

# JAMES

## CHAPTER ONE

1) [This letter is from] **James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**, [who sends] **greetings to the twelve tribes which are scattered throughout the world**. [Note: This refers to Christians, probably of Jewish descent].

2) **Consider it** [an occasion for] **much joy, my brothers, when you experience various trials**, 3) **because you** [should] **know that when your faith is tested, it produces perseverance**. 4) **And you** [should] **allow your perseverance to complete its work, so that you will be perfect and complete, [and] not lacking in anything**.

5) **But if any one of you lacks wisdom, he should pray to God, who gives to everyone generously and does not begrudge** [the person who asks], **and it will be given to him**. 6) **But he should ask in faith, without doubting, because the person who doubts** [that he will receive wisdom] **is like an ocean wave that is driven and tossed by the wind**. 7) **For that** [doubting] **person should not think that he will receive anything from the Lord** [through prayer], 8) **because he is double-minded and undecided in all that he does** [i.e., he cannot make up his mind and follow through about anything].

9) **But the person** [who must live] **in humble circumstances should be happy over being lifted up** [spiritually by God]. 10) **And the wealthy person** [should be happy] **that he is humbled** [by God], **because he will pass away like a flower** [blossoming] **from grass**. 11) **For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass** [so that] **its flower** [blossoms] **fall off, and its beautiful appearance is destroyed. In the same way, the wealthy person will fade away as he goes about his business** [affairs].

12) **The person who perseveres under trials is blessed, because when he has been approved by God, he will receive the crown of** [never ending] **life, which God has promised to those who love Him**.

13) **No one should say when he is tempted, A God is tempting me,**<sup>@</sup> **because God cannot be tempted by evil and He does not tempt anyone**. 14) **But each person is tempted when he is lured**

and enticed by his own evil desire. 15) Then, when the evil desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And when sin is fully grown, it produces [spiritual] death.

16) [So], do not be deceived, my dearly loved brothers. 17) Every good [thing that is given] and every perfect gift [received] is from above, coming down from the Father of [heavenly] lights, with whom there can be no change or shifting shadow [i.e., God always remains the same]. 18) It was God's purpose to bring us into being [spiritually] by the message of truth, so that we could become a kind of **first fruits** of those He created. [Note: **First fruits** here suggests either that Christians are the best of all of God's creatures (Num. 18:12), or that they were the first to be converted, with many more to come].

19) **You people** [already] **know this** [or, **you should know this**], my dearly loved brothers. However, every person should be quick to listen, slow to talk and slow in becoming angry. 20) For the anger of people does not produce what God considers to be right. 21) Therefore, you should put away [from you] all moral filth and overflowing wickedness and humbly receive the word [of God], planted within you [by the Holy Spirit. See John 16:8], which is capable of saving your souls.

22) But you should not deceive yourselves by just listening [to God's word] instead of doing what the word teaches. 23) For if anyone is [only] a listener to the word and does not practice it, he is like a person who sees his natural face in a mirror, 24) and [then after] he sees himself, [he] goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25) But the person who looks closely into the perfect law that brings freedom, and continues to do so, is not a listener who forgets [what he hears], but someone who does the work [it requires]. This person will be blessed for doing so.

26) If anyone considers himself to be religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, this person is self-deceived and his religion is worthless. 27) Religion that is pure and uncorrupted in the eyes of [our] God and Father involves taking care of orphans and widows in their distress and keeping oneself unstained by the world.

## CHAPTER TWO

1) My brothers, do not hold [views regarding] the faith of

our glorious Lord Jesus Christ [i.e., as tenets of Christianity] which show favoritism toward [certain] persons. 2) For, suppose a person comes into your assembly wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothing and [then another] person comes in who is poor and dressed in shabby clothing. 3) Now if you people show special attention to the one wearing the fine clothing and say [to him], **AYou can sit here in this good seat,** and to the poor person, **AYou stand over there,** or **ASit on the floor by my feet,** 4) are you not making class distinctions among yourselves and judging [people] from evil motives? 5) Listen, my dearly loved brothers; did not God choose those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be wealthy in faith and to inherit the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6) But you people have dishonored the poor person. Are not rich people the ones who oppress you and drag you to court? 7) Do they not speak against the honorable name by which you are called? [i.e., the name **ACHrist** or **ACHristian**]. 8) However, you are doing well if you fulfill [i.e., obey] the royal law found in the Scriptures [Lev. 19:18], **AYou should love your neighbor the same way that you love yourself.** 9) But if you show favoritism toward [certain] persons, you are committing a sin and are convicted by the law [of God] as lawbreakers. 10) For, whoever observes the entire law [of God] and yet breaks one requirement [of it], becomes guilty of [breaking] all of it. 11) For God, who said [through Moses, Ex. 20:13f], **AYou must not be sexually unfaithful to your mate,** also said, **AYou must not murder.** Now if you are sexually faithful to your mate and yet murder [someone], you have become a lawbreaker.

12) So, you should speak and act as people who will be judged by a law that brings freedom. 13) For the person who has shown no mercy will be judged without mercy. [For] mercy wins out over condemnation.

14) What good is it, my brothers [and sisters], if a person says he has faith but does not have [good] deeds? Can such faith save him? 15) If a brother or sister is without [adequate] clothing and needs daily food, 16) and one of you says to him, **AGo** [and be] at peace; keep warm and eat well, and yet you do not give him anything for his physical needs, what good is that? 17) In the same way, if [your] faith does not have [good] deeds [to accompany it], it is dead, [because it stands] alone. 18) But someone may say, **AYou have faith and I have [good] deeds.** [I reply], show me your faith

without your [good] deeds, and I will show you my faith by my [good] deeds. 19) You believe that there is [only] one God; that is good! Even the demons believe [that], and they shudder [with fear at the thought]. 20) But will you acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without [good] deeds is useless? 21) Was not our forefather Abraham made right with God by deeds [of obedience] when he offered his son Isaac [as a sacrifice] on the Altar? 22) [Do you not] see that faith cooperated together with his deeds, and faith was made complete by [his] deeds? 23) So, the Scripture was fulfilled, which says [Gen. 15:6], AAbraham believed God and [so] God considered him righteous,<sup>a</sup> and he was called God's friend. 24) [So], you see, it is by deeds that a person is made right with God, and not by faith alone.

25) And in the same way, was not the prostitute Rahab made right with God by [her] deeds when she welcomed [and protected] the messengers, and [then] sent them away by a different road? 26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without [good] deeds is dead.

### CHAPTER THREE

1) Not many of you should be teachers, my brothers, because you [should] know that we [teachers] will be judged more strictly. 2) For we all make mistakes in many areas [of life]. If anyone does not make a mistake in what he says, he is a perfect person, capable of keeping a tight rein on his whole life also.

3) Now if we put bits in the mouths of horses so that they will obey us, we can govern the direction of their entire bodies as well. 4) Look, even though ships are huge and are driven by strong winds, still their direction can be governed by a very small rudder, wherever the pilot desires to sail. 5) So, the tongue is a small part [of the body], yet it boasts of great accomplishments. Look at how large a forest is burned up by even a tiny spark. 6) And the tongue is [like] a fire [i.e., like that spark]. [For] the tongue, as a part of the body, is [like] the world of evil. It corrupts the entire life [of a person] and inflames the course of nature itself [i.e., it affects a person throughout his whole earthly existence], and is ignited by hell itself [i.e., the evil produced by the fiery tongue has hell as its source and destiny].

7) For all kinds of animals and birds and reptiles and ocean creatures are being subdued and have been subdued by mankind, 8) but no one can subdue the tongue. It is an uncontrollable [source of] evil and full of deadly poison. 9) We praise the Lord and Father with it, and [also] curse men who are created in God's likeness with it. 10) Praise and cursing come out of the same mouth! My brothers, these things should not be happening. 11) Does a spring produce [both] fresh water and salt water from the same opening? 12) My brothers, can a fig tree produce olives or a grapevine [produce] figs? Neither can a salt water [spring] produce fresh water.

13) Who [then] is the wise and understanding person among you? He should show by his good conduct [that he has] deeds of gentleness [stemming] from wisdom. 14) But if you people have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your hearts, do not be arrogant [over it] and deny the truth. 15) This <sup>A</sup>wisdom<sup>@</sup> is not the kind that comes from [God] above, but is earthly, unspiritual and demonic [i.e., it is motivated by an evil spirit and not the Holy Spirit]. 16) For when jealousy and rivalry exist, there is [also] disorder and every [kind of] evil practice.

17) But the [true] wisdom, which is from [God] above, is first of all pure, then peace-loving, patient and easily persuaded. [It is] full of mercy and produces a crop of good deeds; [it is] impartial [or, unwavering] and sincere. 18) [People who are] peacemakers sow [seeds of] peace and it produces a crop of righteousness [in the lives of others].

## CHAPTER FOUR

1) Where do conflicts and fights among you come from? Do they not come from your [desire for] pleasures which produce inner conflict? 2) You people desire something and yet do not have it, [so] you murder [to get it]. You are envious [of what someone has] and [yet] are not able to obtain it, [so] you fight and quarrel [over it]. You do not have [what you want] because you do not ask [God for it]. 3) [When] you do ask, you do not receive it, because you ask from wrong motives, [just] so you can satisfy your own pleasures. 4) You people who have become unfaithful to God, do you not know that being [intimate] friends with the world [of sin] means hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever determines to be an [intimate]

friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5) Or, do you think that the Scripture says [this] for nothing? [Note: No specific passage is here cited, but the idea occurs in several Old Testament passages]. AThe Holy Spirit, whom God has made to live in us, longs jealously [for us to be faithful to God].@ 6) But He gives [us] more unearned favor [i.e., to overcome the world]. Therefore, the Scripture says [Prov. 3:34], AGod opposes proud people, but gives unearned favor to those who are humble.@

7) So, you should submit yourselves to God, but oppose the devil, and he will flee from you. 8) Come close to God and He will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinful people [i.e., this is an exhortation to repent of moral and spiritual corruption], and purify your hearts, you double-minded people. 9) Be distressed and grieve and cry [over your sins]; your laughter should turn into grieving and your joy [should turn] into sorrow. 10) Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you people.

11) Do not slander one another, brothers, [for] the person who speaks against his brother, or judges him, is [guilty of] speaking against the law [of God]. But when you judge the law, you are not obeying it but acting as its judge. 12) There is only One Lawgiver and Judge [i.e., God or Christ]. It is He who is able to save and destroy [people]. So, who [do you think] you are, judging your neighbor?

13) Come on now, you people who are saying, AToday or tomorrow we will go to this [or that] city, spend a year there, do business and make some money.@ 14) [For actually] you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. What is your life? For you are [like] a mist that appears briefly and then vanishes. 15) Instead, you should be saying, AIf it is what the Lord wants, we will live and do this or that.@ 16) But, as it is, you people are boasting in your arrogance [and] all such boasting is evil. 17) So, the person who knows the good [he ought] to be doing, but is not doing it, is sinning.

## CHAPTER FIVE

1) Come on now, you rich people, cry and wail over the miseries that are coming upon you. 2) Your wealth has rotted and moths have eaten your clothing. 3) Your gold and silver have tarnished and their tarnish will be a testimony against you [i.e., you

have hoarded your wealth instead of using it to benefit others], **and they will devour your flesh as fire** [i.e., your riches will ultimately consume you]. **You have hoarded up your riches in these last days.** 4) **Look, the wages you have fraudulently refused to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out** [against you]. **And the cries of these harvest hands have reached the ears of the Lord of [heavenly] armies** [i.e., Almighty God]. 5) **You people have basked in luxury [here] on earth and lived lives devoted to pleasure. You have fattened yourselves [as sacrificial oxen] for the day of slaughter.** 6) **You have condemned and murdered the righteous man** [i.e., the innocent person, See verse 4] **and he does not [even] resist you.**

7) **So, be patient, brothers, until the Lord comes. Look, the farmer waits for his land to produce the valuable crop and is patient with it until it receives the fall and spring rains.** 8) [So], **you people should be patient also; strengthen your hearts because the Lord's coming is near** [Note: This may refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, or to Christ's final coming and judgment]. 9) **Do not complain against one another, brothers, so that you will not [have to] be judged [and condemned for it]. Look, the Judge [i.e., Christ] is standing at the door!** [See verse 8]. 10) **Brothers, take the [Old Testament] prophets, who spoke in the name [i.e., by the authority] of the Lord, as your examples of suffering and patience.** 11) **Notice that we consider those who endured [suffering with patience] to be blessed [by God]. You people have heard of Job's patience and have seen what the Lord finally did [for him]. The Lord is very compassionate and merciful.**

12) **But above everything else, my brothers, do not take oaths, not by the heaven,<sup>@</sup> nor by the earth,<sup>@</sup> nor by any other oath. But your Ayes<sup>@</sup> should be [simply] Ayes,<sup>@</sup> and your Ano,<sup>@</sup> [simply] Ano,<sup>@</sup> so you do not fall under condemnation.**

13) **Is there anyone among you who is suffering? [If so], he should pray. Is anyone happy? [Then] he should sing a psalm.** 14) **Is anyone among you sick? [Then] he should call for the elders of the church and they should pray for him, after pouring [olive] oil on him in the name [i.e., by the authority] of the Lord.** 15) **And if their prayer is [offered] by faith, [God] will heal the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up [from his sickbed]. And if he had sinned, he will be forgiven for them** [Note: This may imply that the man's sickness was the result of some sin. In any event, his forgiveness would

follow his repentance]. **16) So, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another to be healed** [from sin sickness]. **The special request of a righteous person is empowered with** [great] effectiveness. **17) Elijah was a man with a similar nature as ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain** [I Kings 17:1; 18:1], and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. **18) Then he prayed again and the sky poured rain and the ground produced its crop.**

**19) My brothers, if anyone among you strays away from the truth** [of God's inspired message], **and someone brings him back** [to it], **20) that person should know that whoever brings a sinner back from the error of his way will save that soul from** [spiritual] **death and will cover over a large number of sins** [i.e., the many sins of that person will become forgiven].