

# *From the Garden to Glory*

## **James**

**Author:** James, the Lord's brother

**Written to:** The twelve tribes scattered abroad

**Timeline:** c. 49 A.D. (sometime after Acts 14)

**Theme:** The Faith that Works

**Purpose of writing:** James wrote to instruct believers in practical Christian living, to challenge them to an active faith, which would produce a true change in their conduct and character.

### **Introduction:**

Of all the epistles in the New Testament, James is the most practical. While Paul emphasized faith, Peter hope, John love and Jude purity, James stressed conduct.

In this book's 108 verses there are fifty-four crucial commands. This is an average of one call for action in every other verse.

James wrote of living out our faith, which can be seen in the way we handle trials (chapter 1), treat people (chapter 2), speak (chapter 3), deal with sin in our lives (chapter 4), and conduct our prayer life (chapter 5).

As we begin our study of the book of James consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. A key word in the book of James is *faith*. Use a dictionary and/or your own thoughts and write a definition of *faith*.
2. James, the author of this book, was a man given to prayer. According to extra-biblical literature, he was known as *James the Camel-kneeder*.

It was said that he spent so much time in prayer that his knees became hard and calloused like those of a camel. What name characterizes your prayer life?

3. James began his epistle by identifying himself as *James, a bond servant (or slave NLT) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Define bond servant or slave. How do these words characterize *your* relationship with the Lord?

## **Faith Tested**

Read James 1:1-21

1. Read verses 2-4 from The Amplified Bible:

Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort...Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be (people) perfectly and fully developed (with no defects), lacking nothing.

How have trials produced the following in your own life?

- endurance
- steadfastness
- patience

2. Meditate on verses 5-8. Sit before the Lord and ask Him (without doubting) for the wisdom that you need today. Wait with anticipation for Him to answer your prayer. Write down whatever He reveals.

**3.** Verses 19-20 list several qualities which are necessary if we are to live victorious Christian lives. Evaluate yourself in each of the following areas and make a note of specific ways you can grow in any area where you are weak.

- Are you a woman who is swift to hear?
  
- Are you a woman who is slow to speak?
  
- Are you a woman who is slow to wrath?

### **Faith Lived Out**

Read James 1:22-27

**1.** In verse 21 James listed two commands which we must obey if we are to be able to receive the Word of God into our hearts and lives. Ask the Lord to search your heart for any disobedience in these areas.

- Is there any filthiness or wickedness in your life which makes you unable to listen and receive the Word of God?
  
- Is there any area of your life where you are not meek but have already made up your mind and are not able to receive the Word of God?

**2.** True spirituality is not based on what a person knows about God or even what a person may know from God's Word. It is rather based on what a person knows and then *obeys* or *practices* from His Word. Read verse 22. How is the Lord directing *you* to be a *doer* of His Word? How will you obey Him today?

3. In verse 27 two characteristics of *pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father* are listed. How can you do each of these?

- visit orphans and widows in their trouble
- keep yourself unspotted from the world

## **Faith and Brotherhood**

Read James 2:1-13

1. Look up the word *partiality* in a dictionary and write the definition. Keep this definition in mind as you read verses 1-4. Ask the Lord to search your heart for any areas of partiality. You might ask yourself the following question: How would I behave if someone from one of the following groups was invited to my home for dinner: my friends, the wealthy, the poor, politicians, my employer, my employees, the unemployed, the homeless, the well-educated, the uneducated, pastors, family members, certain professions (store clerks, CEOs, attorneys, doctors).
2. In verses 8-12 James spoke of our tendency to show partiality in the way we look at sin. How do you avoid this tendency in your own life?
3. Read verse 13. This verse speaks of the biblical principle of *sowing and reaping*; we will reap what we sow. The gist of this principle is this: if you are merciful, forgiving, kind and compassionate with others, then when you need mercy, grace and kindness—and you will—it will be given to you. But if you are harsh and judgmental, when you need mercy from others, there will be none for you. How have you experienced this principle in your own life?

## **Faith Without Works Is Dead**

Read James 2:14-26

1. Read this section of James' epistle and re-write his instructions in your own words.
2. Look at verse 19. Even the demons are orthodox in their faith. How could you use this verse to instruct those who believe that *all religions lead to God*?
3. Write out verse 20. James is not saying that we are saved by works. He is rather saying that true faith will always manifest itself in works. Real faith will necessarily show itself to be real by its works. How is *your* faith being manifested in works today?

## **Faith and Tongue Controlled**

Read James 3:1-18

1. Verse 8 says that *no man can tame the tongue*. Only the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, can do this. Read Matthew 12:34. Think about some of the negative forms of communication (gossip, slander, nagging, vulgar language, murmuring and complaining, criticism, lying, etc.). How has the Lord changed your heart and speech?
2. Look at verses 14-16. These verses list the characteristics of *earthly, sensual, and demonic* wisdom. What is the end result of this type of wisdom? Define each of these characteristics and explain how you protect your heart and your speech from each one.
  - bitterness

- envy
- self-seeking
- boasting
- lying against the truth

3. Verse 17 lists the characteristics of *wisdom from above*. Define each of these characteristics of godly wisdom and then explain how you can live out this characteristic in your life this week.

- pure
- peaceable
- gentle
- willing to yield
- full of mercy and good fruits
- without partiality
- without hypocrisy

### **Faith Rebukes Worldliness**

Read James 4:1-17

1. What do verses 2-3 say about our prayer life? What is something that you might *ask amiss* for so that you could *spend it on your own pleasures*?
2. Read verses 4-5. Sit quietly with the Lord. Ask Him to reveal any area(s) of your life that is/are causing Him to *yearn jealously* for you.

3. Read verses 7-8. List one practical way that you can do each of the following:

- submit to God
- resist the devil
- draw near to God
- cleanse your hands
- purify your heart

### **Faith in Prayer**

Read James 5:1-20

1. Read verse 7-8. The word *patient* in this verse emphasizes patience with people rather than patience with circumstances or trials. How do you *establish your heart*?
2. James exhorts his readers not to grumble against one another in verse 9. Why is grumbling considered a sin? Is there anyone or any situation you are grumbling against today? If so, confess and repent.
3. Look at verse 16. What do the words *effective* and *fervent* mean? How do you pray effectively and fervently? Be specific.

## **Summary**

As you conclude your study of the book of James consider the following questions and write your answers:

- 1.** What is the most significant thing that you have learned from your study about the Lord, His character, or His attributes? How does this encourage you? Take a few moments to thank and praise the Lord for the things that you learned about Him.
  
- 2.** What is the most important lesson or new insight that you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?