



Commentary

James

Scholars believe James, the younger brother of Jesus (son of Mary and Joseph) likely wrote this book, the first book written for the New Testament. Even though the letter is addressed to first century Christians it gives advice just as important to us today.

James wrote to believers, so the letter doesn't present the message of salvation. Instead he emphasizes how people who already trust in Christ should live. James focuses on real issues that believers face: temptation, anger, favoritism, careless words, quarrelling, boasting, and patience. God knows we're not perfect, but He expects us, with help from the Holy Spirit, to strive to be like Jesus. God wants to change our lives—at home, school, playing sports, on the computer, everywhere.

James shows us that when acts of love are lacking, faith is lacking. If someone "claims to have faith but has no deeds" James says that faith is false. Genuine faith joins us with Jesus Christ so that the power of the Holy Spirit can work in our thoughts and actions. "Words only" faith has no saving power.

What do you think the biggest challenge is to living a Godly life? The tongue - our words. The problem of the tongue is universal. The "tongue" applies to all communication, whether spoken, typed in a computer, or some other means. Just as our actions reveal if our faith is alive, so our speech reveals if our hearts are pure. The life of faith must have action (James 2) and Holy Spirit controlled conversation (James 3).

James wrote to Christians who had problems. These Christians favored rich people, couldn't control their tongues, fought with each other, etc. James ends chapter 3 talking about peace and starts chapter 4 talking about fights. Battles in the world as well as in the church begin with spiritual battles in our hearts. Selfish Christians lack power in their prayers.

Another cause for conflict in the church is "friendship with the world." James 4 calls Christians who adopt the world's philosophy "adulterous people." When we conform to the world around us we are unfaithful to our Lord. James goes on to point out that God gives grace to the humble. It takes grace and humility for people to submit. Arrogant people can't see their own needs. They think they have it all when they are spiritually poor, blind and naked (Revelation 3:17). Humility draws us to God; pride makes Him our opponent.

James 5 gives straight-forward advice about health, wealth, prayer, and pain. James also inserts some subtle warnings about the last days, Christ's return, and judgment. At the close of his letter James gives us an urgent reminder that we live in a fallen world,



Commentary

James

but we live for a life beyond this world.

Scripture tells us to pray directly to God (1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 4:14-16), but James shares the value of having godly believers pray for us. The Apostle Paul asked God for healing and God said, “No” in order to demonstrate grace through Paul’s weakness. Healing can be a difficult subject, but we don’t want to miss God’s healing because we never asked for it (James 4:2).

James closes his letter by asking us to bring anyone who drifts from the faith back into belief. We should do this in gentle humility and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How well do your actions mirror the faith that you proclaim? This is a question that we all struggle to answer well.

As you study the letter from James, focus on each area that he mentions: your actions during trials, your treatment of those less fortunate, the way you speak and relate to others, and the role that money plays in how you live your life.

As you can see the book of James gives practical advice for the believer in living out what one believes. May you be blessed and inspired as you read and study the book of James.