

Practical Lessons for Life from the Book of James

The Book of James may be one of the earliest books written in the New Testament (~45 AD). James, although the Lord's brother, at one time was not a believer (John 7:1-5), but was ultimately transformed after the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:12-14; 12:17; 15:13).

The humble salutation:

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

The importance and necessity of trials as a child of God:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when your encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” *James 1:2-4*.

“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.” *James 1:12*.

The necessity and nature of prayer:

“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. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea and tossed by the wind.” *James 1:5-6*.

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. 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; 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. 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.” *James 5:13-16*.

“You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” *James 4:2-3*.

Tomorrow is not guaranteed:

“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.’ 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. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that’” *James 4, 13-15*.

The futility of riches and honors in this world:

“But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 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.” *James 1:9-11.*

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and 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” *James 5:1-3.*

Iniquity will not go unpunished:

“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.” *James 5:4.*

The importance of avoiding favoritism:

“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, 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,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?” *James 2:2-4.*

“But if you show partiality, you are committing sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors” *James 2:9.*

“For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” *James 2:13.*

The importance of being hearers and doers:

“But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger...therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” *James 1:19; 21-22.*

It is importance of faith and works:

“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?” *James 2:14.*

“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 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? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.” *James 2:15-17.*

“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?” *James 2:19-20.*

“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” *James 2:26.*

“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.” *James 3:13.*

“But someone may well say, ‘You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’” *James 2:18.*

The importance of controlling the tongue:

“...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. 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 fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.” *James 3:5-6.*

“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a relentless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.” *James 1:8-10.*

“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. 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” *James 4:11-12.*

“Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door” *James 5:9.*

Caution against swearing and taking oaths:

“But above all, brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes and your no be no; so that you may not fall under judgment” *James 5:12.*

The peace of God versus the wisdom and the selfishness of the world:

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.” *James 3:13-16.*

“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.” *James 4:4.*

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” *James 3:17-18.*

The importance of patience and endurance:

“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. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” *James 5:7-8.*

“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.” *James 5:11.*

The importance of humility:

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.” *James 4:7;10.*

Questions:

1. Are there examples that illustrate that friendship with the world makes us enemies of God?
2. Is having faith alone enough to save an individual? James suggests that true saving faith is verified by the works that accompany it. Is it the case that good works are not the cause of salvation, but the result of it?
3. A difficult task: how do we control our tongue, and yet communicate Christ’s love to others?