

# Hearing and Doing

## James 1 Verse by Verse

Introduction

Tested  
Faith  
1:2-18

True  
Religion  
1:19-27

Conclusions



# Introduction

## Which James?

- There are several men named **James** in the New Testament.
  - **Two of them** are listed as apostles in the Gospels.
  - **James the son of Zebedee** (John's brother) was put to death by Herod in **Acts 12:2**.
  - **James the son of Alphaeus** doesn't get mentioned outside of those lists.
- 
- The historical favorite is **James the Lord's brother**.
  - He shows up as the leader of the Jerusalem church in Paul's writings and in Acts. (This gives him the motivation to write.)
  - He is known as **James the Just** outside the Bible.
  - Historians tell us he was hastily sentenced to death by the Sanhedrin while the positions of high priest and/or governor were in a state of disarray.

What's in  
James 1?

Our  
Key Verse

Greetings  
from James



# Introduction

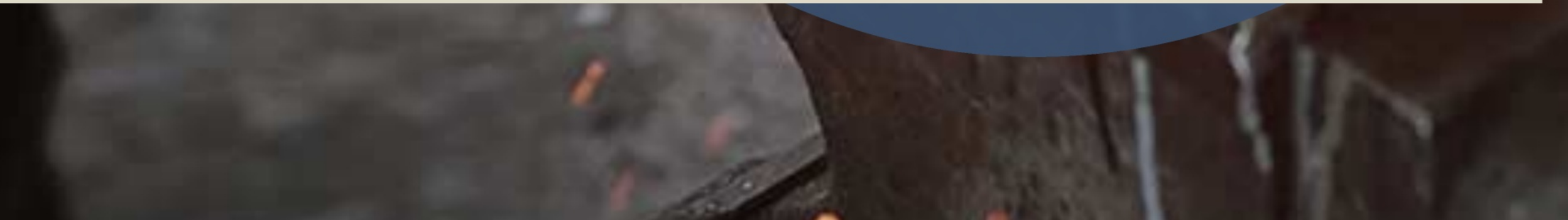
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- Historians tell us he was hastily sentenced to death by the Sanhedrin while the positions of high priest and/or governor were in a state of disarray.





# What's in James 1?

- This chapter, like the whole letter, is full of practical instruction for the Christian life. James wants us to have a **faith that works**.
- James' style is often compared to the **Sermon on the Mount** or the **Book of Proverbs**.
- The first subject James deals with is our perspective on **tests and trials** in the Christian life.
- God uses these to mature us in our faith.
- Next, James encourages us to **live out our faith** in visible, practical actions.
- Our faith is **a way of life** - both believing and doing according to God's revealed will.

# Our Key Verse

**James 1:22**

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.



# Greetings from James (James 1:1)

- **James** (real name *Jacob*)
- **Twelve tribes** James writes to Jewish believers, probably before there were even many Gentiles in the church.
- He even calls the Christian assembly a “synagogue” in 2:2.
- **the Dispersion** is the *diaspora*. Those scattered outside the Holy Land in various countries.
- **Greetings** is literally something like “**rejoice**” (also related to *grace*), which served in Greek as a greeting.
- James uses this as a springboard to make his first point.

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# Tested Faith 1:2-18



## Tested Faith 1:2-18

- James is completely realistic in his expectations of the Christian life.
- He knows there will be difficulties, but he also knows that God intends to use them all.
- Trials are God's method to bring us to maturity in our faith.

**Rejoice in  
Your Trials**

**Ask God for  
Wisdom**

**Know Your  
Position**

**Don't  
Blame God**





# Rejoice in Your Trials 1:2-4

- **Count it all joy** James is not telling us how to feel. He is telling us how to think.
  - Feelings are largely unintentional.
  - Thoughts can more easily be regulated, and can then affect our feelings.
- Trials are sure to come our way as believers.
- The key issue is how we respond.

Matthew  
5:11-12

Luke  
6:22-23

Matthew  
5:48

# Matthew 5:11-12

11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



## Luke 6:22-23

22 Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

# Matthew 5:48

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- *This relates well to James 1:4.*





# Ask God for Wisdom 1:5-8

- **1:5** Wisdom is the ability to act biblically, revealing that we really understand God's perspective.
- God is generous in His giving of wisdom.
- He will not condemn you for not having it.
- He will happily answer your prayer and give you more of it.
- But he also wants us to ask in faith.
- This means we know that God can and will answer prayer.

Matthew  
7:7-8

Two Types  
of Doubt

# Matthew 7:7-8

7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.



# Two Types of Doubt

1. One type of doubt is merely a weakness of faith.
2. The other type of doubt is insincere faith.
  - This kind may question the character of God or whether it makes any sense to pray to him in the first place.
  - There is an outward attempt to honor God while holding onto idols at the same time.

Doubt as  
Weak Faith

Doubt as  
Insincere  
Faith

# Doubt as Weak Faith

- In **Mark 9**, the father of a boy afflicted by a demon asks Jesus for help.
- He also gives us one of the most precise, realistic expressions of faith in all of the Bible. Here is **Mark 9:23-24**.

23 And Jesus said to him, "... All things are possible for one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "**I believe; help my unbelief!**"

- The result was that Jesus cast out the demon just as the father desired.



# Doubt as Insincere Faith

## **2 Kings 17:28-33** (*After Assyria resettled Samaria.*)

28 So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the Lord. 29 But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. ... 32 They also feared the Lord and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. 33 So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.



# Know Your Position 1:9-11

- **1:9** The **lowly brother** is the one of humble circumstances.
- The humble brother can look forward to his future state and rightly give glory to God.
- **1:10-11** The **rich** also have something to glory or “**boast**” in, but it is not their riches, as some might be tempted to believe.
- They are to glory in their “**humiliation.**”
- If a rich person recognizes their utter dependence upon Christ, then this is a real reason to glory or boast.
- He or she has found the secret of true riches.





# Don't Blame God 1:12-18

- **1:12** This section starts with a **beatitude**.
- **Jesus** used these statements, but we also find them in the **Psalms** and **Proverbs**.
- In this case the one who remains faithful under trial is promised the **crown of life**.
- This is the person who truly loves God.
- **1:13-15** James makes a distinction between **trials**, which test our faith, and **temptations**, which test our obedience.
- There are not two different words in Greek, so the difference is only in how the word is used.

From  
Temptation  
to Death

The Truth  
About God

# From Temptation to Death

- **1:13** God and temptation have nothing in common.
- **1:14** **Temptation**, in the sense of enticement toward evil, is something which arises from within us.
- We cannot really prevent this, but we also do not have to give in to it. We can learn to starve the desire.
- **1:14-15** Here is the **process** by which temptation turns into sin, which then leads to death.
- James envisions **three generations**: **Desire** is the father of **sin**, which is the father of **death**.



# The Truth About God

- **1:16** James starts with a somber warning.
- There is a sense in which we are responsible for our own deception - or our ability to stand firm in the truth.
- **1:17** God is **completely good** and **never changes**.
- **Deception** would be to believe something other than this about God.
- **1:18** When we receive Christ through believing the gospel message, we are **born again** to a new, **eternal life in Christ**.
- This is the exact opposite of what happens in the cycle of sin.
- Sin brings forth death. God's word brings forth eternal life.

Jeremiah  
17:9

1 Peter  
1:23

# Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things,  
and desperately sick;  
who can understand it?



# 1 Peter 1:23

... You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

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The background of the image is a close-up of a welding process. A bright, yellow-orange flame or molten metal is visible on the left side, where it meets a dark, metallic structure. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is centered over the image, containing the text. The text is in a white, sans-serif font. The overall scene is industrial and dramatic due to the high-contrast lighting of the welding process.

# True Religion 1:19-27



## True Religion 1:19-27

- Here is more of what it means to live out our faith in the real world. This is James' speciality.
- Issues related to our tongue - the things we say - are woven through this letter from James - starting here.
- He also wants us to put God's word into action.

How  
to Treat  
Others

How  
Change  
Happens

Worthwhile  
Religion



# How to Treat Others

- **1:19 Quick to hear** This implies active listening which is more than waiting to speak.
- **Slow to speak** When we take our time and think about our words, we rarely regret it.
- **Slow to anger** If we think about what is making us angry, we may realize that our anger is wrong.
- **1:20** God himself gets angry at sin.
- We are too often angry at the wrong things or express it in the wrong way.
- And we are rarely angry at our own sin.

# How Change Happens

- **1:21** The main thing that we need to hear is **God's word** - with meek and willing hearts.
- We prepare our hearts for that by rejecting the garbage of the world.
- **1:22-25** After receiving the word, we then need to put it into practice.
- It doesn't matter how hard, how intently, we look into the mirror, we are still going to look the same.
- What matters is what we do once we look.

From Tony  
Evans

Matthew  
7:24-27



A mirror shows the reality. It exposes what you look like, but it can't change you. It won't comb your hair or brush your teeth. To look in a mirror is a call to action.



Tony Evans, Bible Teacher  
and Commentator

# Matthew 7:24-27

24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.



# Worthwhile Religion

- James wants our faith to be **worthwhile** - not **worthless**.
- He returns to controlling our tongue.
- Every church needs to have some kind of orphans and some kind of widows ministry.
- That means something for (potentially) troubled kids and something for the elderly, mostly older women, who need someone to encourage them from time to time.
- The end of **v.27** matches up with the beginning of **v.21**.

The Tongue  
in Proverbs

Injustice  
in Isaiah

The World  
in 1 John

# The Tongue in Proverbs

- **12:18** There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
- **15:2** The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
- **21:23** Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.



# Injustice in Isaiah

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,  
and the writers who keep writing oppression,  
2 to turn aside the needy from justice  
and to rob the poor of my people of their right,  
**that widows may be their spoil,**  
**and that they may make the fatherless their prey!**

3 What will you do on the day of punishment,  
in the ruin that will come from afar?  
To whom will you flee for help,  
and where will you leave your wealth?

# The World in 1 John

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.  
16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.



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# Conclusions

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- He wants us to have a faith that works.
- The first subject James dealt with was our perspective on **tests and trials**.
- God uses these to mature us in our faith.
- Yet he is never any part of temptation toward evil.
- Next, James encouraged us to **live out our faith** in visible, practical actions.
- Our faith needs to be **a complete way of life** - believing and doing according to God's revealed will.

From Tony  
Evans

Key Verse

A Final  
Prayer



James is the in-your-face, no-holds-barred apostle. He says in essence, “If you are going to be a Christian, be a real one.” This book thus explains what practical Christianity looks like. It’s about living out your faith in everyday situations with everyday people, and doing it victoriously.



Tony Evans, Bible Teacher  
and Commentator

# Our Key Verse

**James 1:22**

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.



# A Final Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

- Thank you for being an unchanging God who only gives us good things. Every good and perfect gift comes from you.
- Help us to remain steadfast during the trials that we face, knowing that you are using them in our lives for good.
- Help us to control our tongue, to be open to the lessons that we find in your word, and to faithfully put our faith into action.
- Let us be living examples of a faith that works.
- In Christ,
- Amen

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