

James

Practical Christian Living

James - Chapter 1

James 1

Introduction

Many people believe this was the earliest written book of the New Testament around 50 AD. The author identifies himself as James in James 1:1. There are several men named James mentioned in the New Testament. Two were apostles: James son of Zebedee (martyred by Herod Acts 12:1-2) and James son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:2-4). James the Lord's brother (Matthew 13:54-55, Acts 1:14, Galatians 1:19). Written to the Christian Jews outside of Israel (James 1:1, James 2:1). The focus of James is on the practical aspects of Christianity. Many simple, direct statements on how we should live our lives. In 108 verses, there are 54 imperatives (commands).

James 1:1 a servant

- What do we use titles for?
- What title did James choose?
- Who was James a servant to?
- Where/How did he perform his service?
- How often do we think of ourselves as servants?

James 1:2-4 joy from trials

- What good thing comes from trials?
- What comes from letting patience have its work?

James 1:5-8 lacking wisdom

- How would we know that we lack wisdom?
- What should our response be when we realize this?
- How does God respond to our request?
- How must we ask?
- What will the doubting man receive from God?
- Why will the doubting man receive nothing?
- Can we be unstable in our ways?

James 1:9-11 glory of the rich & poor

- What should the lowly brother glory in?
- What should the rich glory in?

James 1:12-15 temptations

- What blessing is for those who endure temptation?
- What does it mean to endure temptation?
- Does God tempt us?
- What causes us to face temptations and how can we minimize temptations?
- What is the progression from our desires?

James 1:16-18 good gifts

- Where do all good and perfect gifts come?
- How is God the Father of lights?
- Is there any variation or changing with the times?

James 1:19-21 qualities needed

- What does it mean to be slow to speak?
- Why is being slow to speak difficult?
- What can our wrath never produce?
- Why do you think these instructions were included right after talking about temptations and trials?
- How do we lay aside wickedness?

James 1:22-25 doers not hearers only

- Is there a temptation to deceive ourselves in this?
- What is the purpose of a mirror?
- Do we face the issue of being a forgetful hearer?
- What did Jesus call one who heard but didn't do in Matthew 7:26?

James 1:26-27 pure religion

- How serious is it to not bridle our tongue?
- Why emphasize visiting orphans and widows?
- How can we become spotted from the world?

James - Chapter 2

James 2

Introduction

James continues with very practical lessons. The two primary themes of the second chapter of James are:

- 1) Not showing partiality/how to treat others
- 2) Faith without works is dead

James 2:1-7 not showing partiality

- Is it tempting to treat people differently based on their appearance (riches, youth, style, beauty)?
- Why is it called a royal law?
- If we show partiality, what do we commit?
- Does keeping the law vs not keeping it have a simple majority determinant?
- How about, if we keep it all except one point?
- Will the temptation to exclude one point, choose the same point for everyone?
- Since we aren't perfect, what do we require to triumph over judgment?
- Since we know that mercy is needed for ourselves, how should that affect our attitude toward others?

James 2:8-13 Love Your Neighbor

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Controversy of Faith and Works

Some disputed that the book of James belongs in the canon of the New Testament, because they do not want to accept what the 2nd chapter of James says about faith and works. They miss that the same lesson is taught in other places in the Bible.

Galatians 5:6

- What does avail?
- What does it mean for faith to work through love?
- Would faith not working in love avail?

Mark 10:17-22

- Had he heard?
- Did he believe?
- Was hearing and believing enough for him?

Matthew 7:24-29

- Who did Jesus say was a fool?
- Was hearing and believing alone enough to be wise?
- What earthly example did he compare this foolishness with?
- Why did the house fall, what did it lack?
- If we don't have this foundation in our lives, what is our result?
- Is hearing and having the right answers enough?
- Is this a temptation for us today?

James - Chapter 3

James 3

Introduction

James 3 covers two main topics:

- The power of the untamable tongue
- Wisdom from above vs earthly wisdom

James 3:1-2 Not Many Teachers

- Why should not many become teachers?
- Is anyone perfect and who doesn't stumble in word?
- What are some of the ways we can stumble as a teacher?
- What does it mean to bridle the body or tongue and how do we do it?

James 3:3-12 Power of the Tongue

- How does a little thing like the tongue control something big?
- How does the tongue defile the whole body?
- What does it mean that no man can tame the tongue, aren't we supposed to control it?
- What does it mean to curse men?
- Can something really bring forth both good and evil? (no man can serve two masters)

James 3:13-18 Heavenly vs. Earthly Wisdom

- How do we show our wisdom?
- How are our works done in meekness of wisdom?
- What does envy and self-seeking lead us to do?
- What results from envy and self-seeking?
- What are the characteristics of wisdom from above?

James - Chapter 4

James 4

Introduction

James 4 covers four main topics:

- Conflicts and Prayer
- Compromise vs. Humility
- Don't Speak Evil and Judge
- Don't Boast About Tomorrow

James 4:1-3 conflicts and prayer

See also Romans 7:19-23, Matthew 7:7-8

- Where were the wars and fights?
- What caused these conflicts?
- Why were their efforts to obtain things having no results?
- What should they have done to obtain results?
- Why would we choose not to ask about anything important to us?
- Is it possible to ask wrongly?

James 4:4-10 compromise vs. humility

See also 1 John 2:15-17, Matthew 6:24

- What is friendship with the world?
- What is friendship with the world equivalent to?
- What causes the Spirit to be jealous?
- Do we have a choice on who flees and who draws near?
- How can we be double-minded in this?
- Does lamenting, mourning, weeping indicate this is serious? Does our reaction match this?

James 4:11-12 don't speak evil and judge

See also 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Matthew 7:3

- What does it mean to speak evil?
- How is speaking evil related to judging?
- What role of ours in relation to the law do we forget when we take the role of judge?
- Whose place are we usurping when we become judges?
- Does the one Lawgiver take his laws (including this one) seriously?

James 4:13-17 don't boast about tomorrow

See also Luke 14:28-33, Matthew 6:31-34, Luke 9:59-61

- Is he condemning making plans?
- What is he condemning?
- What examples can we think of where we might make plans without considering the spiritual consequences?
- Do we live as if we know what will happen tomorrow?
- Why is saying such things arrogant?
- Do we get to ignore any good thing that we know to do?
- How might we ignore good things today?

James - Chapter 5

James 5

Introduction

James 5 covers three main topics:

- Dangers of Riches
- Patience and Perseverance
- Meeting Needs

James 5:1-6 Dangers of Riches

- What miseries come upon the rich?
- Are we accountable for unused things God has given us (Luke 12:48)?
- Can riches tempt us to think we're above rules, including God's rules?
- Can pleasure and luxury deaden us to the needs of others (Luke 10:30-36)?
- Why would the rich be tempted to resist the just man (Mark 10:17-22)?

James 5:7-12 Patience and Perseverance

- How does having an ending in mind help our patience?
- What ending are we waiting for?
- What would the farmer's result be (at least in the region talked about here), if he harvested before the early and late rains?
- How does patience help us avoid grumbling and condemning?
- What does it mean for the Judge to be standing at the door?

James 5:13-20 Meeting Needs

- Does God have an answer for us and instructions for us whatever our circumstance (suffering, cheerful, sick)?

- Why would someone be anointed with oil (Matthew 6:17)?
- Is it harder to believe the sickness will be healed or that sins will be forgiven (Matthew 9:1-8)?
- What makes a prayer effective and fervent?
- What did Elijah pray for and why did he pray it (1 Kings 17:1, Deuteronomy 28:15-24)?
- Isn't turning a sinner from his way more important than physical circumstances (his and ours) (Mark 8:36-37)?