

JAMES

Perseverance (1:1-21)

1 From James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.
To all the Jewish believers that are dispersed among the nations:
Greetings!

²⁻³My dear brothers and sisters, react with real joy when you have to face many kinds of opposition and difficulty, for you know that we only learn to persevere when our faith is tested. ⁴This perseverance is essential if we are to become mature, being the people God wants us to be, lacking nothing.

⁵You should ask God to supply the wisdom you need, for He gives generously and unreservedly to all who ask. ⁶However, you must believe when you ask and not doubt His willingness to give, for anyone who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷⁻⁸Such a person is double minded and unreliable in everything he does and should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

⁹The believer who comes from a humble background ought to be thankful for the noble status God has given him. ¹⁰The wealthy one should be thankful that God has humbled him, for despite his possessions he will suffer the same fate as the wild flower. ¹¹For when the sun shines with scorching heat, the plant withers, its bloom fades and its beauty is destroyed. In like manner, the wealthy one will fade even though he prospers in his worldly affairs.

¹²The man who perseveres in his faith, when tested, is blessed. Having passed the test, he will be rewarded with the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

¹³When facing temptation, no one should ever say "God is tempting me." It is impossible for God to be tempted by evil, nor will He ever tempt anyone. ¹⁴A person is tempted by his own evil desire. This is what entices him. ¹⁵If he dwells on the desire it will lead to sin, and fully-developed sin ends in spiritual death.

¹⁶So, my dear brothers, do not be deceived. ¹⁷Everything that is good and perfect is a gift from God. It comes from the Father who

created the universe, who never changes as moving shadows do.
¹⁸Through the Word of truth, He chose to give us new birth so that out of His whole creation we are those who come first, as His own children.

¹⁹My dear brothers, be sure to take notice of this: Everyone should be quick to listen but slow to speak or become angry. ²⁰Man's anger can never bring about the good life that God desires. ²¹So rid yourselves of everything that is morally corrupt and the evil that is so prevalent today. Instead, accept humbly the seed of God's Word that has been planted in your heart, for this can save you.

Do what the Word says (1:22-27)

²²⁻²⁴You deceive yourselves if you only listen to God's Word. You need to do what He says, for the person who listens to the Word but fails to act on it is like someone who sees his face in a mirror and then immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵By contrast, the person who takes seriously what God commands us to do enjoys freedom. He continues to obey because he does not forget what he has heard, and so is blessed in what he does.

²⁶Anyone who considers himself to be a good religious person, and yet does not keep tight control of his tongue, simply deceives himself. His religion is useless. ²⁷The kind of religious life that is accepted by God, because it is pure and genuine, is typified by those who care for orphans and widows who are in need and who refuse to allow the world to corrupt them.

Love others as you love yourself (2:1-13)

2 My brothers, because you are believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, be sure not to favour some above others.

²For example, suppose someone was to come to one of your meetings expensively dressed and with gold jewellery, while another came in shabby clothes. ³⁻⁴If you were to give special attention to the wealthy one by giving him a good seat, while telling the poor man to stand or sit on the floor, have you not made a false distinction between them? Have you not dealt with them out of wrong motives?

⁵Listen to what I say, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those the world regards as poor to be rich in faith and to inherit the Kingdom He promised to those who love Him? ⁶But if you were to act in such a way, you would insult the poor and allow the rich to exploit you! ⁷And they are the ones who drag you before the courts and slander the Name of the One to whom you belong!

⁸You do well to obey the royal law revealed in scripture, “Love others as you love yourself.” ⁹However, you sin if you are guilty of favouritism. For God’s law not only tells you what to do, but also convicts you as a lawbreaker when you disobey His Word. ¹⁰For even if you do all He says and yet fail in only one thing, you are still guilty of breaking the law.

¹¹So God said, “Do not commit adultery,” and He also said, “Do not murder.” If you resisted committing adultery but murdered someone, you have still broken the law.

¹²You will be judged by the law that gives freedom; so you need to speak and act accordingly. ¹³For those who have not been merciful will be judged without mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment!

Faith is proved genuine by what you do (2:14-26)

¹⁴My brothers, of what value is the faith a man claims to have if that faith is not reflected in his actions? Does he really possess the faith that can save him?

¹⁵For example, suppose a brother or sister needs clothing and food. ¹⁶If any one of you was to say, “God bless you; keep warm and well fed,” but did nothing to relieve his physical needs, what good would your faith be? ¹⁷So you can see that unless faith gives birth to action, it is dead!

¹⁸Someone may say, “You have faith; I do practical things.” Well, show your faith without positive actions and I will show you that my faith is genuine because of what I do!

¹⁹You believe there is only one true God. Good! But even demons believe that, and they tremble with fear before Him. ²⁰How foolish you are if you need any further evidence to see that faith that does not lead to positive actions is useless.

²¹Surely our forefather Abraham was considered acceptable to God because of what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice! ²²You can tell from his example that his faith led to positive action. Faith and action were working together. His faith was only complete because of what he did.

²³This is how he fulfilled the scripture that says, “Abraham believed God and so was considered to be righteous.” And God called him His friend because of his obedience. ²⁴You see, a person can only please God and be right in His eyes through what he does, as well as through what he believes.

2:8 *Leviticus 19:18*

2:11 *Exodus 20:13-14*

2:23 *Genesis 15:6*

²⁵God even considered the prostitute Rahab to be acceptable in His eyes because of her actions in hiding the spies and then sending them away by a safe route. Is that not so? ²⁶Therefore, just as a body without a spirit is dead, so faith that is not expressed in positive action is also dead.

Proper use of your tongue (3:1-12)

3 My dear brothers and sisters, not many of you will aspire to be teachers of God's Word if you realise that we who have been given the responsibility to teach will be judged more strictly than other believers. ²All of us fail in many ways. For if anyone claims he is never wrong in what he says, then he must be perfect, with complete control over every aspect of his body, especially his tongue.

³We place bits in the mouths of horses so we can control them, making them obey us by turning in any direction we choose. ⁴Or think of how a ship is guided. It can be very large and driven by strong winds; yet the pilot uses only a tiny rudder to steer the ship in whatever direction he chooses.

⁵In the same way, the tongue is only a tiny part of your body, but it can do great harm. A forest fire can be started by a small spark! ⁶And the tongue is like fire, for it can give rise to such evil that it is able to corrupt your whole life. It can ruin the whole course of your life when it is set on fire by the fire of hell.

⁷⁻⁸Man has tamed a variety of animals, birds, reptiles and sea mammals; but no one has ever succeeded in taming the tongue. It can be an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹We use the tongue to praise our Lord and Father and yet we can also use it to speak curses over people whom God has made in His image. ¹⁰So out of the same mouth comes both praise and curse. My brothers, obviously this should not be the case. ¹¹How can fresh water and salt water flow out of the same spring? ¹²My friends, is it possible for a fig tree to produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Well, it is impossible for a salt spring to produce fresh water.

Wrong motives lead to disorder (3:13-16)

¹³So who among you has wisdom and understands these things? Let him demonstrate that this is the case by the good life he leads, the positive actions he performs while maintaining the humility that is an expression of true wisdom.

¹⁴But if your heart is bitter, full of envy and selfish ambition, do not boast about being wise, neither deny the truth. ¹⁵For that kind of

so-called ‘wisdom’ has certainly not been given to anyone by heaven. No, it is earthly, unspiritual, a work of the devil. ¹⁶For there is disorder and all kinds of evil whenever people are motivated by wrong and selfish ambition.

Heavenly wisdom (3:17-18)

¹⁷⁻¹⁸The true wisdom that comes from heaven is totally different. First of all it is pure. Then it promotes a life of peace. It makes people considerate towards others and submissive to those in authority. Wisdom inspires people to be merciful at all times and produces good fruit in their lives, causing them to be impartial and sincere; so they become peacemakers, sowing seeds of peace that produce a harvest of doing what is right.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (4:1-10)

4 Why are there fights and disputes among you? Are they not the results of the evil desires that rage within you? ²You want something you don’t have, so you plan and are even ready to kill to get what you want. You quarrel and fight, yet you do not have because you do not ask God for what you want. ³Even if you do ask, you do not receive because your motives are wrong when you ask; you want only what will please the natural desires of your self-life.

⁴You are an adulterous people! Surely you know that to be friends with the values of this world is tantamount to hatred towards God! Yes, anyone who decides to be the world’s friend makes himself God’s enemy. ⁵Do you imagine that the scripture is meaningless that says the Spirit that God causes to live in us longs for us to be true to Him? ⁶And He gives us all the grace we need to please Him. This is why the scripture says: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

⁷So submit yourselves wholeheartedly to God, stand against the devil and he will run from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. You sinners, wash your hands from the stain of sin and purify your hearts, for you are double-minded. ⁹You need to grieve, mourn and wail until you are free from your sin. Until then it is time to mourn, not laugh, to be sad instead of joyful. ¹⁰So in repentance humble yourselves before the Lord and He will raise you up so you can truly rejoice.

Do not judge (4:11-17)

¹¹My brothers, do not speak against each other, for to do so is to judge your brother and to treat God's Word as being of no account. When you have such an attitude you do not obey the law but sit in judgment on it. ¹²God is the only One who gives us the law and then the only Judge who determines whether we have obeyed Him. He is the same One who has the power to either save or destroy. After all, who gave you the right to judge your neighbour?

¹³Now listen carefully. Some of you say, "Today or tomorrow we will decide to go to this or that place for a year. And our business will then make a good profit." ¹⁴Yet you have no idea what will happen tomorrow. Your life is like a mist that appears in the early morning but soon vanishes when the sun rises.

¹⁵It would be much better if you were to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we live to do this or that." ¹⁶Without such an attitude you are proud and will boast, and all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If you know what you should do but fail to do it, then you are guilty of sin.

Honour God with your wealth (5:1-6)

5 Listen, those of you who are rich: if you realised the misery you face you would grieve with anguish. ²By then your wealth will have come to nothing and your fine clothes will be in tatters. ³Your gold and silver will be useless to you. The wealth you have hoarded will testify against you, and your flesh life that you have indulged will simply rot away. You have held onto your wealth when it could have been used for God's purposes.

⁴Consider this, you rich oppressors: you paid only a pittance to those who worked for you and their lack is now crying out against you, and these cries have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have a life of luxury and self-indulgence, but have only fattened yourself for the slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and ridden rough-shod over innocent people who have nothing against you.

Wait patiently for the Lord (5:7-12)

⁷Faithful believers, wait patiently for the Lord's coming. Notice how the farmer waits patiently for the autumn and spring rains to water the land so the crops can grow and develop. ⁸In the same way, you have to be patient and remain steadfast in your expectation that the Lord could come at any moment.

⁹So do not complain about each other, my brothers; for to do so is to invite judgment on yourself. Realise that the Judge of all is always at hand!

¹⁰My brothers, those who have suffered patiently, such as the prophets who spoke in the Lord's Name, are an example for you.

¹¹You know we believe that those who have persevered in their faith are blessed. You have heard how Job was finally rewarded by the Lord, who is full of compassion and mercy.

¹²It is really important, my brothers, that you never take an oath, swearing by heaven, by earth or by anything else. It is enough for everyone to know that your 'Yes' means yes, and your 'No' means no! Do not bring any condemnation on yourself by going beyond that.

Encouragement to pray (5:13-20)

¹³If anyone among you has a problem, he should pray. If anyone is happy, he should thankfully sing praises to God. ¹⁴If anyone is sick, he should call the church leaders to visit him so they can pray for him and anoint him with oil in the Lord's name. ¹⁵The prayer of faith will cause the sick person to be healed and the Lord will raise him from his bed of sickness. If he has sinned, he will need to be forgiven.

¹⁶So openly confess your sins before one another and pray for one another to be healed. The prayer of anyone made acceptable in God's sight is powerful and effective.

¹⁷Elijah was only human as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and for three and a half years there was no rain.

¹⁸When he prayed again, the heavens were opened and it poured with rain. When the drought ended the crops grew!

¹⁹⁻²⁰My brothers, seek to bring back anyone who wanders from the truth, remembering this: Whoever turns a sinner from his evil ways will save him from death, because he is freed from his many sins!

