



- James is the first of what are known as the general epistles which includes James, the letters written by Peter, the letters written by John and Jude.
- They are referred to as the General Epistles because they are not addressing any individual or church, but the church as a whole
- I believe this letter was written by James, the half-brother of Jesus, the same James who extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul
- Martin Luther made an attempt to remove the books of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation from the Bible because he felt they went against the doctrines of grace alone by faith alone

Luther said concerning James

I think highly of the epistle of James. It does not expound human doctrines, but lays much emphasis on God's laws... I do not hold it to be of apostolic authority.

- There are those who believe that James wrote this letter to combat the extreme teachings of grace by Paul
- However, history tells us Paul's earliest writings were not written until after James and as we study James, you will quickly discover the theme of James is not works but faith
- So I describe James as a manual for living our Faith in the real world... it's a faith that works
- James will give us very practical teaching on what true faith looks like in the real world
- It's not a book of standards to live up to, it's more like a pair of glasses that when worn, bring real faith into focus

James 1:1 (NKJV)

1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

- James introduces himself as a bondservant... the Greek word doulos
- There are only two authors that introduce themselves only as a bondservant... James and Jude
- Paul introduces himself as an apostle and a bondservant
- Now it's interesting to note, that Mark mentions Jesus' half-brothers... James, Jude and Simon (Mark 6:3) and it Mark's reference gives them impression they did not recognize Jesus as Messiah



- However, after the resurrection they all believed and James became a leader in the early church...
- But despite their relationship to Jesus, both Jude and James only identify themselves as bondservants
- James writes to the 12 scattered tribes of Israel... you've heard of the 10 lost tribes... but James doesn't refer to them as lost, just scattered
- So Nat Geo has it wrong again... the idea of the 10 lost tribes is not Biblical
- God knows who they are and where they are

Notice James begins by saying... Greetings or Rejoice!

James 1:2–4 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

- My natural response is the exact opposite when I experience trials
- We feel like God is against us, God is punishing us, God is angry at us or God has forsaken us
- But James reminds us that God is at work, even in the trials
- Vs.3 gives us the purpose for trials... to produce patience
- The word patience is a noun, which speaks of a state of being
- It's a state of stillness that is characterized by the ability to persevere, to endure, to standfast, to hold out
- That is the work God wants to do in us as we go through trials
- But there's a catch... we have to let Him work
- We need to let the work of perseverance, the work of endurance, the work of stillness under pressure take place
- When it takes place, the benefit to use is we become... whole, complete, lacking nothing... literally, we will have what we need to succeed
- People who fall apart under pressure... they don't have what it takes to make it, they make rash and unwise decisions out of fear
- People who allow patience to have it's work operate out of faith in God

James 1:5–8 (NKJV)

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and



tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- James is speaking to those who are in the middle of a trial
- You need wisdom to get through the trial... let him ask God
- God gives liberally, without accusing you of not having what it takes
- There are some people that you hate asking for help because they make you feel stupid for asking... God doesn't do that
- When you do ask for wisdom, believe you'll receive it
- Don't doubt because the person who doubts is like a wave at sea... you're emotions are all over the place, angry, then depressed, then crying
- When you see someone driven by emotions, they're not able to receive any help from the Lord because they're double minded, unstable
- They bounce from this solution to the next based on the last expert they talked to instead of trusting God and seeking wisdom

James 1:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, ¹⁰ but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. ¹¹ For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

- As you read this, you need to keep the key thought of this section in mind... ask in faith
- The Bible says without faith it's impossible to please God
- The Bible also says with faith all things are possible
- If faith is the measure of success... then poor and rich alike glory in faith
- The poor is exalted by faith, the rich humiliated by faith
- The is exalted because when you're on the bottom there's only one way to go... UP
- The rich is humiliated because everything that is of this world... including wealth... perishes
- Everything that I've spent a lifetime building will fade away.
- Only what is born out of faith remains



James 1:12–15 (NKJV)

¹² Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

- There was a bumper sticker back in the day... Life Sucks Then You Die
- But James disagrees... A Crown Of Life Waits For All Who Endure
- The word temptation means to put to the test and it refers to testing what is untried or unknown
- The word approved means to test in battle
- The idea is this... your faith is just a theory until it's tested in reality
- You can say you believe, but you don't really know if you believe or not until you face a crisis where your belief is tested
- People who fall apart under pressure, who lose their sense of priorities, who take on the weight of the world... lack faith
- People who trust God... simply trust God
- Here's the temptation for the person who falls apart when they're tested... they blame God... God is doing this to me
- Key phrase... tested in battle... God is not the cause of the battle and God is not bringing the battle to you because that is against the nature of God
- But James shows us what the source of the battle is... your own desires
- In the Greek culture, your desires were always at war with your intellect
- In Judaism this same battle was characterized as the battle between legitimate desires and illegitimate acts to meet those desires
- The most obvious being the legitimate desires for sex and the illegitimate act of fornication to meet those desires.
- When I seek to fulfill my legitimate desires illegitimately... it leads to sin and sin produces death

James 1:16–18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of His own will He



brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

- Now I want you to see what James is revealing to us...
- If it's good, it's from God and if it tests us, it's from our own desires
- Simple, but solid theology
- I can't tell you how many people think if it's bad, God is testing me and if it's good, God is testing me... it's a loose loose situation
- But we've been born again, brought forth by the word of truth
- We're the first fruits of His creatures, a new creation
- God's desire is to bless us simply because He loves us

James 1:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

- Vs. 20 is just plain truth
- If it's good it's God, if it's bad it's me, so shut up and listen and get off your high horse because your screaming and yelling does not produce the righteousness of God
- You would think that after going through the terrible twos we would learn that temper tantrums don't work
- It doesn't matter how loud you yell in a Supreme Court Confirmation Hearing... it doesn't produce righteousness

James 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

- Since it doesn't work anyhow... stop acting shamefully without integrity
- Whatever you're doing because your mad at God or someone else... lay it aside... it doesn't work... louder doesn't equal power
- Instead receive with meekness the implanted word because that is able to make your soul (psyche, mental health) complete

James 1:22–25 (NKJV)



²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

- How many people have been deceived into thinking, well I've been to church, I heard the Word of God, I'm okay, we're okay, we've been to Church!
- They do what they want during the week and they return on Sunday... we're hearing the Word, I take lots of notes, I agree with the sermons, I'm believe whatever they tell me... I'm a good Christian
- But unless you put it into practice, you're only deceiving yourself
- If you don't put it into practice, James says your like a man who stands in front of the mirror and when he leaves he forgets what kind of person he is... a person in need of mercy!
- But notice... he who looks into the perfect law of liberty... wait a minute... this isn't the law of Moses... this is the law of liberty
- What is the law of liberty? GRACE!!!!
- He who continues in GRACE is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer
- James makes the correlation between grace and doing the work
- That persons, the person who continues in grace, will be blessed in what he does... wow, there is grace in James!

James 1:26–27 (NKJV)

²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

- Again... remember the key phrase...asking in faith
- The person who is asking in faith doesn't have a need to shoot off their mouth... they can bridle their tongue
- If they can't keep themselves under control, their religion is useless
- Vs. 27, James gives us a definition for true religion
- True religion (faith) visits orphans and widows in their trouble and it keeps one unspotted from the world...
- The stain of the world isn't on them



- Worldliness is a sign of unbelief
- It's not being your authentic self, in fact James says it's not authentic at all... it's not pure and undefiled religion
- Now, this doesn't mean that we are to go out and start visiting orphans and widows or start getting rid of televisions, radios, fancy cars, extensive shoe collections and live like beggars
- This is not a standard to live up to... James is giving us a pair of glasses to look through so we can recognize real authentic faith when we see it

James 2:1–4 (NKJV)

2 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

- James is talking about showing favoritism based on one's appearance
- At the end of the worship service in the temple, the priest would pray a blessing upon the people... the Lord bless thee and keep thee
- It was a prayer for God's favor on all the people
- But we are not to show favoritism in the church based on a person's status in life... if they are rich, popular or even poor... everyone is the same
- God is no respecter of person... we are all the same before God
- Showing favoritism is really a sign of judgmentalism... I've become a judge and I'm showing preference based on my evil thoughts
- This is my tribe, they're in and the others are not my tribe, they're out
- Now we have a Christian form of favoritism called celebrity pastor
- If a pastor is on the radio or has written a book or is perceived as being famous... we believe their teaching is more correct than others
- I've had people tell me, I agree with this person more than you because they're more known than you and their church is bigger... partiality
- Really what is revealed by those statements is the evil thoughts of the people making them... they are looking for something from you and they don't perceive that you can give it to them

James 2:5–7 (NKJV)



⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

- So often, it takes more faith to be poor than it does to be rich
- When you're poor you have to trust God... you're rich in faith
- When you're rich, there are so many other things to trust in... God is often the last thing you trust in... you're poor in faith
- Of course, faith is all that matters to God
- The rich on the other hand often cause problems, they drag you into court and bring shame to the name of Jesus

James 2:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

- Now this is something I hadn't considered... but showing favoritism or partiality is a form of legalism and when you're under the law you are judged by the law
- You can't pick and choose what laws to keep and what laws to ignore
- If you stumble in one point, you're guilty of all because that is the standard of law... the law is no respecter of persons

James 2:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹ For He who said, “*Do not commit adultery,*” also said, “*Do not murder.*” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

- Here's the question... what law do you want to be judged by?
- The law of liberty or the law of Moses?
- The law of Moses is without mercy and if you do not show mercy, there remains no mercy for you... that's justice under the law



- But if you show no partiality and are merciful to all, mercy triumphs over judgment under the law of liberty

James 2:14–17 (NKJV)

¹⁴ What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

- When James asks... can faith save him... he’s asking is this the faith that saves?
- A faith that shows partiality is not a saving faith
- A faith that overlooks the needs of the poor (not in general, but speaking of the poor in our lives) is a dead faith... it’s not faith at all

James 2:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

- Authentic, real faith doesn’t have to be announced because it’s being demonstrated by what we do

James 2:19–22 (NKJV)

¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

- Believing in God is not faith... respecting God is not faith
- When someone tells me they believe in God or they went forward in an altar call... it really doesn’t impress me
- What I look for is the fruit in their lives... are they living out their faith
- When they put their faith into action, it’s real
- Abraham believed God, but it was only when Abraham raised the knife to sacrifice his son because he believed God would raise him from the dead did Abraham’s faith become real



- Thus faith working together with works becomes perfect or complete

James 2:23–26 (NKJV)

²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

- Now James is not suggesting a works based righteousness
- James is merely showing us the practical side of faith
- Abraham’s acted on his faith and because he acted on his faith it was counted to him for righteousness and was called God’s friend
- Rahab acted on her faith and by acting on her faith, this Gentile prostitute ended up in the lineage of Jesus
- Thus James is saying that a man is justified, declared righteous, declared holy, declared innocent, forgiven of all his sins not by a system of belief or even a profession of faith in Jesus
- It’s when that man acts on his faith that they are saved because that man’s faith is real, authentic, genuine
- It’s when I begin to live life God’s way, act out my belief in God, my trust in God’s Word by putting it into practice...
- Not showing partiality based on someone’s clothes, bank account, coolness or hip factor
- That’s what James calls a real faith... otherwise, it’s just talk
- Faith and works are two sides of the same coin... they are inseparable
- Works without faith is self-righteousness
- Faith without works is dead religion
- Faith demonstrated through works is life changing
- The beauty of the work of the Spirit through Calvary Chapel is everyone is welcomed and everyone is valued... we minister to whosoever comes
- Long hair, short hair some coats and ties... everybody coming around
- Looking past the hair and straight into the eyes... everybody coming around... that’s when you have a true Jesus Movement
- That’s a genuine faith!