

# James

**1** Greetings from James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To all of God's people\* that are scattered everywhere in the world.

## Faith and Wisdom

<sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, you will have many kinds of troubles. But when these things happen, you should be very happy. <sup>3</sup>Why? Because you know that these things are testing your faith. And this will give you patience. <sup>4</sup>Let that patience work in you to give the result God wants. Then you will be mature and complete. You will be all that God wants you to be. <sup>5</sup>But if any of you needs wisdom, then you should ask God for it. God is generous. He enjoys giving to all people. So God will give you wisdom. <sup>6</sup>But when you ask God, you must believe. Don't doubt God. The person who doubts is like a wave in the sea. The wind blows the wave up and down. The person who doubts is like that wave. <sup>7-8</sup>The person who doubts is thinking two different things at the same time. He cannot decide about anything he does. A person like that should not think that he will receive anything from the Lord.

## True Riches

<sup>9</sup>Believers who are poor should be glad that God considers them so important. <sup>10</sup>Believers who are rich should be glad when bad things happen that make them humble. Why? Because even rich people will die as quickly as wild flowers: <sup>11</sup>The sun rises and becomes hotter and hotter. The sun's heat makes the plants

very dry. The flowers fall off. The flowers were beautiful, but now they are dead. It is the same with rich people. While they are still making plans for their business, they will die.

## Temptation Does Not Come from God

<sup>12</sup>What great blessings there are for the person who is tempted and still continues strong. Why? Because after he has proved his faith, God will give him the reward of life forever. God promised this to all people who love him. <sup>13</sup>When a person is being tempted, he should not say, "God is tempting me." Evil cannot tempt God. And God himself does not tempt any person. <sup>14</sup>It is the evil things a person wants that tempt that person. His own evil desire leads him away and holds him. <sup>15</sup>This desire causes sin. Then the sin grows and brings death.

<sup>16</sup>My dear brothers and sisters, don't be fooled about this. <sup>17</sup>Everything good comes from God. And every perfect gift is from God. These good gifts come down from the Father who made all the lights in the sky (*sun, moon, stars*). But God never changes [like those lights]. He is always the same. <sup>18</sup>God decided to give us life through the word of truth. He wanted us to be the most important of all the things he made.

## Listening and Obeying

<sup>19</sup>My dear brothers and sisters, always be more willing to listen than to speak. Don't become angry easily. <sup>20</sup>A person's anger does not help him live right like God wants. <sup>21</sup>So put out of your life every evil thing and every kind of wrong thing you do. Be humble and accept God's teaching that is planted in your hearts. This teaching can save you.

**all of God's people** Literally, "the twelve tribes." Christians are like the family groups of Israel, God's chosen people in the Old Testament.

<sup>22</sup>Do what God’s teaching says; don’t just listen and do nothing. Why? Because when you only sit and listen, you are fooling yourselves. <sup>23</sup>If you hear God’s teaching and do nothing, you are like this: You are like a man that looks at his face in the mirror. <sup>24</sup>The man sees himself, but he does nothing. He goes away and quickly forgets how bad he looked. <sup>25</sup>But you must not be like that. You must carefully study God’s perfect law that makes people free. You must continue to study it. You must listen to God’s teaching and not forget what you heard. Then you must obey what God’s teaching says. When you do this, it will make you truly happy.

### The True Way to Worship God

<sup>26</sup>You might think you are religious (*good*). But if you say things you should not say, then you are fooling yourself. Your “religion” is worth nothing. <sup>27</sup>The kind of religion (*worship*) that God accepts is this: caring for orphans\* or widows\* who need help, and keeping yourself free from the world’s [evil] influence. This is the kind of religion (*worship*) that God accepts as pure and good.

### Love All People

**2** My dear brothers and sisters, you are believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. So don’t think that some people are more important than other people. <sup>2</sup>Suppose a person comes into your group. This person is wearing very nice clothes and a gold ring. At the same time a poor person comes in wearing old, dirty clothes. <sup>3</sup>You show special attention to the person wearing nice clothes. You say, “Sit here in this good seat.” But you say to the poor person, “Stand there!” or, “Sit on the floor by our feet!” <sup>4</sup>What are you doing? You are making some people more important than others. With evil thoughts you are deciding which person is better.

<sup>5</sup>Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! God chose the poor people in the world to be rich with faith. He chose them to receive the kingdom God promised to people who love

**orphans** Children whose mother and father have died.  
**widows** A woman whose husband has died.

him. <sup>6</sup>But you show no respect to the poor man. And you know that the rich people are the people who always try to control your lives. And they are the people who take you to court. <sup>7</sup>And the rich people are the people who say bad things against the good name of the One (*Jesus*) who owns you.

<sup>8</sup>One law rules over all other laws. This royal law is found in the Scriptures\*: “Love other people the same as you love yourself.”\* If you obey this law, then you are doing right. <sup>9</sup>But if you are treating one person like he is more important than another person, then you are sinning. That royal law proves that you are guilty of breaking God’s law. <sup>10</sup>And you might follow all of God’s law. But if you fail to obey only one command, then you are guilty of breaking all the commands in that law. <sup>11</sup>God said, “Don’t do the sin of adultery.”\*\* The same God also said, “Don’t kill.”\* So if you don’t do the sin of adultery, but you kill a person, then you are guilty of breaking all of [God’s] law. <sup>12</sup>You will be judged by the law that makes people free. You should remember this in everything you say and do. <sup>13</sup>Yes, you must show mercy to other people. If you do not show mercy, then God will not show mercy to you when he judges you. But the person who shows mercy can stand without fear when he is judged.

### Faith and Good Works

<sup>14</sup>My brothers and sisters, if a person says that he has faith, but does nothing, then that faith is worth nothing. Can faith like that save him? No! <sup>15</sup>A brother or sister [in Christ] might need clothes or might need food to eat. <sup>16</sup>And you say to that person, “God be with you! I hope you stay warm and get plenty to eat.” You say these things, but you don’t give that person those things he needs. If you don’t help that person, your words are worth nothing. <sup>17</sup>It is the same with faith. If faith does nothing, then that faith is dead, because it is alone.

**Scriptures** Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

**“Love other people ... yourself”** Quote from Lev. 19:18.

**adultery** Breaking a marriage promise by sexual sin.

**“Don’t do ... adultery”** Quote from Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18.

**“Don’t kill”** Quote from Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17.

<sup>18</sup>A person might say, “You have faith, but I do things. Show me your faith! Your faith does nothing. I will show you my faith by the things I do.” <sup>19</sup>You believe there is one God. Good! But the demons\* believe, too! And they shake with fear.

<sup>20</sup>You foolish person! Must you be shown that faith that does nothing is worth nothing? <sup>21</sup>Abraham\* is our father\*. Abraham was made right with God by the things he did. He offered (*gave*) his son Isaac to God on the altar.\* <sup>22</sup>So you see that Abraham’s faith and the things he did worked together. His faith was made perfect by the things he did. <sup>23</sup>This shows the full meaning of the Scripture\* that says: “Abraham believed God. And God accepted Abraham’s faith. That faith made Abraham right with God.”\* Abraham was called “God’s friend.”\* <sup>24</sup>So you see that a person is made right with God by the things he does. He cannot be made right by faith only.

<sup>25</sup>Another example is Rahab. Rahab was a prostitute.\* But she was made right with God by something she did: She helped the spies [for God’s people]. She welcomed them into her home and helped them escape by a different road.\*

<sup>26</sup>A person’s body that does not have a spirit is dead. It is the same with faith—faith that does nothing is dead!

### Controlling the Things We Say

**3** My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers. Why? Because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly than other people. <sup>2</sup>We all make many mistakes. If there were a person who never said anything wrong, then that person would be perfect. A person like that would be

**demon(s)** Demons are evil spirits from the devil.

**Abraham** The most respected ancestor of the Jews.

**father(s)** Important ancestors of the Jews; the leaders of the twelve Jewish family groups.

**altar** Place for offering sacrifices (gifts) to God.

**Scripture** Part of the Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

**“Abraham believed ... right with God”** Quote from Gen. 15:6.

**“God’s friend”** Quote from 2 Chron. 20:7; Is. 41:8.

**prostitute(s)** Women paid by men for sexual sin.

**She helped ... road** The story about Rahab is found in Josh. 2:1–21.

able to control their whole body, too. <sup>3</sup>We put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us. With these bits in the horses’ mouths, we can control their whole body. <sup>4</sup>It is the same with ships. A ship is very big, and it is pushed by strong winds. But a very small rudder controls that big ship. The man who controls the rudder decides where the ship will go. The ship goes where the man wants. <sup>5</sup>It is the same with our tongue. It is a small part of the body, but it boasts about doing great things.

A big forest fire can be started with only a little flame. <sup>6</sup>The tongue is like a fire. It is a world of evil among the parts of our body. How? The tongue spreads its evil through our whole body. It starts a fire that influences all of life. The tongue gets this fire from hell. <sup>7</sup>People can tame every kind of wild animal, bird, reptile, and fish. People have already tamed all these things. <sup>8</sup>But no person can tame (*control*) the tongue. It is wild and evil. It is full of poison that can kill. <sup>9</sup>We use our tongues to praise our Lord and Father (*God*), but then we curse (*say bad things to*) people. And God made those people like himself. <sup>10</sup>Those praises and curses come from the same mouth! My brothers and sisters, this should not happen. <sup>11</sup>Do good water and bad water flow from the same spring? No! <sup>12</sup>My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree make olives? No! Can a grapevine make figs? No! And a well full of salty water cannot give good water.

### True Wisdom

<sup>13</sup>Is there any person among you who is truly wise and understanding? Then he should show his wisdom by living right. He should do good things with humility. A wise person does not boast. <sup>14</sup>If you are selfish and have bitter jealousy in your hearts, then you have no reason to boast. Your boasting is a lie that hides the truth. <sup>15</sup>That kind of “wisdom” does not come from God. That “wisdom” comes from the world. It is not spiritual. It is from the devil. <sup>16</sup>Where there is jealousy and selfishness, there will be confusion and every kind of evil. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that comes from God is like this: First, it is pure. It is also peaceful, gentle, and easy to please. This wisdom is always ready to help people who

have trouble and to do good things for other people. This wisdom is always fair and honest. <sup>18</sup>People who work for peace in a peaceful way get the good things that come from right living.

#### Give Yourselves to God

**4** Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? Your fights and arguments come from the selfish desires that make war inside you. <sup>2</sup>You want things, but you don't get them. So you kill and are jealous of other people. But you still cannot get what you want. So you argue and fight. You don't get the things you want because you don't ask <sub>God</sub>. <sup>3</sup>Or when you ask, you don't receive. Why? Because the reason you ask is wrong. You only want things so that you can use those things for your own pleasures.

<sup>4</sup>So you people are not faithful to God! You should know that loving the world is the same as hating God. So if a person wants to be a part\* of the world, then he makes himself God's enemy. <sup>5</sup>Do you think the Scriptures\* mean nothing? The Scriptures say, "The Spirit\* that <sub>God</sub> made to live in us wants us only for himself."<sup>\*</sup> <sup>6</sup>But the grace (*kindness*) that God gives is greater. Like the Scripture says, "God is against proud people, but he gives grace (*kindness*) to people who are humble."<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>7</sup>So give yourselves to God. Be against the devil, and the devil will run away from you. <sup>8</sup>Come near to God and God will come near to you. You are sinners. So clean sin out of your lives.\* You are trying to follow God and the world at the same time. Make your thinking pure. <sup>9</sup>Be sad, be sorry, and cry! Change your laughter into crying. Change your joy into sadness. <sup>10</sup>Be humble before the Lord, and he will make you great.

**part** Literally, "friend."

**Scriptures** Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

**Spirit, Holy Spirit** Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

**"The Spirit ... himself"** Other possible translations: "<sub>God</sub> strongly desires the spirit that he made to live in us." Or, "The spirit that <sub>God</sub> made to live in us is full of envious desires." See Ex. 20:5.

**"God is against ... humble"** Quote from Prov. 3:34.

**So clean sin out of your lives** Literally, "So wash your hands."

#### You Are Not the Judge

<sup>11</sup>Brothers and sisters, don't say things against each other. If you criticize your brother <sub>in Christ</sub> or judge him, then you are criticizing the law <sub>he follows</sub>. When you judge a brother <sub>in Christ</sub>, you are really judging the law <sub>he follows</sub>. And when you are judging the law, you are not a follower of the law. You have become a judge! <sup>12</sup>God is the only One who makes laws. He is the only Judge. God is the only One who can save and destroy. So it is not right for you to judge another person.

#### Let God Plan Your Life

<sup>13</sup>Some of you say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to some city. We will stay there a year, do business, and make money." Listen! Think about this: <sup>14</sup>You don't know what will happen tomorrow! Your life is like a fog. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away. <sup>15</sup>So you should say, "If the Lord wants, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup>But now you are proud and you boast. All of this boasting is wrong. <sup>17</sup>And when a person knows how to do good, but does not do good, then he is sinning.

#### Selfish Rich People Will Be Punished

**5** You rich people, listen! Cry and be very sad because much trouble will come to you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches will rot and be worth nothing. Your clothes will be eaten by moths. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver will rust, and that rust will be a proof that you were wrong. That rust will eat your bodies like fire. You saved your treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup>People worked in your fields, but you did not pay them. Those people are crying out against you. Those people harvested your crops. Now the Lord (*God*) of heaven's armies\* has heard the things they are shouting. <sup>5</sup>Your life on earth was full of rich living. You pleased yourselves with everything you wanted. You made yourselves fat, <sub>like an animal ready</sub> for the day of slaughter.\* <sup>6</sup>You

**Lord of heaven's armies** Literally, "Lord Sabaoth," meaning ruler of all heavenly powers.

**You made yourselves fat ... slaughter** Literally, "You fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter."

showed no mercy to good people. They were not against you, but you killed them.

When you mean no, say only “no.” Do this so that you will not be judged guilty.

### Be Patient

<sup>7</sup>Brothers and sisters, be patient; the Lord [Jesus] will come. So be patient until that time. Farmers are patient. A farmer waits for his valuable crop to grow up from the earth. A farmer waits patiently for his crop to receive the first rain and the last rain.\* <sup>8</sup>You must be patient, too. Don’t stop hoping. The Lord [Jesus] is coming soon. <sup>9</sup>Brothers, and sisters, don’t complain against each other. If you don’t stop complaining, you will be judged guilty. And the Judge is ready to come! <sup>10</sup>Brothers and sisters, follow the example of the prophets\* who spoke for the Lord (*God*). They suffered many bad things, but they were patient. <sup>11</sup>We say that those people who accepted their troubles with patience now have God’s blessing. You have heard about Job’s patience.\* You know that after all Job’s trouble, the Lord helped him. This shows that the Lord is full of mercy and is kind.

### Be Careful What You Say

<sup>12</sup>My brothers and sisters, it is very important that you not use an oath when you make a promise. Don’t use the name of heaven, earth, or anything else to prove what you say. When you mean yes, say only “yes.”

### The Power of Prayer

<sup>13</sup>Are you having troubles? You should pray. Are you happy? You should sing. <sup>14</sup>Are you sick? You should call the church’s elders.\* The elders should rub oil on you\* in the name of the Lord and pray for you. <sup>15</sup>The prayer that is said with faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will heal that person. And if that person has sinned, then God will forgive those sins. <sup>16</sup>Always tell each other the wrong things you have done. Then pray for each other. Do this so that God can heal you. When a good person prays hard, great things happen. <sup>17</sup>Elijah\* was a person the same as us. He prayed that it would not rain. And it did not rain on the land for three and a half years! <sup>18</sup>Then Elijah prayed that it would rain. And the rain came down from the sky, and the land grew crops again.

### Helping People When They Sin

<sup>19</sup>My brothers and sisters, one of you may wander away from the truth. And another person may help him come back to the truth. <sup>20</sup>Remember this: Any person who brings a sinner back from the wrong way will save that sinner from death (*hell*). By doing this, that person will cause many sins to be forgiven.

**first rain, last rain** The “first rain” came in the Fall, and the “last rain” came in the Spring.

**prophets** People that spoke for God. They often told things that would happen in the future.

**Job’s patience** Read the book of Job in the Old Testament.

**elders** A group of men chosen to lead a church. Also called “overseers” and “pastors” (shepherds), they have the work of caring for God’s people. See Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; Tit. 1:7,9.

**rub oil on you** Oil was used like medicine.

**Elijah** A man that spoke for God about 850 B.C.

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