



JAMES

DECEMBER 10

James 1:1-27
James encouraged Christians to be happy when life becomes difficult, because difficult situations help develop character. God will give wisdom to Christians to help them endure their troubles.

GREETING

1 ¹From James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To God's faithful people^a who have been scattered. Greetings.

WHEN YOU ARE TESTED, TURN TO GOD

²My brothers and sisters, be very happy when you are tested in different ways. ³You know that such testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴Endure until your testing is over. Then you will be mature and complete, and you won't need anything.

⁵If any of you needs wisdom to know what you should do, you should ask God, and he will give it to you. God is generous to everyone and doesn't find fault with them. ⁶When you ask for something, don't have any doubts. A person who has doubts is like a wave that is blown by the wind and tossed by the sea. ⁷A person who has doubts shouldn't expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸A person who has doubts is thinking about two different things at the same time and can't make up his mind about anything.

⁹Humble believers should be proud because being humble makes them important. ¹⁰Rich believers should be proud because being rich should make them humble. Rich people will wither like flowers. ¹¹The sun rises with its scorching heat and dries up plants. The flowers drop off, and the beauty is gone. The same thing will happen to rich people. While they are busy, they will die.

¹²Blessed are those who endure when they are tested. When they pass the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³When someone is tempted, he shouldn't say that God is tempting him. God can't be tempted by evil, and God doesn't tempt anyone. ¹⁴Everyone is tempted by his own desires as they lure him away and trap him. ¹⁵Then desire becomes pregnant and gives birth to sin. When sin grows up, it gives birth to death.

¹⁶My dear brothers and sisters, don't be fooled. ¹⁷Every good present and every perfect gift comes from above, from the Father who made the sun, moon, and stars. The Father doesn't change like the shifting shadows produced by the sun and the moon.

¹⁸God decided to give us life through the word of truth to make us his most important creatures.

¹⁹Remember this, my dear brothers and sisters: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and should not get angry easily. ²⁰An angry person doesn't do what God approves of. ²¹So get rid of all immoral behavior and all the wicked things you do. Humbly accept the word that God has placed in you. This word can save you.

²²Do what God's word says. Don't merely listen to it, or you will fool your-

^a1:1 Or "to the twelve tribes."





selves.²³If someone listens to God's word but doesn't do what it says, he is like a person who looks at his face in a mirror,²⁴studies his features, goes away, and immediately forgets what he looks like.²⁵However, the person who continues to study God's perfect teachings that make people free and who remains committed to them will be blessed. People like that don't merely listen and forget; they actually do what God's teachings say.

²⁶If a person thinks that he is religious but can't control his tongue, he is fooling himself. That person's religion is worthless.²⁷Pure, unstained religion, according to God our Father, is to take care of orphans and widows when they suffer and to remain uncorrupted by this world.

DON'T FAVOR RICH PEOPLE OVER POOR PEOPLE

2¹My brothers and sisters, practice your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ by not favoring one person over another.²For example, two men come to your worship service. One man is wearing gold rings and fine clothes; the other man, who is poor, is wearing shabby clothes.³Suppose you give special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say to him, "Please have a seat." But you say to the poor man, "Stand over there," or "Sit on the floor at my feet."⁴Aren't you discriminating against people and using a corrupt standard to make judgments?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! Didn't God choose poor people in the world to become rich in faith and to receive the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?⁶Yet, you show no respect to poor people. Don't rich people oppress you and drag you into court?⁷Don't they curse the good name of Jesus, the name that was used to bless you?

⁸You are doing right if you obey this law from the highest authority: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."⁹If you favor one person over another, you're sinning, and this law convicts you of being disobedient.¹⁰If someone obeys all of God's laws except one, that person is guilty of breaking all of them.¹¹After all, the one who said, "Never commit adultery," is the same one who said, "Never murder." If you do not commit adultery but you murder, you become a person who disobeys God's laws.

¹²Talk and act as people who are going to be judged by laws that bring freedom.¹³No mercy will be shown to those who show no mercy to others. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

WE SHOW OUR FAITH BY WHAT WE DO

¹⁴My brothers and sisters, what good does it do if someone claims to have faith but doesn't do any good things? Can this kind of faith save him?¹⁵Suppose a believer, whether a man or a woman, needs clothes or food¹⁶and one of you tells that person, "God be with you! Stay warm, and make sure you eat enough." If you don't provide for that person's physical needs, what good does it do?¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself is dead if it doesn't cause you to do any good things.

¹⁸Another person might say, "You have faith, but I do good things." Show me your faith apart from the good things you do. I will show you my faith by the good things I do.¹⁹You believe that there is one God. That's fine! The demons also believe that, and they tremble with fear.

²⁰You fool! Do you have to be shown that faith which does nothing is useless?²¹Didn't our ancestor Abraham receive God's approval as a result of what he did when he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice on the altar?²²You see that Abraham's faith and what he did worked together. His faith was shown to be genuine by what he did.²³The Scripture passage came true. It says, "Abraham believed God, and that faith was regarded by God to be his approval of Abraham." So

DECEMBER 11

James

2:1-3:12

James told his readers that Christians cannot show favoritism to one group of people over another. All Christians are equally important in God's eyes. He also wrote that true faith is characterized by good actions.





Abraham was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person receives God's approval because of what he does, not only because of what he believes. ²⁵The same is true of the prostitute Rahab who welcomed the spies and sent them away on another road. She received God's approval because of what she did.

²⁶A body that doesn't breathe^a is dead. In the same way faith that does nothing is dead.

SPEAK WISELY

3 ¹Brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers. You know that we who teach will be judged more severely.

²All of us make a lot of mistakes. If someone doesn't make any mistakes when he speaks, he would be perfect. He would be able to control everything he does. ³We put bits in the mouths of horses to make them obey us, and we have control over everything they do. ⁴The same thing is true for ships. They are very big and are driven by strong winds. Yet, by using small rudders, pilots steer ships wherever they want them to go. ⁵In the same way the tongue is a small part of the body, but it can brag about doing important things.

A large forest can be set on fire by a little flame. ⁶The tongue is that kind of flame. It is a world of evil among the parts of our bodies, and it completely contaminates our bodies. The tongue sets our lives on fire, and is itself set on fire from hell. ⁷People have tamed all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures. ⁸Yet, no one can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil filled with deadly poison.

⁹With our tongues we praise our Lord and Father. Yet, with the same tongues we curse people, who were created in God's likeness. ¹⁰Praise and curses come from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, this should not happen! ¹¹Do clean and polluted water flow out of the same spring? ¹²My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? In the same way, a pool of salt water can't produce fresh water.

Today

Pray that you will become known for your encouraging words rather than harsh, cynical, or sarcastic remarks.



DECEMBER 12

James 3:13–5:20

James ended his letter with some practical wisdom. He encouraged his readers to be careful and wise about their prayers, relationships, lifestyles, and plans. He advised Christians to keep on trusting God's promises, to be trustworthy in their own promises, and to pray.

LIVE WISELY

¹³Do any of you have wisdom and insight? Show this by living the right way with the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you are bitterly jealous and filled with self-centered ambition, don't brag. Don't say that you are wise when it isn't true. ¹⁵That kind of wisdom doesn't come from above. It belongs to this world. It is self-centered and demonic. ¹⁶Wherever there is jealousy and rivalry, there is disorder and every kind of evil.

¹⁷However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure. Then it is peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good deeds, impartial, and sincere. ¹⁸A harvest that has God's approval comes from the peace planted by peacemakers.

STOP FIGHTING WITH EACH OTHER

4 ¹What causes fights and quarrels among you? Aren't they caused by the selfish desires that fight to control you? ²You want what you don't have, so you commit murder. You're determined to have things, but you can't get what you want. You quarrel and fight. You don't have the things you want, because you don't pray for them. ³When you pray for things, you don't get them because you want them for the wrong reason—for your own pleasure.

⁴You unfaithful people! Don't you know that love for this [evil] world is hatred toward God? Whoever wants to be a friend of this world is an enemy of God. ⁵Do you think this passage means nothing? It says, "The Spirit that lives in us wants us to be his own."

^a2:26 Or "A body without a spirit."



⁶But God shows us even more kindness.^a Scripture says,

“God opposes arrogant people,
but he is kind to humble people.”

⁷So place yourselves under God’s authority. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you. ⁸Come close to God, and he will come close to you. Clean up your lives, you sinners, and clear your minds, you doubters. ⁹Be miserable, mourn, and cry. Turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the Lord’s presence. Then he will give you a high position.

STOP SLANDERING EACH OTHER

¹¹Brothers and sisters, stop slandering each other. Those who slander and judge other believers slander and judge God’s teachings. If you judge God’s teachings, you are no longer following them. Instead, you are judging them. ¹²There is only one teacher and judge. He is able to save or destroy you. So who are you to judge your neighbor?

DON’T BRAG ABOUT YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

¹³Pay attention to this! You’re saying, “Today or tomorrow we will go into some city, stay there a year, conduct business, and make money.” ¹⁴You don’t know what will happen tomorrow. What is life? You are a mist that is seen for a moment and then disappears. ¹⁵Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and carry out our plans.” ¹⁶However, you brag because you’re arrogant. All such bragging is evil.

¹⁷Whoever knows what is right but doesn’t do it is sinning.

ADVICE TO RICH PEOPLE

5 ¹Pay attention to this if you’re rich. Cry and moan about the misery that is coming to you. ²Your riches have decayed, and your clothes have been eaten by moths. ³Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be used as evidence against you. Like fire, it will destroy your body.

You have stored up riches in these last days. ⁴The wages you refused to pay the people who harvested your fields shout to God, against you. The Lord of Armies has heard the cries of those who gather the crops. ⁵You have lived in luxury and pleasure here on earth. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered people who have God’s approval, even though they didn’t resist you.

BE PATIENT

⁷Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes again. See how farmers wait for their precious crops to grow. They wait patiently for fall and spring rains. ⁸You, too, must be patient. Don’t give up hope. The Lord will soon be here. ⁹Brothers and sisters, stop complaining about each other, or you will be condemned. Realize that the judge is standing at the door.

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, follow the example of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They were patient when they suffered unjustly. ¹¹We consider those who endure to be blessed. You have heard about Job’s endurance. You saw that the Lord ended Job’s suffering because the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

DON’T TAKE OATHS

¹²Above all things, my brothers and sisters, do not take an oath on anything in heaven or on earth. Do not take any oath. If you mean yes, say yes. If you mean no, say no. Do this so that you won’t be condemned.

^a4:6 Or “grace.”

How should the rich treat the poor? (5:4)

Employers should be careful to pay their employees a fair wage for the work they do. They should not get rich from the labor of others without paying them. God is a righteous judge, and he will punish those who oppress and take unfair advantage of the poor.

**Today**

Tell God you want to be completely truthful and trustworthy with your words. Be sure to avoid telling subtle lies or making unreasonable promises.

**PRAYER IS POWERFUL**

¹³If any of you are having trouble, pray. If you are happy, sing psalms. ¹⁴If you are sick, call for the church leaders. Have them pray for you and anoint you with olive oil² in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵(Prayers offered in faith will save those who are sick, and the Lord will cure them.) If you have sinned, you will be forgiven. ¹⁶So admit your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you will be healed.

Prayers offered by those who have God's approval are effective. ¹⁷Elijah was human like us. Yet, when he prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell on the ground for three-and-a-half years. ¹⁸Then he prayed again. It rained, and the ground produced crops.

HELP THOSE WHO HAVE WANDERED AWAY FROM THE TRUTH

¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if one of you wanders from the truth, someone can bring that person back. ²⁰Realize that whoever brings a sinner back from the error of his ways will save him from death, and many sins will be forgiven.



²5:14 People in ancient times used olive oil for healing.

