

JAMES 1

SLOW TO SPEAK, SLOW TO ANGER

The Epistle of James was written around A.D. 45–50 by the half-brother of Jesus (James the Just). It is not addressed to any individual, but to the church as a whole. James' theme is not works, but faith—the same as Paul's theme, but James emphasizes what faith produces.

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. **6** But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **7** That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **8** Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. **10** But the rich

should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. **11** For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. **21** Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. **27** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

STUDY NOTES

The Bible is clear: We are saved by grace alone. “Works” should come as a byproduct of our faith and relationship with Jesus Christ. As James explains, we should see these works in our lives if we have truly been transformed. *Slow to speak, slow to anger* is a great, quick verse to memorize for when it's needed most: In the heat of the moment! -JT

[BlueLetterBible.org](https://www.BlueLetterBible.org) Commentary

James: There are several men named **James** mentioned in the New Testament, but reliable tradition assigns this book to the one called *James the Just*, the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55) and the brother of Jude (Jude 1), who led the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). Yet the writer of this letter is the same James who received a special resurrection appearance of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7). This was probably the cause of his conversion, because up to that time the brothers of Jesus seemed unsupportive of His message and mission (John 7:5). When he did follow Jesus, he followed with great devotion. An early history of the church says that James was such a man of prayer that his knees had large and thick calluses, making them look like the knees of a camel. It also says that James

was martyred in Jerusalem by being pushed from a high point of the temple. Yet the fall did not kill him, and on the ground he was beaten to death, even as he prayed for his attackers.

A bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Knowing that this James was the half-brother of Jesus makes his self-introduction all the more significant. He did not proclaim himself “the brother of Jesus” but only **a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Jesus was more than James’ brother; more importantly, Jesus was his **Lord**.

Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience: Faith is *tested* through trials, not *produced* by trials. Trials reveal what faith we do have; not because God doesn’t know how much faith we have, but so that our faith will be evident to ourselves and to those around us.

“Faith is as vital to salvation as the heart is vital to the body: hence the javelins of the enemy are mainly aimed at this essential grace.” (Spurgeon)

On **Patience**: “I have looked back to times of trial with a kind of longing, not to have them return, but to feel the strength of God as I have felt it then, to feel the power of faith, as I have felt it then, to hang upon God’s powerful arm as I hung upon it then, and to see God at work as I saw him then.” (Spurgeon)

A wave of the sea is a fitting description of one who is hindered by unbelief and unnecessary doubts.

- **A wave of the sea** is *without rest*, and so is the doubter.
- **A wave of the sea** is *unstable*, and so is the doubter.
- **A wave of the sea** is *driven by the winds*, and so is the doubter.
- **A wave of the sea** is *capable of great destruction*, and so is the doubter.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren: Satan’s great strategy in temptation is to convince us that the pursuit of our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us. If we remember that Satan

The Christian ideal is **not to retreat from the world**; they are in the world, they are not of it; and **remain unspotted from the world**.

only comes to *steal, and to kill, and to destroy* (John 10:10), then we can more effectively resist the deceptions of temptation.

Slow to speak, slow to anger: We can learn to be slow to anger by first learning to be swift to hear and slow to speak. Much of our anger and wrath comes from being *self-centered* and not *others-centered*. Swift to hear is a way to be *others-centered*. Slow to speak is a way to be *others-centered*. “But hath not Nature taught us the same that the apostle here doth, by giving us two ears, and those open; and but one tongue, and that hedged in with teeth and lips?” (Trapp)

Receive with meekness the implanted word: In contrast to an impure manner of living, we should **receive the implanted word** of God (doing it **with meekness**, a teachable heart). This word is **able to save** us, both in our current situation and eternally. The purity of God’s word can preserve us even in an impure age.

“The first thing, then, is receive. That word ‘receive’ is a very instructive gospel word; it is the door through which God’s grace enters to us. We are not saved by working, but by receiving; not by what we give to God, but by what God gives to us, and we receive from him.” (Spurgeon)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only: We must receive God’s word as doers, not merely hearers. To take comfort in the fact you have heard God’s word when you haven’t *done* it is to deceive yourself.

He is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was: The person who only hears God’s word without doing it has the same sense and stability as a man who looks into a mirror and immediately forgets what he saw. The information he received did not do any good in his life.



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JAMES 1

#27

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HE IS LIKE A MAN WHO LOOKS INTENTLY AT HIS NATURAL FACE IN A MIRROR. FOR HE LOOKS AT HIMSELF AND GOES AWAY AND AT ONCE FORGETS WHAT HE WAS LIKE.

JAMES 1:22-24

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