

## Lesson 1 – James

Text: James

Key Passages:

- James 1:2-4 – Trials and testing of our faith ultimately perfects us; count these as blessings.
- James 1:22 – We cannot be hearers only; we must also be doers of the word to be accepted.
- James 2:26 – Faith without works is dead; without works, our faith is worthless.
- James 3:5 – The tongue is extremely powerful; it can do great and terrible things.
- James 4:4 – We cannot be friends with God and be friends with the world; we must choose one.
- James 4:13-14 – We do not know what tomorrow will bring; God must be first in our lives always.
- James 5:7-9 – Judgment is coming quickly for those who are evil; be patient for Christ’s return.
- James 5:16 – The importance and effectiveness of prayer cannot be understated.

Background Information:

There is little doubt that James, the brother of Jesus, was the author of the book of James. James seems to have been an important figure in Jerusalem (e.g. Galatians 1:19), and the epistle seems to be directed toward Jewish Christians (James 1:1), contrasting with Paul’s epistles which heavily focus on Gentile Christians. Like the other epistles not written by Paul, it is somewhat difficult to place the writing of this epistle because there is relatively little inspired historical context (i.e. within the book of Acts) to help in that regard. However, based on information about James’ life provided by secular historians of that time (such as Eusebius), it seems that the book of James was likely one of the earliest epistles to be written (AD 48-60).

James is one of the most practical epistles in the New Testament. It contains instruction regarding various aspects of the Christian’s life that is straightforward and without extensive argumentation (as with other epistles). It appears that the book was written to the Jewish Christians to encourage them to maintain their faith in various aspects of life despite the constant persecution from the Jews (note that James died before Nero began the Roman persecution against the church), though this is not specifically written.

Outline:

- I. Purpose: to encourage the Jewish Christians to maintain their faith in various aspects of life
- II. Perfect Your Faith; Endure Through Trials (James 1)
  - a. Count it a blessing to be tested; it perfects faith if we endure it (1:2-4)
  - b. Look to God for wisdom (1:5-8; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10)
  - c. Faith helps us to endure temptations; focus on what is important (1:9-27)
- III. Truly Hold the Faith (James 2)
  - a. Not with partiality toward anyone; love your neighbor as yourself (2:1-13)
  - b. Faith without works is dead; without works, one does not truly have faith (2:14-26)
- IV. Bridle the Tongue (James 3:1-12)
  - a. The tongue is like a rudder on a ship; though it is small, it has great effect (3:4-5)
  - b. One’s mouth should not be a source of both blessings and curses (3:10-12; Matthew 6:24)
- V. Show Wisdom Through Righteousness in Meekness (James 3:13-4:17)
  - a. Seek godly attributes instead of sin (3:13-18)
  - b. One cannot be joined to God and to the world in friendship; humble yourself before God (4:1-10)
  - c. Do not boast; recognize the short duration of your life and perform righteousness now (4:11-17)
- VI. Final Encouragements (James 5)
  - a. The rich will be brought to judgment (5:1-6)
  - b. Judgment is coming quickly against those evildoers; be patient (5:7-9)
  - c. Follow the examples of the prophets and of Job (5:10-11)
  - d. There is no need for oaths (5:12)
  - e. Prayer is effective; it should be used often and in many situations (5:13-18)
  - f. Help those who are wandering to return (5:19-20)