
  1. Peace begins with a desire to have peace.
  2. Peace begins with sowing the seeds of peace.

#### **VI. Faith Does Not Promote Strife, 4:1-5:6.**

- A. Battles and fights come from individual desires for pleasure and passions which are at war within us.
  1. It results in lusting after things we do not have.
  2. It results in murder and coveting those things we cannot obtain.
- B. Battles result because we have the wrong motive in our desires.
  1. We ask amiss.
  2. We ask for it for our own pleasures.
- C. Battles result in sexual immorality.
  1. Adulterers and adulteresses are in friendship with the world.
  2. Those who are in friendship with the world make themselves an enemy of God.

3. The spirit that God has put into man has a tendency to turn towards envious desires (see Genesis 6:5).
- D. Battles result because of pride and self-will.
1. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
  2. The humble will submit to God.
  3. The humble will resist Satan and Satan will then flee.
  4. The proud and self-willed need to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts.
  5. The proud have a tendency to be double-minded.
  6. The proud need to turn their laughter and joy to mourning and weeping.
  7. If the proud will humble themselves before the Lord, he will lift them up to exaltation.
- E. Battles result when we wrongly judge our brother.
1. We are not to speak evil of one another (malign or talk against).
  2. When we speak evil of our brother we make ourselves censors and critics rather than doers of God's will.
- F. Battles result when we boast about tomorrow.
1. None of us can boast about tomorrow because we do not know what tomorrow will hold.
  2. We need to understand that life is short.
    - a. Life is like a vapor; it's here for a while and then gone.
    - b. Life's length is not guaranteed.
  3. Boasting about tomorrow does not take into consideration God's will.
    - a. Such an attitude comes from pride and arrogance.
    - b. All such boasting is evil.
  4. Our concern should be to do God's will today; for, to know to do good and do it not is sin.
- G. Battles result from wrong attitudes about riches.
1. There is the wrong attitude that results in oppressing others.
    - a. Their riches are corrupted, and their garments are moth-eaten.
    - b. Their gold and silver are corrupted.

- c. This has come about because of their misuse of what could be an opportunity for good.
  - d. They see their riches as a right to get their way.
  - e. They used their riches as a threat against those who stood for the right.
2. There is the wrong practice that results in fraudulent wages paid to employees.
    - a. They had kept back the wages the workers deserved.
    - b. The cries of the workers have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.
  3. There is the wrong practice of condemning the innocent and murdering the just.

## **VII. Faith Is Patient and Persevering, 5:7-12.**

- A. The Christian needs to exercise patience as he waits for the coming of the Lord.
  1. This is exemplified by the farmer who waits for the precious fruit of the earth.
    - a. The farmer realizes that it takes time to reap a harvest.
    - b. The farmer realizes that he must do his part (plow, sow, and reap) and then wait for God to do His part (rains, etc.).
  2. This is exemplified by the prophets who suffered but had patience.
    - a. We count them blessed who endured.
    - b. Job was a man of perseverance because he saw (by faith) the end intended by the Lord—the Lord is compassionate and merciful.
- B. The Christian needs to be consistent in his speaking and living the truth.
  1. Our “Yes” needs to mean “yes” and our “No” needs to mean “no.”
  2. When a person tells the truth, there is no need for an oath.
  3. Taking an oath does not make a statement truer.
  4. The Christian, therefore, is not to swear either by heaven or earth, or any other oath (see Matthew 5:34-37).
  5. Swearing will result in the person falling into judgment (will be seen as hypocritical).

### VIII. Faith Will Meet Specific Needs, 5:13-20.

A. Those who are suffering need to pray, and those who are cheerful need to sing psalms.

B. Those who are sick should call for the elders of the church.

1. The elders are to pray for the sick.
2. The elders are to anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord.
3. The prayer of faith will save the sick.
4. The Lord will raise the sick up after the anointing and praying in his behalf.
5. The sins of the sick will be forgiven..

NOTE: To see these verses in the proper light, the Bible student must be reminded that these verses were written in the miraculous time of the Christian age. Elders, preachers, teachers, and other members of the church had experienced the laying of the apostles hands, and as a result received gifts of healing (Ephesians 4:8 and 11-16).

- a. The anointing of oil served several purposes in biblical times: (1) The institution of leaders such as kings, a time of blessings and honor, and (2) as a sign of wellness (see Mark 6:13).
- b. The prayer of faith was from the gift of faith, one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 13.
- c. The result of this practice is that the sick **will be** (not may be) made well and his sins forgiven.
  - 1) This would imply that this is the miraculous (“**shall be raised up**”).
  - 2) This would imply the total wellness of a person, the healing of the body (**shall be raised up**) and the healing of the soul (**will be forgiven his sins**).

C. Those who sin should confess their sins to each other.

1. This practice will result in individuals praying for one another.
2. This practice will result in spiritual healing.

D. Those who are righteous are reminded that their fervent (supplication or in behalf of others) prayers are important.

1. Their prayers result in much being brought about.
2. Their prayers are needed in behalf of the body of Christ and its members.
3. Their prayers and the powers of pray are exemplified by the man Elijah.



- a. Elijah, though a prophet of God, was a fallible and sinful man like Christians of all generations.
- b. Elijah experienced the same needs and problems we do.
- c. Elijah prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and the result was it did not rain on the land for three years and six months (see 1 Kings 17 and 18).

NOTE: The length of time is not mentioned in 1 Kings, but the phrase “in the third year” is found. Thus, the drought began 3.5 years before it rained and the famine began three years before it rained. “In the third year” is a phrase referring to the sojourn of Elijah with the widow of Zarephath during the three years of famine. Jesus confirms the time of the drought in Luke 4:25-26.

- d. Elijah prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.
- E. Those who have hearts of concern will make an effort to restore those **among them** who have wandered from the truth.
- 1. If the one in error is restored, the concerned Christian will have turned him or her back to truth in knowledge and according to truth in living, thus saving him or her from being lost in eternity.
  - 2. Seeking lost sheep is an important work in the kingdom.
  - 3. If the one in error is restored, the concerned Christian will have turned him from the error of his way.
  - 4. If the one in error is restored, the concerned Christian will have saved a soul from death and covered a multitude of sins.

### CONCLUSION:

- 1. While we serve the Lord in this time and world, our faith waits patiently for the final coming of the Lord.
- 2. Through troubles and trials our faith sustains us.

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