



# Walking Thru The Bible JAMES

## Introduction

### 1. The Need:

James is one of the most practical books of the New Testament and one needed by Christians of every generation. Its stinging rebukes of worldliness and pretense in religion are urgent ones for our time. Its denunciations of social injustice have caused many to label James the "Amos of the New Testament."

The epistle of James appeals from start to finish for Christians to make their lives consistent with their profession.

There is an amazing similarity between this epistle and the Sermon on the Mount:

- 1) Joy in the midst of trials (1:2; cf. Matt. 5:10-12)
- 2) Boldness in prayer (1:5; cf. Matt. 7:7-12)
- 3) The danger of a bad temper (1:19-20; cf. Matt. 5:22)
- 4) Hearing and doing (1:22; cf. Matt. 7:24-27)

And many other parallel points. The practical wisdom of this book impresses all who bother to study it closely.

**2. The Author:** There several men in the New Testament who bear the name "James." (Matt. 4:21; 10:3; Luke 6:16; Mark 6:3). By a process of elimination the most reasonable possibility for authorship of this letter is James the brother of Jesus.

He was the James who played the most prominent role in the early history of the church. This would make him the brother of another New Testament writer, Jude (Jude 1, Matt. 13:55).

Neither James nor Jude were sympathetic to Jesus' claim during the Lord's personal ministry (John 7:3-5). Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection and all doubts and reservations were removed (I Cor. 15:7; Acts 1:14). He is mentioned a number of times in the book of Acts and Paul referred to him as one of the "pillars" of the church at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9).

In his letter James humbly only identifies himself only as "a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1).

**3. The Background:** The letter is addressed to Jewish Christians who had been scattered from Palestine by persecution (1:1). This dispersion had come about because of attacks from unbelieving Jews (Acts 8:1ff about AD 33, and Acts 12:1 about AD 41).

This book was probably the first of all the New Testament book to have been written, probably about AD 45. (Therefore the controversy over receiving Gentiles into the church had not yet become an issue.)

James knew of the severe trials these saints were having to endure for their faith (1:2). He wrote to encourage them in their difficulties and warn them against spiritual laxity and neglect of their duties.

**4. The Theme:** Daily practice of true religion.

A key verse seems to be James 1:22.

### 5. An Outline:

I. True religion in a time of trial -- 1:1-18

1. After a brief salutation (1:1), James immediately urges a positive attitude toward his reader's trials (1:2-4). Such difficulties should be faced with prayer (1:5-8) and with a consciousness of life's true value (1:9-11), God blesses those who endure (1:12).
2. When temptation comes, it is not from God (1:13) but arises from our own lusts (1:14). Yielding to temptations ends in death (1:15-16), but God only gives good gifts (1:17-18).

II. How our faith is tested in this world -- 1:19-5:18

The faith of Christians is tested in various ways:

- its reactions to the word of God (1:19-27)
- its relations to one's fellowmen (2:1-13)
- its right actions (2:14-26)
- its control of the tongue (3:1-18)
- its avoidance of worldliness and strife (4:1-12)
- its acknowledgment of God's will in all one's plans (4:13-17)
- its reaction to oppression (5:1-12)
- its dependence on prayer (5:13-18)

III. On restoring the erring -- 5:19-20

Although the letter is designed to promote endurance, it encourages the faithful to help bring back any who should err from the faith (5:19-20).

Conclusion:

- This lovely letter reads very much like a sermon.
- It has tones of compassionate authority which James would use with people dear to him who were facing extreme difficulties.
- It is eminently practical in showing Christians how faith is to be lived in the total arena of life.

## 6. Major Points in the book of James:

### 1. Hearing and doing -- 1:22-25

The truth of the gospel must be translated into concrete deeds and actions of faith. "Hearing" the Word of God is the right point of beginning; we must guard against the notion that contemplating the good is same as being good! (Rom. 2:13). One who is content to hear without doing is "deceiving" himself.

### 2. Living by the "royal law" -- 2:8-13

Loving one's neighbor as himself is a central commandment of true religion. In the O.T. (Lev. 19:18; cf. Mark 12:29-31); in the N.T. (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8-10).

All of the strong statements in this letter about social justice are based on this law. Love for one's neighbors requires compassion for widows and orphans (1:27). It forbids partiality (2:1-7), it prohibits slander (4:11-12), and it rebukes exploitation of the poor (5:1-6).

### 3. The relationship of faith and works -- 2:14-26

James' thesis is that faith without works is dead (2:14-17). Remember what Jesus said about validating a claim to faith, Matt. 7:21. Christianity must produce practical results in order to be counted genuine. What we believe, must have a bearing upon how we behave.

Next James challenges the naive assertion that some men may demonstrate their religion by faith and others by works (2:18-20). There is no proof that one has faith at all apart from the fruit that faith produces in his daily life. James challenges anyone to show his faith apart from his deeds.

The epistle shows how true faith is exemplified (2:21-26). Abraham demonstrated his faith in offering up his son Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19; Heb. 11:17-19). Rahab proved her faith in the God of the Hebrews by hiding the spies in her house (Josh. 2:1-24; Heb. 11:31).

Our confusion over the relationship between faith and works may be traced to the fact that "**works**" can be taken to mean different things:

- (1) the works of the Law of Moses (cf. Rom. 3:28)
- (2) works of human merit (cf. Eph. 2:9)
- (3) actions of response to the divine will (cf. John 6:29; James 2:14-26).

No man can be saved by works of the Law of Moses or works of human merit; but no man can be saved without an obedient response to heaven's commands.

## Let Us Pray

James 5:13-20

Introduction:

The book of James has a great deal to say about the use of the tongue: complaining (5:9); and swearing (5:12). But he also named some of the highest uses of the tongue: proclaiming God's Word (5:10); and praying and praising God (5:13).

Seven times in this section James mentions prayer and encourages us to pray by describing five situations in which God answers prayer.

### 1. PRAY FOR THE SUFFERING (5:13)

The word afflicted means "suffering in difficult circumstances." James tells us what we should do when we find ourselves in such trying circumstances.

Such prayer of the faithful will either remove the affliction, or enable the child of God to bear it.

### 2. PRAY FOR THE SICK (5:14-16)

Some seem to think that this teaches that full physical health is always just a prayer away. Others relate this process outlines by James as invoking God ("pray over him") and using medicine ("anoint him with oil") -- prayer plus a physician.

A brief explanation and background will be considered here.

### 3. PRAY FOR THE SINFUL (5:16)

This verse points out our spiritual concern for one another. The healing in this verse is spiritual healing, a healing of the souls (Matt. 13:15; Heb. 12:13; I Pet. 2:24).

### 4. PRAY FOR THE STATE (OR STATESMEN) 5:16b-18

As an indication of the power of prayer James refers to a story of the time of Ahab King of Israel (1 Kings 17-18). We are exhorted to pray for our rulers (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

### 5. PRAY FOR THE STRAYING (5:19-20)

While James does not specifically name prayer in these verses, the implication is there. If we pray for the suffering, the sick, we must pray for the brother who wanders from the truth. (Not that he may be saved in his sin, but that he will turn from those sins.)

"Seeking the Lost" is a common Bible picture of soul-winning. Jesus pictured the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boy in Luke 15. In seeking the lost and straying we must manifest the right attitude (Gal. 6:1 "the spirit of meekness").

CONCLUSION: