

James
Faith that works

I. Chapter 1

Vocabulary:

persecution: when people harm you because of your faith

wisdom: deep understanding

purified: metal placed in extreme heat to get rid of other substances

discount: to minimize or think less of someone

toss: to go back and forth

constant: faithful

A. Facing all kinds of trouble

James begins by telling us that we will have many kinds of trouble. These troubles may be due to persecution. Sometimes people will make fun of us because of Jesus. How should we respond to trouble in our lives? We should be joyful!! Because of these troubles, our faith will be tested. Peter says in I Peter 1, that our faith is made pure by troubles and trials. We must continue to trust in Christ. The troubles will help us to strengthen our faith. As our faith increases, we will be more and more like Jesus. We will be able to do all the jobs that God has for us to do.

Read James 1: 1-4 (page 1279), I Peter 1: 6-7 (page 1283)

When we experience troubles, we need to know how to act. We must ask God for wisdom. God understands that the trouble we experience will be difficult for us. God wants us to come to Him. He will not discount our troubles. When we ask God for wisdom, we must not doubt that He will give it. James gives us a picture of a person who doubts. They are like the waves in the ocean tossed by the wind. When we doubt, we waver back and forth from belief to unbelief. We must be constant in our trust that God will answer our prayers. Jesus says that when we pray, we must not doubt. In fact, we must believe that we have already received what we pray for.

Read James 1: 5-8 (page 1279), Mark 11: 22-26 (page 1079)

Regardless of our circumstance, we should respond to God with joy. If we are poor, we can be joyful because of our riches in Heaven. If we are rich, we can be joyful because we know our own sinful hearts. We know that we have nothing without Christ. The things of this world will not last. We can see this when we see flowers die from the hot sun. Wealth and earthly possessions mean nothing compared with our Heavenly reward.

Read James 1: 9-11 (page 1279)

In verse 12 of James 1, James says that we should be happy when we endure hard times. The "hard times" in this passage are really trials that we endure. God allows these trials or tests to train us. The tests help us to develop our faith in Christ. However, temptations are very different from trials. Temptations never come from God. It is our own desires and sinful natures that tempt us. It is not wrong to desire something. However, when we continue to think about these desires, we begin to focus on them. As we focus on our desires, our hearts and minds turn from God. In Romans 6, Paul tells us that we do not gain from sinning. We have been set free by Christ's blood. God has given us the gift of eternal life. Every good and perfect gift comes from God. God never changes - He is the God of creation. God is absolutely consistent.

Read James 1: 12-18 (page 1278), Hebrews 12:5 (page 1277), Romans 6: 21-23 (page 1193)

B. Our conduct

James tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. These are words of wisdom. We need to be constantly listening to God's Holy Spirit. We need to be constantly listening to God's word. Before we speak, we should choose our words carefully. We should ask God to give us the correct words to say. We should be slow to get angry. Take the time to ask for God's help.

Read James 1: 19-20 (page 1279)

There is nothing we can do to make God give us Eternal Life. It is a gift. God shows His grace to us by giving His gift freely. But once we belong to God, we must obey Him. Obedience requires action. We must turn away from the things that tempt us. We have to turn away from our old sinful life. We have to trust that God's word is true. We must do more than just read or listen to God's word. We must obey what it says. Jesus talks about people who listen and obey.

They are like a man who builds his house on solid rock. No storm can harm this house. When we obey God's word, we can endure all tests, temptations, and trials.

So, as we read and hear God's word, we must obey it. But if we don't control what we say, we are violating our beliefs. This is what God accepts: that we care for widows and orphans. He also wants us to separate ourselves from the world.

Read James 1: 21-27 (page 1279), Romans 2: 13-16 (page 1189), Luke 6: 46-49 (page 1097), Psalms 34: 11-16 (page 595)

Questions

1. How should we respond to trouble in our lives?
2. How can trouble actually help us?
3. Why do we need wisdom during trouble? How do we get wisdom?
4. What did Jesus say about prayer?
5. What is the difference between trial (tests) and temptations?
6. Temptations never come from God. How are we tempted?

7. Explain each of the following:

quick to listen:

slow to speak:

slow to anger:

8. Obedience requires _____. What does this mean?

Think about it!!

What troubles in your life have increased your faith and growth in the Lord?

How can this passage (James 1: 1-18) help you depend on God?

James

II. Chapter 2

Vocabulary:

treat: how we behave towards others

the law: God's Ten Commandments

evident: something that is very clear, obvious

should mirror: should be the same as

intervened: to keep something from happening, to come between

A. Treat everyone the same.

Because we believe in Jesus, we should treat everyone the same. How a person dresses does not matter. When someone new comes to church, we should not respond to them based on how they are dressed. To God, the poor are rich in faith. Paul tells us in I Corinthians that God chooses the foolish, weak, and unimportant people to bring shame to the world. We think that rich people are important. But rich people can cause trouble. They take people to court.

Read James 2: 1-7 (page 1280), I Corinthians 1: 27-31 (page 1205)

There are two commands that Jesus said were the most important. The second one says that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Our neighbors are everyone that we meet. When we don't treat everyone the same, we sin. God has given us His laws to show us our sin. We are supposed to keep the law. When we disobey even the smallest part of the law, we break all of God's laws. But Jesus came to give us the full understanding of the law. God's grace is evident because Jesus obeyed the law perfectly. When we trust in Jesus, God looks at Jesus' righteousness, not ours. However, our behavior should mirror the law as we obey God. As we respond to the people God places before us, let us always choose to show mercy.

Read James 2: 8-13 (page 1280), Matthew 22: 36-40 (page 1054), Matthew 5: 17-20 (page 1033)

B. Show your faith by what you do.

Faith in God requires action. When we obey God, we act out our obedience. When Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself", He meant that we

should respond to people in a loving manner. If someone needs food or clothes, we must help them. Giving words of encouragement are not enough. As your faith grows, you should desire to help those around you. If not, then your faith is dead.

Read James 2: 14-19 (page 1280)

In the Old Testament, we can find examples of faith leading to actions. As an act of faith, Abraham placed his son Isaac on an altar. Abraham obeyed God and he was prepared to kill his son. But God intervened and sent a ram in place of Isaac. Abraham believed God and acted in faith. Scripture says that Abraham's faith in action made him right with God. It is a combination of belief and active faith that makes us righteous.

Another example of faith in action is Rahab. Rahab was a prostitute living in Jericho. Jericho was a city in the land of Canaan. God told the people of Israel to go into Canaan. Joshua had sent some men into Jericho secretly. The king of Jericho found out and he wanted to kill the men. Rahab hid the men in her home. Her belief in God and her actions made her right before God.

Read Genesis 22: 9-13 (page 20), Joshua 2: 1-11 (page 226), James 2: 20-26 (page 1280)

Questions

1. How should we treat everyone we meet?
2. Who does God choose to shame the world?
3. Why has God give us His law?

4. What happens if we disobey the smallest part of the law?

5. What did Jesus mean by the command "Love your neighbor as you love yourself"?

6. What did Abraham do that showed his faith in God? What did Rahab do?

James

III. Chapter 3

Vocabulary:

accurate: being true, exact, correct

rudder: a blade in the front of a ship that can be turned to change the ship's direction.

bit: a piece of metal placed in a horse's mouth used to control the horse's direction.

reins: leather straps that the rider holds (attached to the bit)

razor: used to remove hair from a man's face

spark: something that starts a fire

getting ahead: to be successful and rich

bitter: resentful

A. Control what you say

James begins this chapter by writing about teachers. Teachers will be judged by what they say and do. This is because someone who teaches God's word has the responsibility to teach with accuracy. However, everyone including teachers, say wrong things sometimes. We say words in anger, we say harmful things as a joke, and we speak without thinking. A person who never says anything wrong is perfect.

James compares our tongues to a horse's mouth and the rudder of a ship. To control a horse, we put a bit in the horse's mouth. When we pull on the horse's reins, the bit makes the horse turn its head. The rudder on a ship is very small but it controls the direction of the ship. Just like a horse's mouth or a rudder, our tongues are a very small part of our body. But the tongue can cause a great amount of trouble.

Read James 3: 1-5 (page 1280)

In Psalms, David talks about a man who is a liar. David says that his tongue is as sharp as a razor. James says that our tongue is a fire. Although it starts as a spark, our tongue can set our whole body on fire. Throughout history, people have tamed many animals for pets. But no one can control the tongue. With our mouths, we praise our Father God. But with the same mouth, we yell and curse at the people God created.

Read Psalms 52: 2-5 (page 608), James 3: 6-12 (page 1281)

B. Two kinds of wisdom

Do you think that you are wise? Then, live a good life of service to others and be humble. But if you are jealous and bitter, this is not wisdom from God. Jealousy and bitterness come from the devil. Don't think only about getting ahead. If you do, your life will not be happy.

God's wisdom is pure. God's wisdom loves peace, and thinks about other people. God's wisdom is merciful and fair. If you have God's wisdom, you will obey Him and be honest about yourself.

Read James 3: 13-18 (page 1281)

Questions

1. Why should teachers be careful?
2. What does James compare our tongues to?
3. What do David and James say about the tongue?
4. How do we use our tongue for good? How do we use our tongue for bad?
5. What is God's wisdom?

James

IV. Chapter 4

Vocabulary:

desires: things that we want

selfish: to want to only please yourself

secular: not Christian

emphasizes: views as important

A. Obey God

Why do we argue with other people? It is because of our own sinful desires. We fight because we are selfish. We only want to please ourselves. We don't even ask God for what we want. But if we did, God wouldn't answer because we are asking for selfish things.

So, what prayers does God listen to? In I John, we read that if we obey God, He will give us anything we ask. If we pray about the things that God wants, He will hear us.

Read James 4: 1-3 (page 1281), I John 3: 21-22 (page 1293), I John 5: 14-15 (page 1294)

We have to choose between following God and following the world. What is the "world"? The "world" consists of secular culture without God. The "world" emphasizes selfish desires and earthly rewards. If we choose the world, we are God's enemies. If we love the world, we don't love God. God wants us to love Him. God wants to give us more grace.

Read James 4: 4-6 (page 1281), I John 2: 15-17 (page 1292)

How can we stop being selfish? How can we choose God over the world? We must take action. First, we must decide to obey God. Second, we must resist the devil. Do not allow the devil to win. Third, come to God and confess your sins. Show real sorrow for being selfish. Be humble before God and He will lift you up.

Read James 4: 7-110 (page 1281), I Peter 5: 6-9 (page 1287)

If you speak against another Christian, you are not keeping God's commandments. When we speak against people, we are judging them. God says not to judge others. Only God has the right to judge. Jesus spoke about judging. He said that you would be judged in the same way that you judge others. When we are tempted to judge, we must look at our own sin.

Read James 4: 11-12 (page 1281), Matthew 7: 1-5 (page 1035)

B. Bragging about tomorrow

Don't make plans about the future. You don't know what the future holds. God is the One who holds the future. We don't even know what will happen tomorrow. Does this mean we can never think about making plans? No, but it does mean that we must plan knowing that God is in control. We must pray and ask God's guidance for every plan we make. We must seek God's will for everything in our lives. In Matthew, Jesus says to put God's kingdom first. Jesus said not to worry about tomorrow.

Read James 4: 13-17 (page 1282), Matthew 6: 33-34 (page 1035)

Questions

1. Why do we argue with other people?
2. What prayers does God listen to?
3. What is the "world"?
4. How can we choose God over the world?

5. What are we doing when we speak against other people?

6. What should we do about the future?

Think about it!!

1. What does it mean for us to have "friendship with the world"?

2. James says that life is a mist. How does this affect the way that you look at the future?

James

V. Chapter 5

Vocabulary:

obsessed: someone who concentrates on only one thing

store: keep something for future use

stand firm: continue to trust god in everything

throne: a king's chair

footstool: a small piece of furniture that you put your feet on

fervently: with great intensity and belief

effect: result

A. A warning to rich people

In Chapter 5, James warns people who are rich. Riches do not satisfy. Some people who are rich only want to get more and more wealth. The need to be rich becomes the most important thing. Many times, wealthy people are so concerned about their money that they will not pay their employees. Many wealthy people become obsessed with getting more money. They also become obsessed with keeping the money that they have.

Is it bad to be rich? No. But it is wrong to be obsessed with making money. In I Timothy, we read that the love of money is evil. Jesus talked about riches. He said that we should not store up riches on earth. These riches would be destroyed. Instead, we should store riches in Heave. Your heart and your desires will be where your riches are. If you are storing riches on earth, your heart only wants to get more and more money. If you are storing riches in Heaven, your heart desires God.

Read James 5: 1-6 (page 1282), I Timothy 6: 10 (page 1258), Matthew 6: 19-20 (page 1035)

B. Be patient when you suffer

We must be patient as we wait for the Lord to return. James compares our waiting to a farmer. After a farmer plants, he waits for the crops to grow. As we wait for the Lord, we must stand firm. James reminds us again about judging. This is important because the true Judge will come soon.

We should also be patient as we suffer. James reminds us of the patience of Job and the prophets. If we continue in the faith, we will be blessed. Although Job suffered so much, God showed him mercy.

We are not supposed to swear to anything on earth or Heaven. We should simply respond with "yes" or "no". Jesus talks about this same thing in detail. We should not swear by anything on earth for it is God's footstool.

Read James 5: 7-12 (page 1282), Matthew 5: 33-37 (page 1033)

C. The prayer of faith

When you are in trouble or are suffering, you should pray. God tells us in Psalms 50 that if we call out to Him when we are in trouble, He will save us. When you are happy, sing praise to God. In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he tells the Christians to sing with thankfulness in their hearts. Do everything in the name of Jesus and be thankful.

If we are very sick, we should go to the elders of our church. They will lay hands on us and anoint us with oil. This prayer of faith can heal us. However, we must seek God's will. We should pray for each other. We should pray that people will be healed. The prayer of a godly person is powerful. We can see the effect of a godly man's prayer. Elijah was a prophet. He fervently prayed that it would not rain. It didn't rain for 3 1/2 years. Elijah prayed again and the rains came.

If a brother or sister in Christ should fall into sin, we should help to bring the back to the Lord. We will save the soul of this person.

Read Psalms 50: 15 (page 606), Colossians 3:16 (page 1247), James 5:13-20 (page 1282)

Questions

1. What is the most important thing to a rich person?
2. Is it bad to be rich? When does money become bad?

3. Where would we be storing riches?

4. How does a farmer show patience?

5. When should we show patience?

6. What should we do if we are suffering? What should we do if we are happy?

7. What is a fervent prayer?

Think about it!!

1. In what areas of your life are you impatient?