

JAMES 1:1-8

1:1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

6 But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. Identify the audience of the book. To whom might this be referring? Based on your knowledge of the audience and the content of the book, can you draw any conclusions about James' reasons for writing this letter?
2. What are some of the reasons given in the text for rejoicing in trials?
3. Why might James compare the person who doubts to "the surf of the sea"?
4. What lessons do you learn from this text about dealing with trials in your life?

JAMES 1:9-18

9 But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; 10 and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. Explain vv. 9-10. How do you think a humble brother is exalted to a “high position” and a rich man is brought to “humiliation”?
2. Do you see any connection between these verses and vv. 1-8?
3. What are first fruits? What does it mean that we are “the first fruits among His creatures”?

JAMES 1:19-27

19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

27 This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. According to this text, what things are important if we want to properly receive God's word?
2. What is the "perfect law" James refers to in v. 25? Why do you think he calls it the "law of liberty"?
3. What makes a person religious according to this text? How is this different from what makes a person religious according to our culture today?

JAMES 2:1-13

2:1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. Give some examples of ways we might hold our faith with an attitude of personal favoritism.
2. What are some of the reasons we sometimes show favoritism to certain people? Are there ever circumstances in which showing favoritism can be a good thing?
3. Explain v. 5.
4. Do you see any relationship between mercy and favoritism?

JAMES 2:14-26

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

18 But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God.

24 You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.

25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. Define justification.
2. What do you learn about faith from this text?
3. Why are works important to our faith? Why is faith important to our works?

JAMES 3:1-12

3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.

2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

4 Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race.

8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think it means that teachers will “incur a stricter judgment”? Why do you think this is the case?

2. What do you learn about the relationship between our speech and the rest of our behavior?

3. Write down your thoughts on the meaning of the following phrases from v. 6:
 - a. “And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity...”

 - b. “...the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body...”

 - c. “...and sets on fire the course of our life...”

 - d. “...and is set on fire by hell.”

4. Do you see any connections between this section and the overall theme of the book?

JAMES 3:13-18

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

JAMES 4:1-10

4:1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you think v. 2 is literal? Why or why not?
2. Why does James call his audience “adulteresses” in v. 4?
3. What do you think vv. 5 & 6 mean?
4. What practical answers do you see in this text to overcoming the problem of selfish motives?

JAMES 4:11-17

4:11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it.

12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."

16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. What kind of speaking and judging are being talked about in v. 11? Why are they forbidden?
2. What is wrong with the attitude described in vv. 13-14? What is James warning against?
3. Explain how v. 17 concludes James' argument in this text.
4. How does this section fit in with the overall theme of the book?

JAMES 5:1-11

5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

7 Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does the phrase “Lord of Sabaoth” mean in v. 4? Why do you think James uses it here?
2. Based on this section, how would you summarize the problem of James’ readers? In what ways does this problem exist today?
3. Identify the different groups of people James writes to in this text. What specific instructions does he give to each group?
4. What encouragement do you find in this text for your walk with the Lord?

JAMES 5:12-20

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back,

20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.

In your own words, state what you believe to be the main point of this text.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does v. 12 tie in with the previous section?
2. Explain vv. 19-20.
3. What do you think of the ending of the book? How does it serve as an appropriate conclusion to what James writes?
4. Take some time to reflect on the book of James as a whole. How would you summarize the book now after studying through it in detail? What have been some of the most memorable lessons you have learned from this study?