



James - 5 chapters

Title:

The Epistle of James – because it was written by James

Author:

The author of this epistle was James, who was a half-brother of Jesus, one of the later children of Mary and Joseph. He referred to himself as a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He became a leader in the church in Jerusalem and was highly respected by all.

Occasion and Purpose:

This book was written for the people whom James pastored. They had a variety of problems and issues which needed to be addressed, which are typical issues which every Christian faces at some time. And so, the purpose of James is fairly general. It is similar to the Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament, aiming to help people to live out their faith in everyday life. James insisted that true religion impacts lifestyle and gave practical instructions how to live it out.

Themes:

1. **Wisdom** – James seeks to apply the truth to all areas of life. And for James, like the Old Testament, true wisdom is putting God first and seeking Him and conforming to His character. Humility before God and experiencing Him is more important than worldly riches, worldly status, or worldly pleasures. True wisdom comes from God, so, we should seek Him and ask for His wisdom in order to live well.
2. **Joy & Patience** – That is, Joy and patience primarily in the midst of trials. Trials and temptations happen. We should be realistic about that. But we should also be hopeful and joyful, knowing that they are under God's control. And He is not giving us trials to tempt or destroy us. Rather, trials can be the occasion for us to grow in virtues, especially faith, hope, and patient endurance, knowing that trials will not last forever.
3. **Faith AND Deeds** – Christians need both faith and good deeds. Christian faith must be lived out in our everyday lifestyle and character, or it is severely lacking, or not genuine faith. James does not contradict Paul. But he emphasized the practical wisdom and lifestyle that results from real faith. Good deeds are the result of genuine faith, because we not only trust God for salvation, but we also trust Him when He commands our good deeds and promises blessings for obedience.
4. **Rich & Poor** – James would not allow any favoritism or prejudice based on class or wealth. The church is not to treat rich people any better or worse than poor people based solely on their wealth. And James warned of the dangers of wealth and the temptation to trust in wealth and use money to do injustice for the sake of more money and power. He argued that wealth is temporary and will not satisfy. And therefore, generosity and ethics is far better than selfishly acquiring wealth.
5. **Proper use of Speech** – James primarily warned against the improper use of speech. Our speech can be harmful. Therefore, we need to guard what we say, by guarding our attitudes, by guarding our desires, by seeking and loving God and His wisdom more than worldly things. And then our speech will be a blessing to others instead of being destructive.

Summary:

Similar to the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, James gives practical principles, warnings, and exhortations to live out Christian faith in everyday lifestyle and character. This book addresses a variety of particular lifestyle and character issues and the attitude and actions that best reflect a faithful Christian response to all these life situations and challenges. We are to live faithfully to our God, and that faithfulness is worked out in godly character, attitudes, and good deeds.

Organization:

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	4:13-17 Don't Boast in Your Plans 5:1-6 Beware of Unrighteous Riches
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	5:7-11 Be Patient 5:12 Don't Give Oaths, but Keep Your Word 5:13-20 Pray With Faith

Key Verses:

1:2-4, 12-15, 22-27, 2:8-18, 3:5-10, 13-18, 4:1-8, 5:1-6