

Title: **JAMES**
 “Be Ye Doers of the Word”

Text: James 1:1

Date: Tuesday Evening — July 6, 2004

Tape # Y-30a

Readings: *Larry Criss & Larry Brown*

Introduction:

The book of James is thought to be the earliest of all the New Testament epistles. It was written by James, the half-brother of our Savior. The epistle was written to Jewish believers who had been greatly scattered in God’s good providence.

(James 1:1) "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting."

In these five short chapters James addresses those to whom he is writing as “*brethren*” fifteen times (1:1, 16, 19; 2:2, 5, 15; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19). He is writing to men and women who were born of God, to people who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This epistle was written to all in every place who are washed in the blood of Christ and robed in his righteousness, to all who trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

In these five short chapters James gives us divinely inspired instructions about how we are to live in this world for the glory of God. He is not writing as a counsellor offering advice, but as God’s messenger

giving authoritative instruction. Throughout the book, James speaks in imperatives.

OUR TRIALS

In chapter 1 (verses 2-12) James tells us that we are to always look upon our trials, those things that try, test, and prove the reality of our faith as tokens of God's grace. Those heartaches and troubles God's saints experience in this world are not evidences of anger, wrath, and judgment, but evidences of mercy, love, and grace (Heb. 12:5-14). This is particularly true when the things we suffer are the result of our faith in Christ (2 Tim. 2:12).

In Acts 8:1 we read, *“And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”* In chapter 11 we are told that the persecuted were scattered *“as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch,”* and that the persecuted saints went everywhere *“preaching the word”* (Acts 11:19).

Our Savior said, *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted*

they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).

James seems to have those very words in mind, as he writes the opening verses of his epistle. He urges us to always count it our honor as the children of God to suffer anything at the hands of wicked men for Christ's sake. Yet, what he says to us applies to anything we suffer in this world in the good and wise providence of our God.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience...Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (1:2, 3, 12).

“God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up and choke the weeds
That would else o’erspread the soil.
Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet;
Lay me low and keep me there.”

The word “*temptation*,” as it is used in these verses refers to a test or a trial by which our fidelity is proved, by which our faith is proved. In verses 13-16 the same

word is used, but it is obvious that it is used in a different sense. In verses 13-17 the word “*tempted*” refers to an enticement to evil.

OUR TEMPTATIONS

Our trials we are ever to ascribe to the work of our heavenly Father and his goodness. They are always the blessings of his grace and favor. Our temptations to evil we must never ascribe to or blame on God. This distinction James makes with great clarity in verses 13-16.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren."

God sends us trials to teach us patience (v. 3), to cause us to grow in grace and in faith; but God never tempts anyone to sin (v. 13). Yes, God has ordained from eternity all things that come to pass in time (Eph. 1:11). Yes, God works all things together for the good of his elect (Rom. 8:28). And, yes, God graciously and wisely rules and overrules the evil deeds of men and devils to sovereignly accomplish his will (Ps. 76:10). But the holy

Lord God cannot be tempted with evil and he does not tempt any to evil.

When we sin, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Let us never seek to excuse our sin by attributing it to God's sovereign purpose. We are tempted to evil when we are drawn away by our own wicked lusts. It is our lusts, nothing else, that is to be blamed for our sin (vv. 14-15). "*Do not err, my beloved brethren*" (v. 16). Your sin is your fault — no one else's, your responsibility — no one else's.

GOD'S WORK

In verses 17-25 James tells us that God's work is good. He tells us that every good thing in this world comes down from our heavenly Father in heaven. Just as all the evil there is in this world erupts from the festering corruption of our vile hearts (Mark 7:20-23), every good thing there is in this world comes down from the throne of God and is the gift of his grace (v. 17).

(James 1:17) "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Then, in verse 18, James tells us that it is by the work and good gift of God's omnipotent grace that chosen, redeemed sinners are born again, born again by the good gift of the gospel.

(James 1:18) "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

- What a blessed good gift this is! — Cherish it!
- "Of his own will" (Rom. 9:15-16)
- "begat he us" (John 3:8)
- "with the Word of truth" (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25)
- "that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." — Firstfruits are the best. — Firstfruits belong to God. — Firstfruits are the pledge of the full harvest.

THE POWER OF GODLINESS

"*The Word of Truth*" is the whole Volume of Sacred Scripture, which is the Revelation of Christ, redemption, grace, and salvation by him. The Word of Truth is the whole Revelation of God in Holy Scripture, the gospel of his free grace in Christ. This is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17) and the power of godliness by which we live in this world for the glory of God (2 Tim. 3:5).

(Rom 1:16-17) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed

from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

(2 Tim 3:5) "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

If we would live in this world for the glory of God in the exercise of true religion, our lives must be ruled and guided by the gospel of Christ. If we would live under the influence of God's powerful grace, by the power of godliness, we must hear the gospel (vv. 19-20, receive the message of God (v. 21), and obey it (vv. 22-25).

(James 1:19-25) "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: (20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (21) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (22) But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (23) For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: (24) For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. (25) But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Whenever men come into the house of God, it should be with an intense desire to hear the Word of God.

Thomas Manton made this wise observation, "If we were as swift to hear as we are ready to speak there would be less wrath and more profit in our meetings."

Usually, I find that when men do not profit from the ministry of the Word it is because they practice exactly the opposite of what James commands in James 1:19, "*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*" They are slow to hear, swift to speak, and swift to anger. There are men who seem to come to church for no other reason than to find some point of disagreement. They can hardly wait for the minister to finish speaking so that they can point out his errors. Such men are a continual source of strife and division. They do not worship, and they try to keep others from worshipping. Let us guard against this tendency of proud, self-willed flesh. May God make us swift to hear and slow to speak. Let me give you some practical advice on **hearing the Word of God**.

Prepare yourself to hear the Word (Eccles. 5:1-2).

(Eccl 5:1-2) "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. (2) Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."

Before you go to the place of worship, spend some time

in prayer. Ask God to speak to you. Ask God to enable the minister to speak with clarity and power. Go seeking a message from heaven.

Submit yourself to the Word of God. When you are sitting in the assembly, listen personally, for yourself. Submit your ideas, your traditions, and your doctrines to the Scriptures. Be willing to forsake anything that is not plainly taught in the Bible. And be willing to obey everything that is required by the gospel.

Meditate upon the Word. Do not swiftly speak against what you hear. Do not become angered by what you hear. Rather, meditate upon it. Ask God to apply the Word to your heart, and give you understanding. Seek the glory of Christ in your response to his Word.

TRUE RELIGION

Beginning in verse 26 of chapter 1 and going through chapter 5, James tells us how we are to live in this world for the glory of God. He tells us what true religion is in verses 26-27 of the first chapter.

(James 1:26-27) "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Then, beginning in chapter 2, he tells explains the details.

True religion involves caring for one another, particularly caring for our needy brethren (2:1-26).

- **Good Works** — *Brotherly Love*
- **FOURFOLD JUSTIFICATION**

There is no contradiction between James and Paul. James is not teaching that we justify ourselves before our God by our works. Rather, the Holy Spirit here teaches us that we justify our professed faith in Christ before one another by our works.

(James 2:14-20) "What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, (16) And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? (17) Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (18) Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. (19) Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (20) But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

True religion necessitates the bridling of our tongues
(3:1-12).

(James 3:1-12) "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. (2) For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body. (3) Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. (4) Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. (5) Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! (6) And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. (7) For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: (8) But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (9) Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. (10) Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. (11) Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter? (12) Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."

True religion demands grace, grace that only God our Savior can supply (3:13-5:6).

- **We must drink from the right Fountain – Christ** (3:13-18).

(James 3:13-18) "Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. (14) But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. (15) This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. (16) For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. (17) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

- **We must recognize that our greatest foe is ourselves** (4:1-5:6). – That will put an end to warring among ourselves! — Resist the devil. — Submit to God. — Guard against gossip and slander. — Protect one another's name!

(James 4:1-11) "From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members? (2) Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. (3) Ye ask, and

receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts. (4) Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (5) Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (6) But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (7) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (8) Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded. (9) Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. (10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (11) Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."

CONCLUSION

If we would honor our God, if we would do all things for the glory of our Savior, we must seek by his grace to...

Be patient (5:7-12).

(James 5:7-12) "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for

it, until he receive the early and latter rain. (8) Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (9) Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. (10) Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. (11) Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. (12) But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

Pray for one another (5:13-18).

(James 5:13-18) "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. (14) Is any sick among you? 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: (15) And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (16) Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (17) Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. (18)

And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Seek to restore one another (5:19-20).

(Gal 6:1-3) "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (2) Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (3) For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

(James 5:19-20) "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; (20) Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."