

.BBI 2002 The Book of James Teacher: Dan Lehigh

I. General Introduction

Christians must put their faith into action. The faith that Christians claim must be demonstrated in all the situations and circumstances of life—at work, at home, in the neighborhood, in church. Trials and hardships are not to be seen as hindrances to faith, but as opportunities to exercise healthy faith. Knowing God's Word is not enough. That knowledge must be applied to our everyday lives. Real faith is the application of God's truth to ourselves.

James is a book that is intensely practical.

Like a "string of beautiful pearls", James strings one subject after another.

The book is an intense call for Christians to put their faith into action.

James is known as a "general" or "catholic" epistle, along with 1-2 Peter, 1-2-3 John and Jude.

Author: Probably James the brother of our Lord.

James is the English form of Jacob

Relationship to Christ disputed by scholars.

3 main possibilities:

1. Cousins of Christ

Theory known as "hieronymian".

2. Half Brothers of Christ

Theory known as "epiphanian".

3. Children of Joseph and Mary

Theory known as "helvidian".

Five men named James in N.T.

1. James the Son of Zebedee

James and John— rash / spirited / headstrong.

Jesus nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder".

2. James the Son of Alphaeus

3. James the Less

4. James the father of Judas

<u>Mark 3</u>	<u>Luke 6</u>	<u>Matt 10:3</u>	<u>Acts 1:13</u>
Simon	Simon	Simon	Simon
James	Andrew	Andrew	James
John	James	James	John
Andrew	John	John	Andrew
Phillip	Phillip	Phillip	Phillip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Matthew	Matthew	Thomas	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Matthew	Matthew
James	James	James (A)	James (A)
<u>Thaddaeus</u>	<u>Simon</u>	<u>Thaddaeus</u>	<u>Simon the</u>
<u>Simon the</u>	<u>Judas</u>	<u>Simon the</u>	<u>Zealot)</u>
<u>Zealot</u>	<u>Judas Iscariot</u>	<u>Zealot</u>	<u>Judas</u>
Judas		Judas Iscariot	

Thaddaeus = Lebbaeus

Thaddaeus = Judas, Son of James

Bartholomew = Nathaniel

Simon the Zealot = Canaanite

Why do we believe the author was James, the Lord's brother?

1. Speaks with authority
2. Very Jewish book
3. Given title of "The Righteous"

James was a sibling-turned-servant, an antagonist turned apologist, a passive observer turned passionate follower.

Date probably AD 47-49

James was martyred in 62 AD

Written to:

"...*twelve tribes scattered among the nations*" (NIV)

James, as the leader of the "mother" church at Jerusalem, sent this letter to those scattered Christians.

Luther didn't like James very much. He called it an "epistle of straw lacking the wheat of the gospel". Not accepted fully into canon till the end of the 4th century appo. 390 AD.

II. Chapter One

1. 1:1Greetings, Recipients

Greek doulos = bonds slave

1. Absolute obedience:
2. Absolute Humility:
3. Absolute Loyalty:
4. Pride:

2. 1:2-4Tested, Triumphant

KJ..."temptations"

1. Afflictions, persecutions or trials from providential circumstances

2. Solicitation to sin

v.3 - *endurance*1...KJ – "patience"

Word means not just ability to bear things, but ability to turn them into greatness and to glory.

3. 1:5-8..... God's giving and Man's asking

1. How God Gives...Generously

2. How to Ask...Faith—no doubts.

4. 1:9-11..... As each man needs

5. 1:12..... The crown of life

(a) The crown of flowers was worn at times of joy.

(b) The crown was the mark of royalty.

(c) The crown of laurel leaves was the victor's crown in the games.

(d) The crown was the mark of honour and of dignity.

6. 1:13-15..... Blaming God; Evading responsibility

Every man is pulled in two directions:

Jews believed in yetser hatob (good tendency) and Yetser hara (evil tendency).

They believed evil tendency came from Satan. Rabbis believed that since God created everything, he must have created the evil tendency also.

God permits trials to make us strong; He never entices us to do evil.

Desire considered long enough becomes action.

7. 1:16-18.....An unchangeable, good God
8. 1:19-20.....Quick; Slow
9. 1:21 Teachable spirit
10. 1:22-24.....Hearing and Doing

James gives us two vivid pictures in these verses.

First: The man who goes to church, listens to the reading and preaching and thinks that listening has made him a Christian.

Second: The man who looks into the mirror and sees himself and all the smuts and disfigurements and the messed hair, and goes away and forgets what he looks like and therefore does nothing about it.

11. 1:25 True law

I. *perfect law*²

II. *law of liberty*³

12. 1:26-27 True worship

III. Chapter Two

1. 2:1 Respect of persons
2. 2:2-4 The peril of snobbery

²The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

³The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

V. 2... *assembly* (V), **meeting** (NIV), Gr—"synagogue"

3. 2:5-7 The riches of poverty / The poverty of riches

4. 2:8-11 The royal law

5. 2:12-13 The law of liberty / Life of mercy

1. Christian life is a life of liberty.

2. Only he who shows mercy will find mercy.

6. 2:14-26 Faith and Works

A. vv. 14-17... Profession / Practice

B. vv. 18-19... Not either or, but both and

C. vv. 20-26... The Proof of faith

Two biblical examples of faith having works:

Abraham's faith

Rahab's faith

IV. Chapter Three

1. 3:1 The teacher's peril

2. 3:2 Universal danger

A. There is no one who doesn't sin in something—

B. The second idea James brings is this: That there is no sin easier to fall into than the sin of the tongue.

3. 3:3-5a.....Little but powerful

4. 3:5b-6.....Destructive fire

The damage the tongue can do is like a fire in two ways..

First, it is wide-ranging

A Second reason the damage of the tongue is like a fire is that it is uncontrollable.

v. 6... *world of iniquity*⁵ or *unrighteous world*⁶

*course of nature*⁷, *the course of our life*⁸

5. 3:7-8.....Beyond all taming

6. 3:9-12.....Blessing and Cursing

...Make it pass,

Before you speak, three gates of gold:

These narrow gates. First, "Is it true?"

Then, "Is it needful?" In your mind

Give truthful answer. And the next

Is last and narrowest, "Is it kind?"

And if to reach your lips at last

It passes through these gateways three,

Then you may tell the tale, nor fear

What the result of speech may be (Beth Day).

⁵*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁶*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

⁷*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁸*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

7. 3:13-14..... The man who should not teach

A teacher is subject to two temptations:

1. Arrogance
2. Bitterness

Barclay lists 4 characteristics of wrong teaching in this passage:

1. It is fanatical
2. It is bitter
3. It is selfishly ambitious.
4. It is arrogant.

8. 3:15-16..... The wrong kind of wisdom

9. 3:17-18..... True wisdom

James uses 8 words to describe true wisdom.

1. *pure*⁹
2. *peaceable*¹⁰
3. *gentle*¹¹
4. *easy to be intreated*¹²
5. *full of mercy*
6. *good fruits*
7. *without partiality*¹³, *unwavering*¹⁴
8. *without hypocrisy*¹⁵

⁹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

¹⁰The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

¹¹The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

¹²The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

¹³The Holy Bible, New King James Version, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

¹⁴The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

¹⁵The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

V. Chapter Four

1. 4:1-3 Man's pleasure or God's will

James says a life dominated by pleasure and desire has 3 consequences:

1. It sets us against other men / women.
2. Craving for pleasure drives men to shameful deeds.
3. Craving for pleasure shuts the door to prayer.

2. 4:4-7 Infidelity to God

A vv. 4-7 Friendship with World / Enmity with God

B. vv. 4-7 God, the jealous lover

C. vv. 4-7 Humility / Pride

Pride shuts us off from God for 3 reasons:

1. We do not know our own need.
2. We cherish our own independence.
3. We do not recognize our own sin.

3. 4:8-10 Godly purity

Bible demands fourfold cleansing.

Lips

Hands

Heart

Mind

A. vv. 8-10.....Godly sorrow

James calls for 3 things:

1. Affliction
2. Mourning
3. Weep

B. vv. 8-10.....Godly humility

4. 4:11-12..... The sin of judging others

God hates the sin of gossip / slander.

James gives two reasons:

1. It is against the royal law
2. A second reason God hates gossip—It takes the prerogative of God.

5. 4:13-17..... The mistaken confidence

Anchor Bible Commentary:

A tiny clot of blood in the brain may cause instant and unexpected death. The heart concealing an unknown weakness or driven too hard, may cease to beat. The psalmist wrote, "*My days are like a shadow that declineth...*"¹⁶ Psalm 102:11

VI. Chapter Five

1. 5:1-3.....Worthlessness of riches

In the East, there were three main sources of wealth—James has a word for the decay of each of them.

1. There was corn and grain—James says, "Your grain is rotten".
2. There were garments = wealth.

James says, "Your garments will be eaten by moths".

3. There was gold and silver.

"Rusted clean through"...Gold and silver do not rust—But even these non-perishable metals will perish.

2. 5:4-6 The way of selfishness and its end

1. The selfish rich have gained their riches by injustice.
2. The selfish rich have used their wealth selfishly.

3. 5:7-9 Waiting for the coming of the Lord

To walk in love with saints above
 Will be a wondrous glory;
 But to walk below with saints you know—
 Well, that's another story!

NT teaching about the Second Coming:

1. No man knows the day or the hour, not even Christ.
2. It will be unexpected and sudden to those who are not looking for him.

Our duty:

1. We must be always watching / looking for him.
2. Long delay should not produce disbelief.
3. We must use the time given to us to prepare for his coming.
4. We must have our relationship with fellow men in order.
5. We should live close to Christ.

4. 5:10-11.....The triumphant patience
5. 5:12.....Oaths needless, foolish
6. 5:13-18.....Singing, Healing, Praying

James lists some great characteristics of the early church:

1. It was a singing church.
2. A healing church:
3. a praying church

There are three Jewish ideas here.

1. The Jews believed sickness was due to sin.
2. Confession is very important to the healing process.
3. The Jew thought that no limits can be set to the power of prayer.

7. 5:19-20.....Truth must be practiced

A. vv. 19-20...Rescuing sinning souls

VII. Closing Thoughts

Adapted from William Barclay's Daily Study Bible