

The Epistle of James



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with group of twelve men
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Contextual assumptions: Written by James, the Lord's brother and leader of the Jerusalem church, to the Jewish-Christian churches spread throughout Palestine sometime prior to A.D. 50.

Salutation, 1.1

A figurative use of "the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad"

A. Faith in Private, 1.2-25

The testing of our faith in our everyday personal life

1. Growing in character, 1.2-4

Rejoice, knowing that the various testings of your faith are used by God to fill out your Christian character.

2. Searching for wisdom, 1.5-11

Ask for wisdom from God in a single-minded way, and recognize it when it begins to change your perspective—with regard to eternal values.

3. Battling with sin, 1.12-18

Be faithful in your devotion to God, who is good, and has chosen us for a special purpose, "a kind of firstfruits among His creatures."

4. Applying the word, 1.19-25

Open your heart to the word in humility, and prove to be truly doers of it.

B. Faith in Public, 1.26–5.12

The testing of our faith in our everyday public life

Transition: Governing theme, 1.26-27

The distinction between worthless religious works and pure ones

1. The church gathered, 2.1–3.18

It is all about treating people with love.

a. Greeting newcomers, 2.1-13

Show mercy without partiality—if anything, show a preference for the unimpressive.

b. Supporting the brethren, 2.14-17

Be sure to meet pressing needs.

Parenthesis: on faith and works, 2.18-26

Works are explained as spontaneous actions toward others out of a love for God.

c. Speaking and teaching with wisdom, 3.1-18

Let the community conversation be about blessing, not cursing.

2. The church scattered, 4.1–5.12

It is all about patience without complaining.

a. Attitude: Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, 4.1-12

Avoid worldly attitudes when dealing with others.

b. Activities: Seeking the Lord's will, 4.13–5.6

Avoid worldly aims of seeking monetary advantage at the expense of others.

c. Demeanor: Fixing your hopes on the coming of the Lord, 5.7-12

Be patient—those who endure will be blessed.

Conclusion, 5.13-20

The power of prayer