

# James, a Bible Study

## Introduction and Chapter 1

### 1. Preliminary:

- a. Read the book of James
- b. Reread chapter one
- c. Review Bible Project video on James
  - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn-hLHWwRYY> (8:02)
- d. Review "Got Questions" on James (especially the brief section at the close)
  - i. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-James.html>

### 2. Introduction and Chapter 1

- a. Who was James? Why was his perspective on Jesus' life and teaching so unique?
- b. In one sentence, how would you summarize the Book of James?
- c. Martin Luther opposed having the Book of James in the NT Canon. In fact, he once described it as "a right strawy epistle." Why do you think he felt this way?

### 3. V1: James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

- a. James describes himself as a "slave" and not an "apostle." What point do you think he was trying to make? Is there a lesson there for us?
- b. The NIV uses the word "servant." The NASB says, "bond servant." What exactly is a bond servant?
- c. What kind of status did a bond servant have?
- d. How was a bond servant identified?
- e. Look at I Corinthians 7:22-23. What does this passage tell us about our spiritual status?
- f. What does it mean that we are purchased?

### 4. V2-4: Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- a. Verse 2 opens with, "Consider it pure joy." What is pure joy?
- b. How can James expect us to have "pure joy" amidst our trials?
- c. Note that James does not say, "if you face trials." Rather, he says, "when you face trials." What is he telling us?
- d. The word for trial is *periasmos*. It describes a trial or testing directed towards an end. What end does God have in mind when we face trials?
- e. How have the trials you have faced impacted your spiritual development?
- f. We are to let perseverance finish its work. What is the larger purpose of these trials?
- g. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does this passage tell us about the tests we face.

5. **V5-8: If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup>But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup>Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.**
- How does godly wisdom differ from intelligence or even worldly-wisdom?
  - Being double-minded literally means having two minds that are in conflict with one another. One believes and the other disbelieves. (much like the man in Mark 9:23-25). What are the hazards of being double-minded?
  - How can we quell our unbelief?
  - How does God impart wisdom?
6. **V9-11: Let the lowly brother be proud of his exaltation; <sup>10</sup>and let the rich brother be proud of his humiliation; for he will pass away like a flower of the field. <sup>11</sup>The sun rises with the scorching wind and withers the grass, and the flower wilts, and the beauty of its form is destroyed. So the rich will wither away in all his ways.**
- The Bible, particularly the New Testament, often juxtaposes the rich and the poor and the weak and the strong. What lesson is James teaching by using this parallel construction? See, too, Matthew 6:19.
7. **V12: Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. To the man who meets trials in the right way there is joy here and hereafter.**
- Note:** The NT describes five heavenly crowns: The imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life.
  - Note 2:** The Greek word translated “crown” is *stephanos* (the source for the name Stephen the martyr) and means “a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally.” Used during the ancient Greek games, it referred to a wreath or garland of leaves placed on a victor’s head as a reward for winning an athletic contest. As such, this word is used figuratively in the New Testament of the rewards of heaven God promises those who are faithful. For more information: <https://www.gotquestions.org/heavenly-crowns.html>
  - The crown of life is a reward we receive in heaven. As we learn to persevere, what rewards do we receive in this life?

8. **V13-15: When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup>but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**
- Man loves to evade (avoid) responsibility. We saw this in the garden of Eden when Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Why is it so important for us to be able to blame someone when we succumb to our own desires?
  - Charles Stanley (the other Stanley) says there is always the sin before the sin. In other words, we sin first in our mind and then we act on that sin. How can we learn to deal with sin at the mind stage before we act on our evil desires (see Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5)?
9. **V16-18: Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup>He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.**
- What two great truths are addressed in V17?
  - Why is God's "unchangeableness" so important?
  - What does James mean when he writes, "He (God) chose to give us birth through the word of truth."
  - What does it mean that we have birth through the word of truth?
  - What does it mean to be a "first fruit?"
  - What special affection does God have for first fruit?
10. **V19- 20: My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup>because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.**
- What practical life skills are presented in this passage?
  - How would the body of believers be strengthened if we were to actually adopt these habits?
  - How would adopting these habits improve our witness to nonbelievers?
  - Why is listening well so difficult for us?
  - Proverbs is full of the perils of too hasty speech. "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is prudent" (10:19). "He who guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin" (13:3). "Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise" (17:28). "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (29:20). How has hasty speech gotten you in trouble?
  - Why is anger, especially self-righteous anger, so destructive?

- 11. V21: Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.**
- As Christians, how can we avoid becoming inured by filth and evil?
  - James is telling us to “get rid of” or “lay aside” all filth and evil. Why is this important? Is this a “one and done” kind of deal or ongoing?
  - James advises us to “humbly accept the word (that is) planted in you.” What does it mean to “humbly accept?”
  - One commentator used the subhead “Developing a teachable spirit” to describe this passage. What is a teachable spirit?
- 12. V22-24: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.<sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.**
- James reminds us of a great danger: The person who listens to the word but does not act on what he or she heard. How is this person deceiving himself?
  - How is he or she harming the kingdom?
  - How can we avoid “forgetting” the word?
- 13. V25 - But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.**
- How does this “perfect law” differ from the law Paul mentions in Romans 10:4?
  - What freedom is offered in this perfect law?
  - What part of this passage would Martin Luther find most troubling?
  - What does James mean when he tell us to “continue in the law” and “do the law?”
- 14. V26-27: Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.<sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**
- This passage is a bit of a sandwich. V26 again addresses the need to speak carefully (as we will see, this is a fairly common theme in James). V27b, reminds us to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world. V27A, however, introduces a new theme: look after orphans and widows. Why does James have a special concern for widows and orphans?
  - Why is caring for widows and orphans such a powerful testimony?