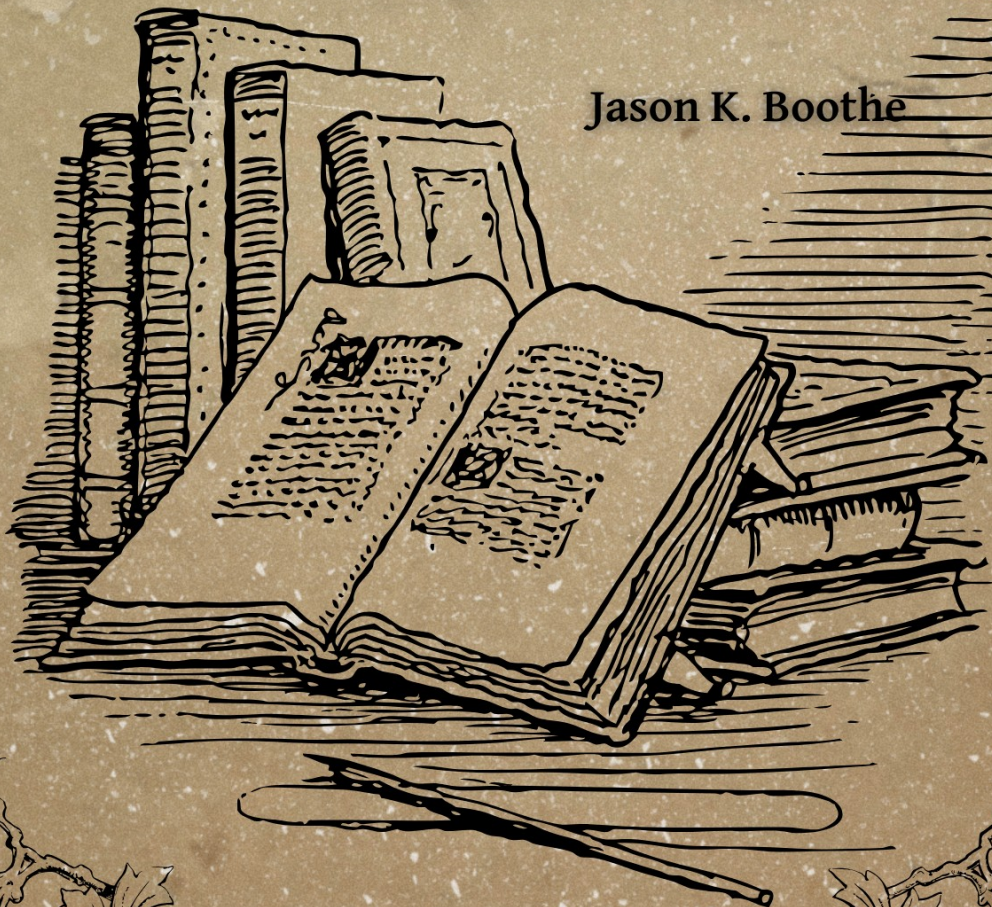


Faith Displayed:

Living in Light of the
Gospel

Sermons from
the Epistle of James

Jason K. Boothe



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Faith in the Furnace: Joy During Trials	3
Faith in Action: The Word at Work	7
Faith Displayed: Works That Witness	11
Faith and Wisdom: Taming the Tongue	16
Faith and Humility: Grace for the Lowly	21
Faith in the Lord's Will	25
Faith Under Pressure: Waiting on the Lord	28
Faith Expressed in Prayer, Confession, and Restoration	31
Conclusion	34
Appendix	36

Introduction

Beloved in Christ,

The Epistle of James is unlike any other New Testament letter. It is direct, practical, and deeply concerned with the lived experience of faith. While the Apostle Paul often addresses theological truths and doctrinal foundations, James addresses the Christian life as it is lived day by day, moment by moment and in the heat of battle. He does not ask, “What do you believe?” but rather, “How does your faith show itself in your life?”

Faith is a transformative force that touches every part of our lives: our words, our attitudes, our relationships, our work, and even the way we endure trials. As he writes, “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17, ESV). Faith that does not express itself in action is, in James’s words, useless, not to God, but to those around us who witness our lives.

This book is an invitation to journey through the Epistle of James in a way that is both thoughtful and practical. It is designed to help you:

Understand the nature of faith. James presents faith as living, active, and powerful, a faith that endures trials, speaks wisely, and ultimately humbles itself before God, crying out to Christ alone for all righteousness before God.

From controlling the tongue to submitting to God’s will, James gives instruction that is immediately relevant to our personal, familial, and communal lives.

Experience transformation through grace. At the heart of James’s message is the good news of Christ: it is by His grace that we are able to persevere, to live wisely, and to act justly.

As you read, you will notice a recurring theme: faith under pressure produces steadfastness, humility, and love. James addresses conflicts within the church, the temptations of the world, the trials of life, and the challenge of living consistently for God. His words are sharp, but they are always meant to lead us closer to Christ and to encourage us to reflect His character in every sphere of life.

This work is organized to follow the Epistle of James chapter by chapter. Each chapter is divided into clear sections, including:

Scripture readings to anchor the teaching in God’s Word.

Explanations to clarify the meaning of the text.

Applications to help you put the teaching into practice today.

Reflection questions to engage your heart and mind in active discipleship.

Whether you are a long-time believer seeking deeper understanding, a new disciple eager to grow, or a pastor or teacher preparing to shepherd others, this study of James will guide you in seeing faith not as a static idea but as a dynamic force that speaks, acts, endures, and glorifies God in every circumstance.

Beloved, as we open these pages, let us do so with hearts ready to hear, minds eager to understand, and hands willing to serve. Let us come with humility, recognizing our dependence on Christ, and with courage, trusting that His Word will not return void.

May this journey through James lead us to a faith that is vibrant, visible, and victorious, a faith that truly displays the glory of God in Christ Jesus.

Let us begin. - JKB

Chapter One

Faith in the Furnace: Joy During Trials

James 1:1–18 KJV

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. (2) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (3) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (4) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (5) If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (6) But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. (7) For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. (8) A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (9) Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: (10) But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. (11) For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. (12) 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. (13) 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: (14) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (15) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (16) Do not err, my beloved brethren. (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. (18) Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The Epistle of James opens with a call that confronts every believer at the very beginning of the Christian journey: “Count it all joy.” These words, addressed to the “twelve tribes in the Dispersion,” were first spoken to believers scattered across the Roman world, isolated, pressured, misunderstood, and often persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Yet James does not begin his letter with consolation or gentle encouragement. He begins with a command that runs contrary to every natural impulse of the human heart. When trials come, and they surely will, believers are to receive them with joy, understanding that God is at work in them for His glory and for their ultimate good.

We too live in days marked by pressure, compromise, and temptation. Ours is a culture that demands a diluted Gospel, one that removes the offense of sovereign grace, the scandal of the cross, and the glory of God’s electing love. The temptation to soften the message is real. Faithful churches and ministers often find themselves marginalized, dismissed, or openly opposed simply for proclaiming that salvation is entirely the work of God, from beginning to end. Many of us have already tasted something of this reproach. And unless the Lord returns soon, more trials surely lie ahead.

In such moments, like Asaph in Psalm 73, we may be tempted to question the goodness of God. The wicked seem to prosper while those who hold fast to the truth often suffer. Yet, as Asaph discovered upon entering the sanctuary, the light of divine truth exposes the folly of such doubts. God has not forsaken His people. He never has and He never will. Even when His providence is perplexing, He is near, strengthening, refining, and sustaining His people. Our hearts, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, become sanctuaries of remembrance where the promises of God speak louder than the storms surrounding us.

James teaches us that trials are never meaningless. They are the furnace in which God purifies faith, deepens reliance on Christ, and magnifies His grace. When our strength falters, He supplies more grace. When wisdom fails, He bids us ask, and He gives liberally. This chapter explores James 1:1–18 as a foundational call to joyful steadfastness that is anchored in the character and goodness of God.

Trials of Faith Will Come to Christians (James 1:2–4)

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...” With these words, James acknowledges what every believer must understand. Trials are not optional; they are inevitable. More than this, they are purposeful. Joy, in this context, is not mere emotional cheerfulness, but a settled, God-centered confidence that His purposes have not failed.

James reminds us that “the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” Trials do not weaken true faith; they strengthen it. They draw our confidence away from ourselves and direct it toward Christ alone. Scripture confirms this over and over:

- Jesus declared that those who suffer for righteousness’ sake are blessed (Matt. 5:10–12).
- Paul urged believers to “stand firm” in the truth they have received (2 Thess. 2:15).
- Peter pointed us to Christ, who suffered on our behalf and left us an example (1 Pet. 2:19–21).

James continues, “Let steadfastness have its full effect.” God is not interested in shallow or unstable discipleship. Through trials He ensures that His people become “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” This does not speak of sinless perfection, but of maturity, stability, and preparedness for life in Christ.

God Grants Wisdom to Apprehend Our Trials (James 1:5–8)

Trials reveal our need for wisdom, wisdom to see God’s purpose, wisdom to respond in faith, and wisdom to rest in His promises. James reminds us that God “gives generously to all without

reproach.” He does not shame us for our weakness. He does not rebuke us for our lack. Instead, He invites us to draw from the endless well of His grace.

This wisdom is not a product of human reasoning, but a divine gift. Christ is Himself the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30–31). As we draw near to God in faith, He teaches us to view life through the lens of His sovereignty and goodness.

Yet James adds a warning. “Let him ask in faith, with no doubting.” The double-minded person, one who splits trust between God and self, is unstable and unprepared for the storms of life. Robert Hawker observed that it is a “blessed thing” when grace enables us to come boldly before the Lord, remembering His past mercies and trusting Him for new ones. Doubting the goodness of our Savior is a foolish posture for a child of God.

Humility in Trials (James 1:9–11)

Trials have a remarkable leveling effect. They teach the poor to rejoice in their exaltation, and they teach the rich to rejoice in their humiliation. The world measures success by wealth, status, and power, but the Gospel measures all people by their standing in Christ. Those of low estate are lifted by God’s grace, and those with abundance are reminded that worldly riches fade like the flower of the field.

Paul’s testimony in Philippians 4:11–13 illustrates this truth beautifully. He learned contentment in every circumstance because Christ was his sufficiency. Whether abased or abounding, he could “do all things” through the strength Christ supplied.

In trials, God teaches His people humility, a humility that rests not in earthly security but in the eternal riches of Christ.

Perseverance Through Trials of Faith (James 1:12–15)

James pronounces a blessing on the one who remains steadfast under trial: “For when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life.” Perseverance does not save us, but it proves that we belong to Christ. False professors fall away, but true sheep hear His voice and follow Him to the end (John 10:1–9).

James also clarifies that God tests, but He does not tempt. Trials come from His sovereign wisdom; temptations arise from our own sinful desires. When desire conceives, it leads to sin, and sin ultimately leads to death (Rom. 6:15–23). The believer must resist sin and cling to Christ, knowing that life is found only in Him.

God Gives Only Good Gifts (James 1:16–18)

“Do not be deceived,” James writes. In seasons of hardship, it is easy to misinterpret God’s providence. But the character of God does not change. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is

from above.” These gifts come from the Father of lights, in whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

The greatest of all His gifts is Christ Himself. Flowing from that gift is the grace of salvation: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth.” Salvation begins in God’s purpose and ends in God’s purpose. Believers are the firstfruits of His new creation, and they stand as testimony to His redeeming work in the world.

Conclusion: Joy in the Furnace

James calls believers to view trials not as accidents, but as instruments, tools by which God sharpens faith, deepens wisdom, and magnifies His grace. He wastes nothing. Not a tear, not a loss, not a hardship is without purpose.

He invites us to ask for wisdom.

He promises to supply grace.

He directs our gaze to Christ, the giver of every good and perfect gift.

And what greater gift could we receive than Christ Himself?

Paul writes, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). In that light we endure. In that light we rejoice. In that light we find strength for every trial.

May we, by the grace of God, behold the face of Christ in the furnace of affliction and learn to endure with joy.

Chapter Two

Faith in Action: The Word at Work

James 1:19–27 KJV

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. (26) 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.

The Epistle of James is rich with wisdom concerning practical Christianity. James takes the profound realities of faith and brings them into the daily life of the believer. In our previous study, we saw that trials test faith, refining it as genuine because it is born of God. Now, in James 1:19–27, he shows us what genuine, living faith looks like in practice. Faith hears the Word of God with humility and acts upon it with obedience that flows from grace.

The Character of the Word-Formed Believer (James 1:19–20)

“Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

James begins by addressing “my beloved brothers,” reminding us that those exhorted are the same people who have been “brought forth by the word of truth” in verse 18. Those who have been regenerated by the Word will increasingly demonstrate lives shaped by Christ.

Quick to Hear

To be “quick to hear” speaks of teachability and humility before God’s truth. Proverbs 19:20 urges us to listen to instruction so that we may gain wisdom. Romans 10:17 affirms that faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. The believer born of the Spirit is drawn toward God’s voice because the Word is his life. Peter’s confession in John 6:68 captures this beautifully. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Slow to Speak

Being “slow to speak” does not require silence in the face of truth but cautions us to weigh our words. Proverbs 10:19 warns that excessive speech leads to sin, while restrained words show wisdom. James later reminds us that the tongue is difficult to tame. The believer must carefully choose words that edify, encourage, and point others to Christ.

Slow to Anger

Anger frequently flows from pride and self-protection. James states plainly that the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. Human wrath cannot advance divine purposes. Paul echoes this in Ephesians 4:31 as he calls believers to put away bitterness and wrath. James urges the church to adopt a posture of humility, a meek spirit submitted to the Word.

The Reception of the Word (James 1:21)

“Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

James gives a twofold command. We are to put away what corrupts and receive what saves. The believer turns from sin and turns toward the Word.

Receive with Meekness

The meek person does not dispute God’s Word. Instead, he bows before it by the power of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 25:9 assures us that the Lord leads and teaches the humble.

The Implanted Word

The “implanted word” recalls the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:33 where God writes His law upon the heart. Peter writes that believers are born again through the living and abiding Word of God. This Word has taken root by the Spirit’s power. The fruit of this implanted Word is faith working through love, serving God and others with joy for what Christ has done.

We do not trust in our works for salvation. Many kinds of people can perform outward acts of kindness. The difference lies in motivation. Believers render good works to God in faith because they have been transformed by Christ. Paul writes in Galatians 5:6 that what truly matters is “faith working through love.”

The Doing of the Word (James 1:22–25)

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

Jesus warned of this danger in Luke 6:46. “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” James illustrates the self-deception of hearing without doing. It is like a man who looks at

his reflection in a mirror, walks away, and immediately forgets what he saw. The Word exposes truth, but the hearer remains unchanged.

The Law of Liberty

In contrast, the believer who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it is not a forgetful hearer but a faithful doer. The “law of liberty” refers to the moral will of God fulfilled in Christ and written on the heart through the gospel. It is called liberty because believers are freed from the bondage of sin to joyfully serve God. True liberty is not freedom to do as we please but freedom to please God.

James promises that such a believer “will be blessed in his doing.” This mirrors Psalm 1 where the one who delights in the law of the Lord is compared to a tree planted by streams of water, flourishing in season and sustained by constant nourishment. Obedience brings blessing, not because it earns favor with God but because it aligns the believer with God’s will and purpose.

The Test of True Religion (James 1:26–27)

James concludes with a practical test of authentic Christian living. “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.” Speech is a window into the heart. Jesus taught that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” An unbridled tongue betrays a disconnect between profession and practice.

James then provides a clear definition of pure religion before God the Father. “To visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” True religion consists of compassion and purity.

Compassion reflects the heart of Christ. The gospel compels believers to care for those who are vulnerable, overlooked, and suffering. First John 3:17 reminds us that indifference toward a brother in need is incompatible with the love of God.

Purity reflects the holiness of Christ. Believers are to remain unstained by the world, resisting its sinful patterns. Paul teaches in Romans 12:2 that transformation occurs through the renewal of the mind. Practical Christianity flows from a life set apart for God.

When these qualities are present, the world sees a living testimony of the gospel’s transforming power. Compassion and purity are evidences of a faith that works.

Conclusion: The Word That Works

Let us strive to be a people who are quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. When we receive the implanted Word with humility, Christ works His transforming power within us. By His grace, we become not only hearers but doers of the Word, walking in good works that flow naturally from faith.

The Christian life is not a cold pursuit of moral duty. It is vibrant evidence of new life in Christ, a life that bears fruit for the glory of God. Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:13 that it is God who works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure. May we be counted among those whose faith expresses itself through love and whose religion is pure and undefiled before God the Father.

Chapter Three

Faith Displayed: Works That Witness

James 2:1–26 (KJV)

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. (2) For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; (3) And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: (4) Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (5) Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (6) But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? (7) Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? (8) If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: (9) But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (10) For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (11) For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. (12) So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (13) For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. (14) 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: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew 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? (21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? (22) Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? (23) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. (25) Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? (26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Few passages in all of Scripture have stirred more discussion than the second chapter of James. Statements like “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17) and “a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:24) have caused many to wonder whether James contradicts Paul. After all, Paul teaches with great clarity that “to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5), and again, “For by grace you have been saved through faith... not of works” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Is James opposing Paul?

Not in the least. The two apostles are standing back-to-back, fighting different enemies.

- **Paul** defends the *root* of salvation: justification before God by faith alone.
- **James** defends the *fruit* of salvation: justification before men through works that make faith visible.

Paul speaks of **how we are justified before God**.

James speaks of **how our faith is demonstrated before others**.

Both proclaim the same gospel: **Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone**.

I. The Sin of Partiality (vv. 1–13)

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” — James 2:1

James begins by rebuking favoritism within the assembly. He paints a vivid scene: A wealthy man enters the congregation, adorned with fine clothing and gold rings. He is immediately honored and offered a premium seat. Meanwhile, a poor man arrives in shabby garments and is told to stand in the back or sit on the floor.

James calls this behavior **evil**. Why? Because it contradicts the very nature of the gospel. The church is not built on social distinctions but upon the grace of God. When we show favoritism, we adopt the world’s values and deny Christ’s character.

GOD’S HEART FOR THE LOWLY

“Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?” (v. 5)
To despise the poor is to despise the God who delights to lift the humble and bring down the proud (Luke 1:52). The poor are often rich in ways the world does not see: rich in dependence, rich in faith, rich in longing for the kingdom.

James insists that the church must uphold the **royal law**—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (James 2:8). Anything less is sin. And at the judgment, mercy will triumph over judgment. Those who have received mercy must now show mercy.

Takeaway:

Favoritism reflects the world. Mercy reflects Christ.

To love without partiality is to act as true citizens of the kingdom.

II. THE PROFIT OF LIVING FAITH (vv. 14–20)

“What does it profit, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” (v. 14)

James shifts from partiality to productivity. Faith, he argues, must be **profitable**—not in earning God’s favor, but in blessing others and bearing witness to the gospel.

He gives a practical example:

A believer is cold and hungry. Another believer responds, “Go in peace; be warmed and filled,” but offers no clothing or food.

This is faith **in word only**, not in deed.

It is as useless as a lamp with no oil.

“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” — James 2:17

Dead faith is still *faith*, but it is lifeless, inactive, barren, and unprofitable. Living faith, however, expresses itself in love, mercy, and obedience. Jesus taught the same principle: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works...” (Matthew 5:16).

Even the demons believe true propositions about God (James 2:19), but their belief is void of love, trust, and obedience. Saving faith is more than acknowledgment—it is the heart resting in Christ, producing fruit through the Spirit.

Takeaway:

Faith without works exists, but it is unprofitable.

Living faith is visible faith—faith that acts.

III. FAITH VINDICATED BY WORKS (vv. 21–26)

To clarify his argument, James turns to two Old Testament examples: **Abraham** and **Rahab**.

ABRAHAM: FAITH BROUGHT TO MATURITY

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac...?” (v. 21)

Abraham was justified before God long before this moment (Genesis 15:6). But when he offered Isaac in Genesis 22, his faith was **vindicated**—demonstrated, proven, displayed. His works did not create faith but **completed** it, bringing it to maturity.

RAHAB: FAITH PROVEN THROUGH COURAGE

Rahab believed long before she hid the spies (Joshua 2:9–11). Her actions revealed a heart that trusted Israel’s God. James calls this “justified by works” because her works made her faith known.

THE ANALOGY OF BODY AND SPIRIT

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” (v. 26)

A body without breath is still a body—but lifeless.

Faith without works still exists—but without vitality or witness.

Takeaway:

Works do not create faith, but they reveal its life.

Faith comes alive in obedience and service.

BRINGING THE TEACHING TOGETHER

James and Paul do not contradict one another—they complete one another.

- **Paul:** How the sinner is justified before God.
- **James:** How the believer’s faith is justified before others.

Eternal salvation is by faith alone.

But living faith expresses itself in works prepared by God (Ephesians 2:10).

Application

For the believer: Your works cannot commend you to God, but they do commend the gospel to others.

For the church: Reject favoritism. Christ receives sinners from every station of life.

For witness: Faith in action gives credibility to the message of Christ.

For eternity: Rest in Christ’s finished work—and rise daily to walk in newness of life.

Conclusion: The Word that Works

Christ is the foundation of salvation—solid, immovable, eternal (1 Corinthians 3:11). James urges believers not to let their faith lie dormant, like a field left unplowed. Let it bear fruit. Jesus declared, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...” (John 15:8).

Faith alone saves.

But faith that remains alone is unprofitable, unfruitful, and without witness.

Living faith works because Christ lives in His people.

Living faith serves because Christ served us.

Living faith loves because Christ first loved us.

Closing Exhortation

Let us walk in the mercy and grace of Christ, rejecting the world's favoritism and embracing heaven's compassion. Let us demonstrate our faith through works that witness of Christ's transforming power. And may we be found as those whose faith bears fruit— fruit that blesses others and brings glory to God.

Chapter Four

Faith and Wisdom: Taming the Tongue

James 3

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. (13) Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew 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 intreated, 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.

The Epistle of James is a call to live in the light of God's grace in Christ, putting our professed faith to work in the real world through acts of godly obedience, humility, and love. James correctly teaches that profession without loving action is of little use to our brothers and sisters or the wider world around us. We are made free by the Gospel to tend to the betterment of one another by cultivating acceptable works in Christ's name, to showcase our Christian faith through action.

In James 1, we saw that faith endures trials with joy. In chapter 2, we learned that faith without works is dead or useless to those around us. Now, in chapter 3, James turns to a theme that hits every believer close to home, the use of our tongues.

Our words reveal the condition of our hearts and the realities of living in this fallen frame. Jesus Himself declared,

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

As believers in the wondrous grace and mercy of God in Christ, we are called by the Scriptures to edify one another with our words, fighting against the human tendency to cut a man down with hateful speech.

1. The Tongue's Power to Direct

James 3:1–5a (ESV)

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.”

Explanation

James begins with a sober warning to teachers, those who proclaim God's Word. He says, “Not many of you should become teachers.” Why? Because teachers shape the minds and hearts of others, and they will be held accountable for how they handle the truth of God.

Every preacher, every Sunday school leader, and every voice of influence within the church must handle their words with holy caution. The tongue directs people like a bit in a horse's mouth or a rudder on a ship. Though small, it controls the entire course of movement.

Application

Your words are steering your life and influencing others.

- Parents steer the spiritual direction of their homes by their speech.
- Church members shape the unity or division of the congregation by their words.
- Pastors play a major role in shaping congregations by the Word they proclaim.

Words have immense power: to direct hearts toward God, to confuse and alarm, and to turn hearts away from the truth of Scripture.

2. The Tongue's Power to Destroy

James 3:5b–8 (ESV)

“How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

Explanation

Here James moves from direction to destruction. He paints a terrifying picture: the tongue as a spark that can ignite a forest fire.

Our words can destroy reputations, relationships, churches, and even our own witness. James calls the tongue “a world of unrighteousness.” It represents the entire fallen nature of man condensed into one instrument.

He says it is “set on fire by hell.” This means that when the tongue is used in malice, gossip, slander, or pride, it becomes a tool of the accuser of the brethren.

Application

Think of how easily words can wound.

- A single careless comment can discourage a fellow believer.
- A slanderous whisper can divide a church.
- A lie can destroy a testimony.

And here is the humbling truth: “no human being can tame the tongue.” Our problem is deeper than self-control. It is a heart issue. This is not an issue for which mere behavioral modification can atone.

Only the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit can cause us to turn to Christ in true Gospel repentance and faith. By imputation, Christ’s righteousness is credited to us. In that way, we cry out the prayer of the Psalmist:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

While we await our glorified bodies, fighting against the base desires of our fallen humanity, we can rest assured in knowing that Christ has paid our sin debt in full. This gives us joy for the journey as well as motivation to love and serve the brethren.

3. The Tongue’s Power to Reveal

James 3:9–12 (ESV)

“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.”

Explanation

The tongue not only directs and destroys. It reveals.

James shows the hypocrisy of double speech: blessing God on Sunday, then cursing man on Monday. Such inconsistency betrays the reality of the heart. A spring cannot produce both fresh and salt water. A fig tree cannot bear olives. Likewise, a true believer, indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, should not be known for corrupt or cruel speech.

Application

Do your words refresh others with grace and truth?
Or do they poison relationships and dishonor Christ?

As Jesus said,

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

4. The Wisdom from Above

James 3:13–18 (ESV)

“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

Explanation

After confronting the danger of the tongue, James shifts to the source of true control, wisdom from above.

There are two kinds of wisdom:

- Earthly wisdom: self-centered, prideful, and destructive.
- Heavenly wisdom: Christ-centered, humble, and peace-producing.

James describes heavenly wisdom with a beautiful list of qualities: pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere. These are the fruits of a heart ruled by Christ.

Application

You cannot tame your tongue by sheer discipline, but you can seek wisdom from above. Strive to be gracious, and seek to edify one another.

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6).

The same Spirit who gives saving faith gives us blessings for each day, grace to speak truth in love, to bless rather than curse, and to edify rather than tear down.

Conclusion: A Tongue Informed by Grace

James has shown us that the tongue is small but powerful, capable of directing, destroying, and revealing. But he also points us to the only hope for our speech and our souls: the wisdom that comes from above, found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The One who never sinned, not even in His words (1 Peter 2:22), has redeemed us by His blood and sanctifies us by His Spirit.

So let your faith be displayed not only by your works but by your words. Speak life, speak truth, speak grace.

*“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”*

- Psalm 19:14

Chapter Five:

Faith and Humility: Grace for the Lowly

James 4:1–12

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. (12) There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Beloved, as we come to God’s Word this morning, we find ourselves confronted by a passage that pierces deeply into the heart. James chapter four reveals what lies beneath the surface of our conflicts, frustrations, and restlessness. The problem, James says, is not found in other people. The problem is within us.

But even in our failure, even in our pride and worldliness, the text gives us a hope greater than all our sin: “But He gives more grace.” As Tim James writes in his commentary on the Epistle of James, “He gives more grace than our flesh is able to overcome.” This is grace for the humble, and that is our theme today.

I. The War Within

James 4:1–3 (ESV)

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

You desire and do not have, so you murder.

You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have, because you do not ask.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”

James begins with a simple question: “What causes fights among you?” He answers it clearly. The real conflict is the war within your own heart. The word for “passions” (*hedonai*) refers to self-

indulgent pleasure. It is the root of hedonism. James is telling us that the reason we quarrel with others is because our sinful hearts are in conflict with God.

Jesus said in Mark 7:21–23:

“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Our conflict with others begins with conflict in our own hearts.

Then James says, “You murder.” He is speaking of the heart-murder Jesus described in Matthew 5:21–22. Anger, bitterness, and envy are the seeds of murder.

And why? Because we do not pray. “You do not have, because you do not ask.” And when we do ask, we often pray for self-centered desires. “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly.”

Prayer is not meant to pull God toward our will but to pull our hearts toward His will.

As Jesus taught in Matthew 6:10:

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

This internal spiritual war will rage within us until the day we die. As Pastor Tim James writes, “The war within defines the life of the child of God while he remains in this body.”

II. The Danger of Worldly Friendship

James 4:4–5 (ESV)

“You adulterous people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us’?”

James now uses strong language. “You adulterous people.” Why? Because spiritual compromise is spiritual adultery. To chase after the world is to betray our covenant with Christ. Any attempt to build our own righteousness or pursue earthly pleasure apart from the grace of God ends only in ruin and despair.

The Apostle John writes in 1 John 2:15–17 that the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life are passing away. To love the world is to make oneself an enemy of God.

James adds, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.” God’s jealousy is not petty or selfish. It is the holy zeal of a husband for His bride. He loves His people too much to let them settle for less than Himself.

III. The Call to Humility and Repentance

James 4:6–10 (ESV)

“But he gives more grace.

Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Be wretched and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

What a glorious truth. He gives more grace. Though our sin is great, His grace is greater still. James quotes Proverbs 3:34: “But to the humble he gives favor.”

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Then comes the command: “Submit yourselves therefore to God.” Submission means placing yourself under His authority in faith. Then, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” We resist not in our own strength but in the strength of Christ.

Next, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” What a promise. The believer who draws near through faith in Christ finds God drawing near in mercy and fellowship.

James then calls for sincere repentance: “Cleanse your hands” and “purify your hearts.” These are not works of human effort but the fruit of faith in the finished work of Christ.

Psalm 24:3–4 asks who may stand in God’s holy place, and the answer is the one with clean hands and a pure heart. These blessings come only through Christ.

James also calls us to mourn our sin. True repentance, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:10, produces a godly grief that leads to salvation without regret.

Finally, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” Christ Himself is our pattern. He humbled Himself even to death on the cross, and God highly exalted Him. When we humble ourselves before God, He lifts us in grace and fellowship.

IV. The Sin of Judging Others

James 4:11–12 (ESV)

“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.

The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law.

But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy.
But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

James closes with a call to humility in our relationships. To speak evil of a brother is to assume a role that belongs only to God. Romans 14:4 reminds us that we have no right to judge another man's servant. Christ alone is the Lawgiver and Judge.

The heart that has been shown mercy will show mercy. The one who has received grace will extend grace.

Conclusion

James 4 exposes our hearts, revealing our pride, worldliness, and self-centered desires. Yet in the midst of that painful diagnosis shines this radiant promise: "But He gives more grace."

Whatever sin clings to your heart, whatever bitterness or pride still remains, there is grace sufficient for you in Christ. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

So humble yourself before Him. Submit to God. Resist the devil. Draw near to the Lord, and He will draw near to you.

At the foot of the cross, grace flows freely for all who come in repentance and faith.

"Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt."

Chapter Six

Faith in the Lord's Will

James 4:13–17

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: (14) Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. (15) For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. (16) But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. (17) Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

There are at least three truths we can glean from our Scripture lesson today:

1. The brevity of our earthly lives.
2. The sovereignty of God, even in the mundane areas of life.
3. The responsibility of God's elect to cultivate humility, selflessness, and brotherly love.

I. The Brevity of Life

James 4:14

James asks, "What is your life?" and then answers, "You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."

This truth confronts the proud and arrogant directly. Our lives are brief. We are like vapor, here for a moment and then gone. Yet how often do we plan as if tomorrow is guaranteed? How often do we speak of the next year as though it is ours to claim? Only God knows what tomorrow holds.

Psalm 39:5 says,

"Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath."

Psalm 90:12 prays,

"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

This humbles us. It reminds us that our days are numbered by God's hand, not ours. Therefore, we must ask:

- How can I use today for Christ?
- How can I love my family better?
- How can I serve this church more faithfully?

- How can I walk in gratitude for the mercy already shown?

If life is like a morning mist, every breath matters.

II. The Sovereignty of God in My Planning

James 4:15–16

James instructs, “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”

That phrase, “If the Lord wills,” is not a cliché or superstition. It is a confession of faith. It acknowledges that our life, our plans, and our future are in God’s hands. While we plan and work, we must not presume upon tomorrow.

Proverbs 19:21 reminds us,

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”

Proverbs 16:9 declares,

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

Presumption is arrogance, and James calls it evil. How often have we said, “I will do this,” without first seeking God’s will?

Christ reigns. He holds the world and our tomorrow in His hands. Psalm 115:3 says,

“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”

Because of this, we can rest. We are free to plan, labor, and live under God’s sovereign hand.

Romans 8:28 reminds us,

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Saying, “If the Lord wills,” is not weakness. It is worship, freedom, and trust.

III. The Responsibility of God’s Elect to Cultivate Humility, Selflessness, and Brotherly Love

James 4:17

James warns, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”

Obedience is not optional. Knowing what is right and delaying or refusing it is sin. This applies to our love, our mercy, and our trust in God.

Jesus commanded in John 13:34,

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

Ephesians 4:32 says,

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Proverbs 27:1 warns,

“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.”

James ties it together: life is short, God is sovereign, and therefore we must live humbly, obediently, and in service to others.

Application

The Spirit convicts us:

- Have I been making plans without God?
- Have I lived as if tomorrow is guaranteed?
- Have I delayed obedience to the good I know I should do?

We cannot change the past, but we can humble ourselves today. Submit every plan, dream, and goal to His sovereign will. Begin every statement about tomorrow with, “If the Lord wills.” And do the good you know to do, for His glory.

Galatians 6:9 says,

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Conclusion

Life is a vapor, but the Redeemer is eternal. Plans are fragile, but His purpose stands forever. Today, rest in His sovereignty, plan under His providence, and live for His glory.

Psalms 33:11 declares,

“The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.”

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for reminding me of the brevity of life, the certainty of Your will, and the call to obedience. Forgive me for the arrogance of self-reliance and the sin of delay. Teach me to say, with sincerity and trust, “If the Lord wills, I will live and do this or that.” Strengthen me by Your Spirit to do the good I know to do. Keep me humble, thankful, and resting in Your sovereign grace through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Chapter Seven

Faith Under Pressure: Waiting on the Lord

James 5:1–12

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. (2) Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. (3) Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. (4) Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. (5) Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. (6) Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. (7) 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.

Beloved, as we open the Word of God today, we come again to the searching counsel of the Apostle James. James 5:1–12 calls us to examine our hearts, to consider the fleeting nature of this present world, and to steadfastly anchor ourselves by faith in the promises of our gracious Lord Jesus Christ.

1. A Warning to the World, an Encouragement to the Church (vv. 1–6)

Scripture Reading:

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.”

James begins with a thunderous rebuke against the wicked—those whose hearts trust in riches and exploit others. This warning, while aimed at the ungodly, brings comfort to the faithful: God sees injustice.

Application:

- The cries of the oppressed reach the Lord of hosts.
- Believers do not need to take vengeance; God will act justly.
- Trust His justice and leave bitterness behind.

2. A Call to Patient Faith (vv. 7–8)*Scripture Reading:*

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

James encourages steadfast endurance. Like a farmer waiting for rain, the believer waits for God’s timing with confidence and hope.

Application:

- Strengthen your resolve and fix your hope on Christ.
- Endure patiently under suffering, knowing the Lord is faithful.
- Keep your heart anchored in the promises of God.

3. Guarding Our Hearts While We Wait (v. 9)*Scripture Reading:*

“Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”

Even in pressure, Christians must guard their hearts against bitterness and discord. Christ calls His people to unity and grace.

Application:

- Avoid irritability and impatience under stress.
- Walk in love and bear with one another.
- Remember the Lord is near and cares for His church.

4. Examples to Follow: The Prophets and Job (vv. 10–11)

James points us to faithful witnesses: the prophets and Job. They endured suffering yet remained steadfast, demonstrating the Lord’s mercy and purpose through trials.

Application:

- Suffering is not meaningless; God works through it.

- Trials cultivate endurance and deepen reliance on Christ.
- Trust God's purposes even in hardship.

5. A Call to Integrity (v. 12)

Scripture Reading:

“But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.”

James emphasizes simple honesty. Words of a heart established in Christ are straightforward, trustworthy, and honor God.

Application:

- Speak plainly and live transparently.
- Let integrity flow from a heart at peace with God.
- Avoid manipulation or exaggeration.

Conclusion: Faith That Endures

James exhorts the church to steadfast faith under pressure. The world will challenge us, suffering will test us, and waiting will stretch us—but the Lord:

- Sees,
- Acts,
- Sustains, and
- Is compassionate and merciful.

Application:

- Wait with steadfast faith.
- Walk with integrity.
- Love one another.
- Keep your eyes fixed on Christ.

Chapter Eight

Faith Expressed in Prayer, Confession, and Restoration

James 5:13–20

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. (19) 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.

Beloved, as we come once again to the sacred text, we arrive at the concluding words of James's epistle. Here James gathers everything he has taught about genuine, living faith and presses it down to practical essence: faith that rests upon Christ expresses itself in prayer, confession, and a heart that seeks the restoration of the wandering brother.

This is not a call to self-reliance or fleshly effort. It is a summons into the gracious means God provides—prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the care of the body—all as the overflow of the faith He has given us in Christ Jesus.

1. Faith Turns to God in All Seasons (v. 13)

Scripture Reading:

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.”

Faith is displayed in ordinary life, in both suffering and joy.

- **In suffering:** look to God as the source of comfort.
 - Psalm 34:17 – “When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.”
- **In cheerfulness:** acknowledge God as the Giver of every good gift.
 - Psalm 147:1 – “Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant.”

2. Faith Seeks the Ministry of the Church in Weakness (vv. 14–15)

Scripture Reading:

“Is anyone among you sick? 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. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

Faith acknowledges weakness and seeks God’s ordained means of care.

- The elders serve as instruments of prayer, counsel, and comfort.
- The power is in Christ, not the oil or ritual.
- Unconfessed sin may contribute to affliction, and God graciously forgives through Christ.
 - 1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

3. Faith Acknowledges Its Need for the Body (v. 16)

Scripture Reading:

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

Faith moves us from isolation into mutual care within the church.

- Honest confession fosters healing and accountability.
- Sin thrives in secrecy; healing thrives in gospel fellowship.
 - Galatians 6:2 – “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

4. Faith Prays with Confidence in God’s Power (vv. 16–18)

Scripture Reading:

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.”

Faith is confident because it prays to the same God who answered Elijah.

- The “righteous person” is one declared righteous in Christ, not morally perfect.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
- God hears and acts according to His sovereign will.

5. Faith Seeks the Restoration of the Wandering Brother (vv. 19–20)

Scripture Reading:

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Faith takes responsibility for the care of others.

- Wandering believers are restored with gentleness and love.
 - Galatians 6:1 – “If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”
- Restoration protects the soul and strengthens the fellowship of the church.

Conclusion: Faith Looks Always to Christ

Faith in Christ expresses itself through:

- **Suffering:** pray.
- **Joy:** praise.
- **Weakness:** seek the elders’ care.
- **Sin:** confess and restore.
- **Community:** pursue the wandering with grace.
- **Prayer:** trust in God’s power.

Christ is the center of all. Christ is the strength. Christ is the hope. Christ is the Shepherd who restores souls.

May God grant us a faith that lives in dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ and expresses itself in humble prayer, loving fellowship, and the restoration of those He brings into our care.

Amen.

Conclusion

Faith That Lives, Words That Serve, and Lives That Glorify God

Beloved,

As we close this study of the Epistle of James, we return to the central theme that has woven itself through every chapter: **faith is not merely a belief; it is a life that is visible, active, and transformative.** For the sake of those around us, the message of James calls us beyond profession and into action, from private devotion to public witness.

Throughout this journey, we have seen that faith:

1. **Endures trials with joy** (James 1). Our faith is refined and strengthened through hardship, and trials provide opportunities for perseverance, maturity, and greater reliance on God. The testing of our faith is not to defeat us but to shape us into vessels fit for the work of His kingdom.
2. **Is alive through works** (James 2). Faith that does not act is dead or unproductive. Genuine faith moves us to care for the needy, to serve sacrificially, and to live out God's commands in practical, tangible ways. Our deeds are the reply of a heart transformed by Christ.
3. **Controls the tongue and reflects heavenly wisdom** (James 3). Words are powerful, capable of building up or tearing down. True faith seeks wisdom from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy. Faith shapes the speech of the believer by love so that it brings life, encouragement, and truth.
4. **Humility invites grace** (James 4). Pride leads to strife, arrogance to sin, and friendship with the world to enmity with God. But humility draws down the grace of God! When we submit to Him, resist the devil, and draw near to God, His Spirit works in us, transforming our desires and actions in accordance with His will and way.
5. **Trusts God's will in every plan** (James 4:13–17). Life is brief, and tomorrow is uncertain. Faith recognizes God's sovereignty over every aspect of life. Planning under His guidance, submitting every goal to His will, and doing the good we know to do honors God and aligns us with His purposes.
6. **Waits patiently under pressure** (James 5:1–12). Trials, injustice, and suffering are not meaningless. Faith rests in the promises of God, strengthens the heart through endurance, and looks forward to the Lord's coming with hope and perseverance.
7. **Expresses itself through prayer, confession, and restoration** (James 5:13–20). Faith turns to God in every season, relies on the ministry of the church, confesses sin, prays in confidence, and seeks the restoration of wandering brothers and sisters. Christ is at the center of all our prayers, our healing, and our community life.

The Epistle of James challenges us to examine the public witness of our faith. It is a mirror held up to the soul, asking whether what we profess is truly reflected in what we do. And while we fail on every front, God gives more grace and draws near to those who humble themselves. Beloved, James calls us to a **faith that transforms ordinary life into a public testimony of God's grace, mercy, and power**. Even when we fail (and we do fail often), God's grace is sufficient. Those who have faith in God through Christ rely on His mercy each and every day.

As we step away from these pages, let us carry with us the practical, life-changing implications of James's teaching:

- Speak words that bless rather than curse.
- Act in love, mercy, and justice toward others.
- Submit every plan and desire to God's sovereign will.
- Endure trials with patience and hope.
- Pray with confidence, confess with humility, and restore with gentleness.

May this epistle continue to shape our hearts long after we have read it. May we be a people known for faith that lives, words that serve, and lives that glorify God. And may our daily walk reflect the love of Christ, showing the world that the Gospel is not only believed but lived.

Let us go forward with courage, conviction, and joy, knowing that **the God who began a good work in us will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus** (Philippians 1:6).

Amen.

Chapter: Date, Context, Setting, and Authorship of the Epistle of James

The Epistle of James is widely regarded by conservative Evangelical scholars as one of the earliest books of the New Testament. Understanding its author and setting enriches our reading and grounds the epistle firmly within the history of the early church.

Authorship

James identifies himself simply as James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to James the Just, the half-brother of Jesus and the influential leader of the Jerusalem church. Early church testimony consistently affirms his authorship. His pastoral tone, moral clarity, and Jewish-Christian perspective align perfectly with what we know of him from Acts and early church history.

Date

Most conservative scholars place the writing of James between A.D. 45 and 50. Several factors support this early date:

There is no mention of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).
Church structure appears simple and undeveloped.
The strong Jewish character reflects the earliest phase of the church.
This makes James likely the first New Testament letter written.

Recipients and Setting

James writes to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion, referring to Jewish believers scattered outside Jerusalem. Many were displaced by persecution after Stephen's martyrdom. These scattered believers faced hardship, poverty, tension with wealthy landowners, and temptations toward spiritual instability.

Purpose

James writes as a pastor seeking to strengthen struggling Christians. His goals include:

- encouraging endurance during trials
- calling believers to genuine, lived-out faith
- confronting favoritism, worldliness, and sinful speech
- urging prayer, repentance, and mutual care

Themes in Brief

Faith and works: True faith produces obedience.

Wisdom: God gives wisdom for trials and temptations.

The tongue: Words have power to build up or destroy.

Justice: God hears oppressed believers and will judge the wicked.

Prayer: Believers must depend on God in every season.

Conclusion

From an Evangelical perspective, James' epistle is a pastoral letter written early in church history to guide scattered believers into steadfast, mature, Christ-honoring faith. Its practical wisdom remains vital for the church today.