

James Recap
James
ABC 10/20/19

This past January, the 1st Sunday of the year, we began our series through the little letter of James. Hopefully we've learned from it. Christianity isn't just head knowledge; it's lived out in everyday life. It's a very practical faith, one that produces good works. As we've seen, James calls for true, genuine saving faith. It's a frightening & tragic reality that throughout church history there have always been tares among the wheat; rocky, shallow, thorny soils that produce no spiritual fruit; those who draw near to God with their words while their hearts are far from Him (Is 29:13); those for whom God is **near to their lips but far from their mind** (Jer 12:2); those who are hearers of the Word, but not doers of it (Js 1:22). To help people avoid being deceived, James has given a series of tests by which one's faith can be evaluated. True saving faith in chapter 1 is marked by its proper response to trials, temptations, the Word of God, & God's standards for holy living. In chapter 2 genuine saving faith is seen in its response to people from various social classes & its demonstration of good works. Chapter 3 gives us the truth that saving faith is seen in proper speech, wisdom, & by not being a friend of the world. Chapter 4 gives us the signs of salvation through humility & submission to God's will. & finally, in chpt 5, true saving faith is shown by having a proper view of money & by truthfulness. Those tests form the benchmarks against which a person's faith can be measured. At the very core of this book is an evangelistic invitation to those whose faith has failed the test. In 4:7-10 James exhorted those with false faith to...

submit therefore to God. Resist the devil & he will flee from you. Draw near to God & He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; & purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable & mourn & weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning & your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, & He will exalt you.

Instead of making you listen to me do a recap of this wonderful little letter, watch this video instead. VIDEO¹

¹ <https://thebibleproject.com/all-videos/read-scripture-new-testament/>

They do a better job & take less time than I would. But we're not done. In our opening sermon² in this series we looked at 3 common myths this book dispels. Should I give a quiz & see if you remember them?

1. Myths The 1st myth was that trials are bad. We've learned differently, haven't we? James describes trials as the way to maturing in the Christian faith because they cause us to consciously depend on God. Tough times strengthen our faith because they cause us to practice putting our trust in God for what we can't immediately see. He's working things together so we become more Christ-like (Rom 8:28-29). Therefore, we can consider our trials as joy (Js 1:2). God in His love gives us trials to test our faith, to develop us, & to mature us into the image of His Son. He isn't blind to our pain. He knows what each one of us is going through & He uses trials to transform us into people who reflect His glory & holiness. We can count it all joy when we experience trials, not because they're enjoyable, but because God is using them to transform us into the image & character of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The 2nd myth was that faith is what we think. Saving faith goes deeper than intellectual knowledge. The point of knowing what God says isn't simply to have head knowledge. The point of hearing God's Word is to do it (1:21). Hearing & knowing it without obeying it is self-deceiving. Religion or faith that's believed cognitively but isn't lived out is **worthless** (1:26) & unacceptable to God (1:27). Faith that isn't lived out isn't true saving faith & James gives 3 examples (2:14-26). Satan's demons believe there's one God. They have the intellectual knowledge but they **shudder** in the face of it. Why? Because it makes no difference in their lives. James then points us to Abraham, the father of the faithful. Abraham showed his faith by what he did. His faith led to actions or his faith was made complete by his behavior because faith without works isn't saving faith. But it isn't just the patriarchs of the faith that prove this. He then gives Rahab as his final example. She showed her faith by what she did, not simply by what she knew or said. A believer isn't one who intellectually recognizes God but doesn't live out their faith. Rather, a believer is one who lives out God's truth in everyday life. We're saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. It's always

² *James Overview* preached 1/6/19, www.ashlandbiblechurch.com/james.html

accompanied by visible acts & evidences. God created us to know Him, but we've sinned against Him. Being holy, He must judge us for our sins. Our only hope is to repent of our sins & have real saving faith in Jesus Christ, God incarnate, who was crucified & raised to life for our salvation.

The 3rd myth James debunks is that religion is a private thing. If what James said is true (& it is), that faith must be acted out, then saving, Christian faith cannot be merely private. Personal, yes, but not private. Both God & His people will be involved with what you do with your words, time, talents, money, & everything else. Any religion that consists of more than thoughts & opinions, one that involves deeds & actions, cannot be completely private. James knows our relationship with God is often made visible by our relationships with other people. As Christians, our primary obligation in this life isn't to ourselves. It's to God & to the body of Christ. We must realize that our selfishness hurts others & God will judge us for it. We're to use ourselves for others. We must learn to cherish the opportunity of living in peace by valuing one another.

2. Themes Although James can sometimes seem disjointed, there are several themes found in it. As a recap, let's look at them quickly.

A. True faith stands up under trial & pressure (1:1-18) Genuine faith looks at every challenge or difficulty as an opportunity to grow & to develop a deeper dependence on God.

B. Genuine faith motivates us to action (2:1-26). True faith in the almighty, all-loving & totally righteous God will change the way we do life. If it doesn't, then you really don't know God nor truly believe Him. Anyone who knows God & believes Him, will desire to cooperate with Him as He changes them. They'll be motivated to do life in a way that pleases God. That affects every aspect of our thoughts & actions.

C. True faith will change how we talk (3:1-12). James gives a graphic description of the tongue's power. A person of faith is Spirit-controlled & self-controlled. He builds others up & encourages them with his speech. True Christians control their tongues & use them to build others up, not tear them down.

D. True faith will motivate & change how we think (3:13-18). Genuine faith that comes from God doesn't think like the world does. If we truly have God-given faith & we're growing, our thinking will grow more & more to reflect God's thinking & character.

E. True faith avoids worldliness to pursue godliness (4:1-17). That seems obvious, but we often miss it. James bluntly states, **friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (4:4).**

F. True faith avoids idolizing & misusing the resources God has given us (5:1-6). Faith that's combined with heavenly wisdom looks at every resource of time, talent, money, influence, or whatever as something God provided & intended that we should use in ways that reflect His love & character. Faith that's driven by heavenly wisdom understands that God provided these resources for us to use correctly & that we'll give an account to God for how we used what He's provided. We should therefore be very wary of any selfishness or pride. Our primary focus should be to use everything in such a way that best reflects God's character & loving work in our lives, not to glorify ourselves, but to please & glorify Him, to whom all glory & honor are due.

G. Genuine faith motivates one to wait on the Lord in prayer (5:7-20). We must be humble enough to ask for help in time of need & look out for others, not just ourselves.

3. Commands As we know, the Bible is full of commands, at least 10, right? Many more than just the 10 Commandments. Biblical commands, instructions, & exhortations are important because by them we see the character of God & exactly what He expects of us. With that being said, what's the bossiest book of the Bible? You might think Psalms because it's huge & you'd be right in number of commands (672 of them). But what book has the highest concentration of commands? Joel is the bossiest book in the OT. What do you suppose is the bossiest book in all the Bible? You got it, James! He crams 54 imperatives into its 108 verses. Around 2.5% of the words in James are imperative verbs. That shouldn't surprise you because we've seen how very practical it is. He gives us 54 imperatives, commands in the Greek telling us how we should live. Again, doing these things doesn't make you a Christian but they give evidence you are one. If we're truly God's children, we want to obey Him & take our direction from Him found in the truth of His Word. We must constantly

be asking ourselves, *Do I follow God's truth or my own thinking?* As we went through the book I didn't enumerate all the commands but will do so today. Throughout this book James gives us practical instructions on what true faith looks like. Here are the commands:

1. **Consider** it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials (1:2)
2. **Let endurance have** its perfect result, so that you may be perfect & complete, lacking in nothing (1:4)
3. If any of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask** of God, who gives to all generously & without reproach, & it will be given to him (1:5)
4. He **must ask** in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven & tossed by the wind (1:6)
5. That man **ought not to expect** that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways (1:7)
6. The brother of humble circumstances **is to glory** in his high position (1:9)
7. **Let no one say** when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, & He Himself does not tempt anyone (1:13)
8. **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brethren (1:16)
9. This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must **be** quick to hear, slow to speak & slow to anger (1:19)
10. Putting aside all filthiness & all that remains of wickedness, in humility **receive** the word implanted, which is able to save your souls (1:21)
11. **Prove** yourselves doers of the word, & not merely hearers who delude themselves (1:22)
12. My brethren, **do not hold** your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism (2:1)
13. **Listen**, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith & heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (2:5)
- 14 & 15. So **speak** & so **act** as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty (2:12)
16. Someone may well say, "You have faith & I have works; **show** me your faith without the works, & I will show you my faith by my works" (2:18)
17. **Let not** many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment (3:1)
18. **Look** at the ships also, though they are so great & are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires (3:4)
19. **So also** (look) the tongue is a small part of the body, & yet it boasts of great things (3:5)

20. Who among you is wise & understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom (3:13)
- 21 & 22. But if you have bitter jealousy & selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant & so lie against the truth (3:14)
- 23 & 24. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil & he will flee from you (4:7)
- 25-27. Draw near to God & He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; & purify your hearts, you double-minded (4:8)
- 28-31. Be miserable & mourn & weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning & your joy to gloom
32. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, & He will exalt you (4:10)
33. Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law & judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it (4:11)
34. Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such & such a city, & spend a year there & engage in business & make a profit" (4:13)
- 35 & 36. Come now, you rich, weep & howl for your miseries which are coming upon you (5:1)
37. Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, & which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; & the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord (5:4)
- 38 & 39. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. (Behold/look) The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early & late rains (5:7)
- 40 & 41. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near (5:8)
- 42 & 43. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door (5:9)
44. As an example, brethren, of suffering & patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord (5:10)
45. (Behold/look) We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job & have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion & is merciful (5:11)
- 46 & 47. But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but (let) your yes is to be yes, & your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment (5:12)
- 48 & 49. Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises (5:13)
- 50 & 51. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church & they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord (5:14)

52 & 53. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, & pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (5:16)

54. My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth & one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death & will cover a multitude of sins (5:20)

Obviously, some of these commands are easier than others for each of us but they're all commanded of all of us. One test of true saving faith is the desire to obey the commands of our Lord. Obedience doesn't bring salvation but it does show salvation. We're all probably familiar with the song, *If you're happy & you know it ... then your face will surely show it.* If there's one resounding message in the book of James it is this: If you've been saved then your life & works will show it. James clearly makes the point that to have faith which doesn't motivate you to action is not true saving faith. It's a dead & deceiving false faith that does not save. True faith is seen by practicing & doing what God's Word says. How do we do this?

1. Rely on the Holy Spirit which means you'll be confessing sin regularly.
2. Resolve to be a strong Christian & be willing to do what it takes.
3. Be in God's Word every day. This is where God speaks to you.
4. As you read, mark any commands & promises you see. Ask God to make you aware of opportunities to practice obeying His Word as you go through your day.
5. Don't be discouraged by failure. Failure is temporary. Keep trying & practicing & don't quit (Gal 6:9). That's important to remember, especially when we realize we're attempting something so big. We're trying to live up to who we actually are in Jesus Christ. We're trying to defy & overcome our old sinful nature. That's huge. It takes practice, determination, & reliance on God.

In closing, I trust we've all been convicted by our journey through James. I pray we'll find our time spent here has been useful in our own Christian walk & that of those we interact with. May God bless you as you grow in grace & truth, learning to walk victoriously & faithfully as we're being conformed to the image of Christ. PRAY