

James – Ethical Conduct 1:1-8

“There is only living faith.”



I. Overview

- A. James, 1 + 2 Peter, 1, 2, + 3 John, and Jude are called General Epistles for they were not limited to a single locality. James is addressed to the 12 Tribes dispersed abroad. – Likely all Jewish Christians at that time.
- B. Two possible authors: James, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, and James, the half-brother of Jesus. The first James was martyred **A.D. 44**, (**Read Acts 12:1-2**). They believe the book was written **A.D. 45-50**. The book has an authoritative tone: James, the half-brother of Jesus, and the brother of Jude, became the **recognized leader** of the Jerusalem Church. Also there are marked resemblances in the Greek between this Epistle and his speech at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. **James, the Just. / Camel Knees. Read 1 Corinthians 15:7** Jesus helped his doubting half-brother believe...as He helps us.
- C. Martin Luther, (1483 – 1546), did not care much for this book *“because it says little about justification by faith, while elevating works.”* He actually put James at the end of his Bible!
- D. The book deals with the practical aspects of Christian conduct...how faith, genuine Spirit-generated faith, works or should work in everyday life. It is not for the faith of heart or the **Fire Insurance Christian**.
- E. References from **22** Old Testament Books and at least **15** allusions to the teachings of Christ as embodied in the Sermon on the Mount are in this Book of James. ¹

II. Read 1:1-8

- A. V.1: What does this Greek word for **servant** really mean? [slave, person of servile condition, one who gives herself up to another's will so Jesus can extend and advance His cause through her to the world. - Devoted to another to the **disregard of one's own interests. KJV** = around 127 times used] ²
- B. V.2: Some have thought James mad, sadistic, or just plain unrealistic. Why? When was the last time you considered a trial pure joy? Why? What about **Psalms 62:8? Read**
- C. V.4: Why does your and my flesh tend to despise perseverance? What is God's goal of perseverance? Look at v. 4. Then **Read Colossians 1:28-29** Look at the upper left photo verse.
- D. V.5-8: What is James' instruction to us regarding wisdom?
- E. Why does a double-minded person equate to being also unstable? Ever been there? How about now? ³

¹NIV Ryrie Study Bible, 1983, Intro to James, p. 1685.

²<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1401&t=NIV>

³https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Jam/Jam-1.cfm?a=1147001



James – Ethical Conduct 1:9-27



“Are you deceived?”

I. Read 1:9-12

- A. So what is God, through James, really saying to the poor and the rich? Is it a sin to be rich? Is it a sin to be poor? Where does one's heart play into this discussion?
- B. *“As the poor brother forgets his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ the two are equals.”* (Hiebert, citing Lenski)
- C. Note: James makes a sudden shift from **wisdom** and **trials** to **riches** and **humility**...sudden topical changes much like in the book of proverbs.
- D. What type of trials do the poor face? What type of trials do the rich face? What types of trials have you faced? Why do we, in general, worry so much about **money**? What is the danger of becoming comfortable and secure financially **in this life**? **Read Psalm 16:5; 73:25-26; 142:5; Proverbs 30:8**
- E. *“If we put our life and our identity into things that fade away, we will fade away also. How much better to put our life and our identity into things that will **never fade**. If a rich man is only rich in this world, when he dies, he **leaves** his riches. But if a man is rich before God, when he dies, he **goes** to his riches.”* (Guzik **Bold** added.) **Discuss.**

II. Read 1:13-18

- A. What is James telling us about blessedness and enduring temptation? Is this similar to Matthew 5 and our Lord's Beatitudes? There is a *“special gift of blessedness to the one who can say **“no”** to temptation, thereby saying **“yes”** to God.”* (Guzik) When have you done this in your life? Why does sin always eventually lead to death? Note: Sexual sin is often very close to death. How can selfishness, pride, lust, and greed lead to death? **Read Romans 6:23**
- B. V.13. How can God use you as His Instrument to unload and reveal His Righteousness to a lost, fallen, corrupt, and unrighteous world?
- C. Why does God allow temptation? **Discuss.** His purpose is to **approve** us; that through the testing we *“would be revealed as genuine and strong in faith.”* (Guzik) -- a 3D cinematic representation to those in darkness. Discuss the **Diamond** laying against a black velvet cloth.



III. Read 1:19-27

- A. What is James saying here? **Discuss.** Does not our anger usually come from being self-centered rather than others-centered? Why is forgetting about ourselves so painful and difficult? We do not believe the Lord will take care of us. Simple as that. **Confession anyone?**
- B. What is it about our tongue that can readily become hellish? What can we do about it?



James – Ethical Conduct 2:1 - 26

“Is your faith living?”



I. Read 2:1-13

- A. V.1: What are some other words for “favoritism”? {partiality, discrimination, etc.} What does it mean? Why would the Lord Jesus be angry with such a sin as this? He came to destroy barriers: **Ephesians 2:14-15**
- B. **Read Acts 10:34; Deuteronomy 10:16-21; Ezra 7:25-26; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:23-25; Romans 13:6-14;** [Side Question: As Christians and as Americans, what should our response and action be toward illegal aliens / undocumented immigrants and how should we deal with the borders. Why?
- C. Why is favoritism so easy to fall into socially, in church, with politicians, with powerful people, & family?
- D. Are you really an **Ambassador**? If so, what weight of responsibility goes along with that? **Read 2 Cor. 5:20** {“An accredited diplomat sent by a (country / **God** as its / **His**) official representative to a foreign country.”} From Siri on my i-phone.
- E. V.1: “...glorious Lord Jesus Christ” The earliest Jews knew of this to mean **divine glory [Shekinah]**.
- F. Favoritism to the rich and powerful is wrong: “**1.** It shows one’s value system to be false. (v.3). **2.** It fails to honor the poor whom God honors (v.5). **3.** It favors those who oppress you (v.6). **4.** It is sin. (v.9). – Ryrie p. 1687
- G. What is the **Royal Law**? Look above to the Scroll. Torah: 1st 5 books of the Old Testament. (a complex term!!) What do you see? Royal? Yes, of God, our King and it is excellent, noble, grand, useful. (Clarke)
- H. So if you only committed the smallest of sins, what does that mean? Who then can be saved? **Read Luke 18:25-27.**
- I. V.13: What is mercy? Have you ever needed mercy? Has there ever been someone in your life or family who has needed your mercy? Mercy is for those who do not deserve it. Do you deserve mercy? The destitute do well to beg for mercy. Are you destitute before Almighty God? **Read Mark 10:46-52.**

II. Read 2:14-26

- A. This section has been hotly debated in churches, pubs, and homes for millennia. Why? Yes, we choose to place our faith or trust in the Lord Jesus, His Living Word, and His finished work on the cross. But who issues forth, generates, and gives lasting life to that faith? Man or God in man, the Hope of Glory? **John 15:5**
- B. “James is not saying that we are saved by works, but that a faith that does **not produce** good works is a **dead faith**. James was not refuting the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, but a perversion of it. Both Paul and James define faith as a living, productive trust in Christ.” – Ryrie p. 1688 ... Martin Luther did not like JAMES. ©
- C. Why is Abraham a great example for James to use? **Read Isaiah 61:10; Ephesians 6:14.**
- D. Discuss the excellent word picture of V. 26. What does the word **credited mean** in v. 23? [Reckoned, counted] (A math and an accounting, “banking, if you will” term.

Examples of Keeping the Royal Law – **Jim Mann, Author and Friend**

- 1. Listen without interrupting.** (Proverbs 18)
- 2. Speak without accusing.** (James 1:19)
- 3. Give without sparing.** (Proverbs 21:26)
- 4. Pray without ceasing.** (Colossians 1:9)
- 5. Answer without arguing.** (Proverbs 17:1)
- 6. Share without pretending.** (Ephesians 4:15)
- 7. Enjoy without complaint.** (Philippians 2:14)
- 8. Trust without wavering.** (1Corinthians 13:7)
- 9. Forgive without punishing.** (Colossians 3:13)
- 10. Kindness with forgiveness.** (Ephesians 4:31-32)



James – Ethical Conduct 3: 1-12



“What is the wildest beast on earth to tame?”

I. **Read 3:1-12**

- A. Discuss this section. **Read Luke 12:48.**
- B. Just like today, teaching / influencing others in the young church became popular. The problem? Not all should teach. **Why?** What problems do we see today? What responsibility is there?
- C. There will be a special strictness on us who are set as examples and who teach. (Moffatt)
- D. *“Their case is awful; they shall receive **greater condemnation** than common sinners; they have not only sinned in thrusting themselves into that office to which God has never called them, but through their **insufficiency**, the flocks over whom they have assumed the **mastery** perish for lack of knowledge, and their blood will God require at the watchman’s hand.”* (Clark) **Read Ezekiel 33:1-6.** We, very well, will be treated more harshly at the **Judgment Seat**.
- E. V.2: What does it mean here to stumble? Not a fatal flaw, but something that trips us up and hinders our spiritual progress. Anyone care to share some of their thorns, cripplings, or frailties? Paul’s thorn?
- F. James’s goal... with God’s help, was to **stumble less each day**. **Read Ephesians 4:15.**
- G. **Read Matthew 12:34-37.** Discuss. Why does what you say or don’t say reveal your character?
- H. How do we stumble in Word? **1) about ourselves** in boasting, exaggeration, and selective reporting. In Word **2) about others** with our criticism, gossip, slander, cruelty, two-facedness, anger, or with flattery and insincere words in order to gain favor. (Being a people-pleasing suck up or a lousy backstabber)
- I. Your tongue will heal or harm; lift or lower; strengthen or weaken; build up or break down; burn or bless; destroy or deliver. If Christ rules your heart this hour by faith and surrender, how will others describe you? **Read Hebrews 3:13; Proverbs 26:18-20**
- * **THE TONGUE** : *“It is though all the wickedness in the whole world were wrapped up in that little piece of flesh.”* (Burdick)
Read Psalm 40:10; Psalm 52:2-5; Prov. 6:16-19; Prov. 10:19-21; Prov. 12:22-25; Prov. 16:23-24; Prov. 18:21.
- J. **Discuss**: *“The poison of the tongue is no less deadly; it murders men’s (and women’s) reputations.”* (Poole)
- K. A woman said to John Wesley, *“I think my talent from God is to speak my mind.”* Wesley replied, *“I don’t think God would mind if you buried that talent.”* **Discuss**. Peter’s tongue confessed Christ as the Messiah and denied Jesus with curses. Why are we, at times, inconsistent?

II. **Read V.12 again.**

- A. *“It is unnatural for a Christian to live in sin. Unless you are regenerated, born from above by a new, Heavenly birth, you are not a Christian, whatever you may be called, and you cannot produce the fruit which is acceptable to God any more than a fig tree can produce olive berries.”* (Spurgeon)
- B. *“You can transplant that fig tree to the Mount of Olives, and that would not make it an olive tree.”* (Spurgeon)

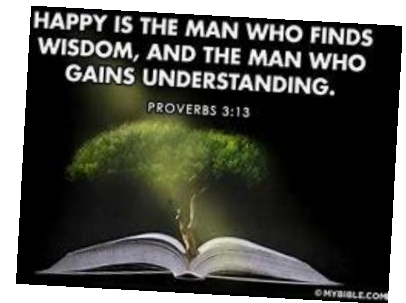
NIV Ryrie Study Bible, 1983.

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Jam/Jam-3.cfm?a=1149001



James – Ethical Conduct 3: 13 - 18

“Words and deeds must be Congruent.”



I. Read 3:13 - 16

- A. V.13: God’s wise and understanding ones never have to broadcast, promote, or sell it. In the quietness of their good works shall the fruit of the Holy Spirit be revealed...Sometimes on earth...always in Heaven.
- B. V.13: *“meekness of wisdom”* is another way of saying *“humility that comes from wisdom”*. What is **humility**? One definition: “Having a right understanding of who you are in light of who God is.”
Read Proverbs 15:33
- C. V13 John MacArthur defined **meekness** as *“enduring injury and suffering with patience and without resentment”* (His book: **Kingdom Living Here and Now**) **Read Matthew 5:5** Meekness is gentle, yes, but *“not of weakness or resignation. It is an active attitude of deliberate acceptance.”* (Burdick) Seneca, the Roman philosopher, stated, *“To bear trials with a calm mind robs misfortune of its strength and burden.”*
- D. Note: James 3 begins with telling teachers or those wanting to be teachers how to **talk**. Here James tells them (us perhaps?) how to **live**. Have you ever seen a teacher or some public person seem to be drawing attention to himself? This is not godly wisdom. Note: *“Any church or teacher that does not edify others and does not point to the supremacy of the Lord Jesus and His Word, is of this world and not of God. The God Tree will produce God Leaves, God Roots, and God Fruit.”*
- E. V.14-16: What is wrong with bitter envy and self-seeking ambition? It does seem, sadly, that many people like them. ☹ Guzik says that this refers to one *“who has a critical, contentious, fight-provoking manner.”*
- F. Beware particularly in the church, in government, and in the schools of education, that worldly wisdom *“evaluates everything by worldly standards and makes personal gain life’s highest goal.”* (Burdick)
- G. Oh yes! The world, the flesh, and the devil can and will accomplish many things! But the fruit on the wicked is **confusion** and **every evil thing**. Examples in our culture?

II. Read 3:17 - 18

- A. Pure: not sexually. Rather the *“the absence of any sinful attitude or motive.”* (Burdick) **Read Psalm 86:1,11. Read John 1:47.** No Guile? Means nothing false, no craftiness, deceit, or sly, subtleness. Trustworthy.
- B. Describe a peace-loving person. Like God, the King, who has every right to be stern and punitive toward man, chooses, rather to be gentle and kind toward us. **Amazing Love!** How can we follow God’s example?
Gentle: *“sweet reasonableness...and it is the ability (God-enabled) to extend to others the kindly consideration we would wish to receive ourselves.”* (Barclay)
- C. Describe someone in your life or past or some historical, non-biblical person who has demonstrated to you the character traits of being considerate, submissive, full of mercy and impartial. Do they exist?
- D. **Impartiality?** What is that? *“without judging (self-righteous condemning), no “curious inquiring into the faults of others, to find matter for censures.”* (Poole) You are not giving darkness a free pass. Rather, from a humble place of love and from a broken sense we live out that, we too, are rotten sinners no more worthy of God’s forgiveness and mercy than the most godless wretch out there. **Warning others humbly and gently in love is not judging. It is loving. Further study: Go to: Ezekiel 33:1-6**



James – Ethical Conduct 4: 1 - 10



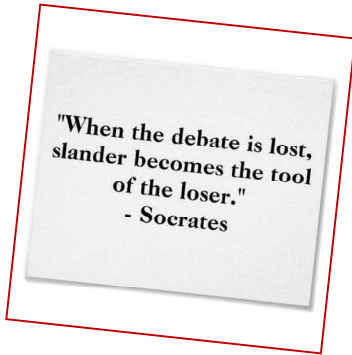
“The whole history of mankind shows the failure of evil lustings to obtain their object.” (Spurgeon)

I. **Read 4: 1 – 6** The Cause and Consequence

- A. Jim Mann points out that James indicts the Christians under his charge with being **unruly (1-3)**, **unfaithful (4)**, and **Un-humble (5-10)**. Let's dissect vs. 1-2. It seems to be, all war, crime, and divorce and interpersonal disputes stem from one thing: **A self-centered, carnal, fleshly, “I want!” heart.**
- B. All of our words our tongue forms, all of our actions and conduct, and all of our attitudes inwardly and toward others emanate from what? **Our Heart. Question: What and where is the heart of a person?**
Read Proverbs 18:12; Jeremiah 17:9; 13-14; Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45; Psalm 51:16-17
- C. V.3: Why don't they get what they ask for? Is God their Santa, Genie, or slave to selfishness, comfort, immorality and promotion? ☹ What motive does God desire and honor?
- D. V.3: “...that you may **spend** what you get on your pleasures.” Same word used re: **The prodigal Son**
- E. V.4: “You adulterous people” actually reads “You adulteresses” in the original language. Why?
Read Hosea 3:1 = (an allusion to covenant unfaithfulness); **Jeremiah 3:8-10; Ezekiel 16:32;**
- F. We, God's people, the Chosen, (originally, the Jews, then we gentles grafted in later), are **in covenant** with God and thus, are **espoused** to Him. Hence, their idolatry + iniquity = **Adultery**, spiritual in nature, but adultery none the less. God's heart was and is so grieved when His children give themselves to less worthy things.
- G. *“Sin seeks to enter, grace shuts the door; sin tries to get the mastery, but grace, which is stronger than sin, resists, and will not permit it. Sin gets us down at times, and puts its foot on our neck; grace comes to the rescue...Sin comes up like Noah's flood, but grace rides over the tops of the mountains like the ark.”*
(Spurgeon)

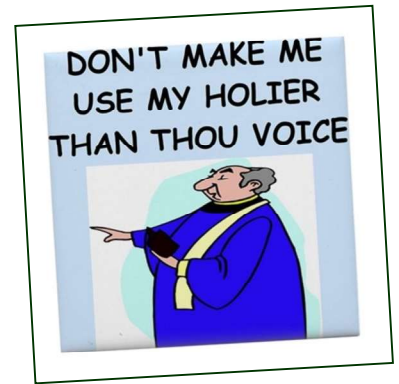
II. **Read 4: 7-10** The Cure

- A. **Submit** (Get right with God.) “to voluntarily come under the authority of – military term”
- B. **Resist** “oppose, set against, withstand” **Read 1 Peter 5:6-10** What happens to you this day if you refuse to submit to God as a gut choice of the will?
- C. Discuss the value of **Wash, Purify, Grieve, Change, Humble yourself.**
- D. Where do you struggle when it comes to submitting, resisting and humbling yourself? What will you do?



James – Ethical Conduct 4: 11 - 17

“Drifting from God often leads to slander and a judgmental heart.”



I. **Read** 4: 11 - 12

- A. First, let us remember the spring board for jumping into vs. 11-17. **Read v. 8 again.** *“When a soul sets out to seek God, God sets out to meet that soul; so that while we are drawing near to him, he is drawing near to us.”* (Clark) Remember the Prodigally Loving Father? **Read Luke 15:20**
- B. V.11: What does it mean to **slander** someone? (making a false, damaging statement about someone. To speak evil of) Has this ever happened to you? **Speak evil:** *“translates the ancient Greek word **katalalia**...the sin of those who meet in corners and gather in little groups and pass on confidential information which destroys the good name of those who are not there to defend themselves.”* (Barclay)
When have we seen this happen in history? ☹
- C. Getting right with God must then lead to getting right with people. Doing the first without the second is like trying to walk with one leg.
- D. Why is this sin, **slander**, wrong? *“First, it breaks the royal law that we should love one another. Second, it takes a right of judgment that only God has.”* (Guzik)
- E. Civil courts, judges, and church discipline calling sin sin are good. Taking a humble and lovingly firm stand against darkness and unrighteous attitudes, actions, laws and policies in our culture are good.
Read Ephesians 5:11
- F. A Cru staffer said something insightful. She suggested that we Christians in this increasingly wicked and sinful culture must lovingly approach and deal with evil not in a mean, harsh, judgmental way. She believes correctly that many who are embracing evil (i.e.: living together immorally, LGBT, etc.) don’t even know or at least they do not believe their actions and attitudes are evil. I wrote to her stating that although this is a caring, insightful approach, we dare not compromise Truth and Light regarding darkness, falsehood, and evil according to that which is written in the Scriptures, the Bible. **Discuss. Very tough topic! No?**
- G. **Read Luke 6:37; 41+42; Matthew 7:1** *“Do not judge: ... indicates that when one’s own life is pure, he should ‘take the speck out’ of the brother’s eye. It also means the follower of Christ is not to be censorious.”* (Ryrie) = ‘severely critical of others’...looking down on them condemning them with a ‘I’m holier than thou!’ pompous, arrogant, judgmental attitude.

II. **Read** 4: 13 - 17

- A. James gives a rebuke to attitudes that are often independent of God. That *“kind of heart that that lives and makes its plans apart from a constant awareness of the hand of God, and with an underestimation of our own limitations.”* (Guzik) **Discuss**
- B. *“This shall come to pass: one is that God knows, and the other is that we do not know.”* (Spurgeon) Plan and do with utter reliance on God...not your track record, your school, your reputation, your health, or \$\$\$.
Life is fragile: We breathe and live only by God’s permission. Do you embrace this? **Read Luke 12:16-34.**



James – Ethical Conduct 5: 1 - 20

*“Beware of riches and power! -
Intoxicating and numbing...
that can lead to Hell.”*



I. Read 5: 1 - 12

- A. Vs. 1-3: What is it about wealth, riches, and fame that is so tempting to our flesh? In what way might it dull our senses, develop a thirst for more, and dampen our real need for Jesus, His Spirit, and His Word? Have you ever experienced this even a little? By the way, pastors and missionaries are tempted as well. **Read Matthew 19:23-24; 1 Timothy 6:10-12; Matthew 4:8-10.** (Note: Of the 3 separate temptations of Jesus by Satan, which of the 3 is there an **exclamation “!”** after it? And which temptation does Jesus address His accuser by his name? Why?
- B. (Pool) believes that these particular rich were, *“wicked, not only wallowing in wealth, but abusing it to pride, luxury, oppression, and cruelty.”* *“It is true that the pursuit of riches is a motivation for every conceivable sin.”* (Guzik)
- C. In Hell, there will be much weeping, howling, wailing, and agonizing (gnashing of teeth. **Read Luke 13:28**). All of the prized things the rich (some rich) are holding up with such high regard will, in the next life be rotten, moth-eaten, corroded, corrupted, and worthless...in a sense a condemning reminder for all eternity! (really eternal damnation conscious spiritual death...alert with no hope, no rest, no mercy and no relief)
- D. *“James adds, with a Dantesque touch (**Dante’s Inferno**, published 1304) of horror, **the rust will devour or corrode your flesh like fire**, you are so bound up (almost like sin-rotting constipation) with your greedy gains; your wealth perishes and you perish with it (though eternally conscious) and by it. Eaten away in burning pain.”* (Moffatt) *“Better howl with men than yell with devils.”* (Trapp) **Read Luke 18:22**
- E. Vs. 4-6: These rich were defrauding and cheating those they hired. Real jerks to work for! **Read Luke 16:19-31**
V. 6: murdered innocent men probably referred to ‘robbing and ravishing’ the poor, powerless ones.
- F. V. 7-12: Like the patient farmer, we are not to give up trusting, serving, and obeying the Lord. *“Even so Christians must work hard and exercise patient endurance even when the harvest day seems far away.”* (Guzik)
We must wait. We have no other option. Right? We are the clay. He is the Potter.
- G. What does it mean to ‘stand firm’ and ‘do not grumble’? The KJV says, *“stablish your hearts”*. = rooted in Jesus, His Word, and His eternal resolution of all things. V. 12: What does James mean when he writes, *“Let your ‘Yes’ be yes and your ‘No’ be no or you will be condemned.”*? We can’t allow hardship to make us unloving and unkind toward others no matter what. Jesus is coming to judge the faithfulness of us Believers. May our character be found weighty and unyielding especially in private when all alone. You and Jesus.

II. Read 5: 13 - 20

- A. Why is it better to pray, than to complain and murmur? What has grumbling ever gotten you? ☺
- B. Discuss this section. What about going to doctors? An application of **V. 5:16**? Foxhole Buddy Accountability