

Teaching through James

Lesson: Topic and Chapter:

1. Patience Has Its Perfect Work (James 1:1-4)
2. Gain True Wisdom and Wealth (James 1:5-11)
3. Proven Christians Understand the Source of Temptation (James 1:12-17)
4. Being a Doer of the Word (James 1:18-27)
5. Partiality Transgresses God's Nature (James 2:1-13)
6. Faith without Works Is Dead (James 2:14-26)
7. Teachers with Tamed Tongues (James 3:1-12)
8. Demonstrate Wisdom by Godliness (3:13-18)
9. Cultivate Humble Godliness (4:1-10)
10. Ignoring God's Word and God's Will (4:11-17)
11. The Miserly Rich Are Condemned (James 5:1-6)
12. Patience Produces Precious Profit (James 5:7-12)
13. Maintain Physical and Spiritual Health (James 5:13-20)

Lesson 1: Patience Has Its Perfect Work (James 1:1-4)

Key Verse: "But let patience have her perfect work, that he may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:4)

Introduction: James, the brother of Jesus, became the first pastor of the church at Jerusalem. When many Christian Jews were scattered by severe persecution, James wrote to encourage them in the faith. He began his letter with an explanation of the benefits of severe trials.

Prologue: James greeted the dispersed Christian Jews (1:1)

1. James was the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19)
2. James originally was an unbeliever (John 7:5)
3. James became a loyal believer (1 Corinthians 15:7)
4. James was the first pastor of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 15:13-22, 21:18-26; Galatians 2:9, 12)
5. James wrote to the dispersed Christian Jews

I. Rejoice Because Trials Produce Patience (1:2-3)

- A. Christians will experience various trials (2)
- B. Christians should rejoice when this happens (2)
- C. These trials are tests of faith (3)
- D. Such tests produce patience (3)

II. But Let Patience Produce Spiritual Maturity (1:4)

- A. Patience has a perfect work
- B. Patience works to make Christians perfect
- C. Patience works to make Christians complete
- D. By this Christians lack nothing essential to maturity

Conclusion: Christians should reap the full benefits of the trials the Lord lets come their way. They can result in joy, patience, and perfection, if the Christian is properly responsive to them.

Lesson 2: Gain True Wisdom and Wealth (James 1:5-11)

Key Verse: "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." (James 1:5)

Introduction: James told his persecuted brethren that wisdom was available to help them profit from trials. Such wisdom is available through prayer, and it bestows a self image that reaps eternal benefits.

I. Gain True Wisdom through Prayer and Faith (1:5-8)

- A. Pray for true wisdom (5)
 - 1. Wisdom is needed to profit from trials
 - 2. Such wisdom is available to those who lack it
 - 3. God gives such wisdom to those who ask Him
 - a. He gives it to all who ask
 - b. He gives liberally (enough to meet the need)
 - c. He does not rebuke those who ask

- B. Pray in faith for wisdom (6-8)
 - 1. Ask in faith (6)
 - 2. Ask without doubting (6-8)
 - a. A doubter is like a tossing wave (6)
 - b. A doubter will receive nothing (7)
 - c. A doubter is double-minded (8)
 - d. A doubter is unstable in all his ways (8)

II. Gain True Wealth through Humility (1:9-11)

- A. The poor should glory in his exaltation (9)
 - 1. Do not concentrate on lowliness and poverty
 - 2. Do concentrate on how God has exalted you
- B. The rich should glory in his humiliation (10-11)
 - 1. Glory in riches leads to pride and sin
 - 2. Humility is pleasing to God (James 4:6)
 - a. The rich are servants of God
 - b. Riches are for the service of God
 - 3. Riches are as transitory as fading grass (10-11)
 - 4. The proud rich fade away in their pursuits (11)

Conclusion: True wisdom and wealth accrue in the heart and endure forever. One must view himself and his circumstances from the divine perspective in order to understand where true values lie.

Lesson 3: Proven Christians Understand the Source of Temptation (James 1;12-17)

Key Verse: "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."
(James 1:12)

Introduction: God blesses Christians who resist temptation. Wise Christians understand that temptations to sin come from their fallen nature, not from God. God cannot sin and will not tempt any to sin. Instead, God is the source of all goodness and perfection.

I. The Proven Christian Is Blessed (1:12)

- A. He endures temptation with unyielding patience
- B. He will receive the crown of life
- C. God promised this crown to those who love Him

II. Temptation Is from the Heart Not from God (1:13-15)

- A. Temptation is not from God (13)
 - 1. Do not accuse God of temptation
 - 2. God cannot be tempted to do evil
 - 3. God does not tempt anyone with evil
- B. Temptation is from fallen human desires (14-15)
 - 1. Human desires draw one away into temptation (14)
 - 2. Human desires entice one to sin (14)
 - 3. Spawned desires give birth to sin (15)
 - 4. Full-grown sin brings forth death (15)

III. God Is the Source of All Goodness and Perfection (1:16-17)

- A. Do not be deceived about the source of evil (16)
- B. All good and perfect gifts are from God (17)
 - 1. They are free gifts
 - 2. They are from God above
- C. God is immutably holy (17)
 - 1. He is the Father of lights
 - 2. He never varies
 - 3. He never casts a shadow

Conclusion: Wise Christians do not allow their fallen desires to conceive, let alone give birth to sin.

Lesson 4: Being a Doer of the Word (James 1:18-27)

Key Verse: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
(James 1:21)

Introduction: Because God has given spiritual life, believers should exercise self restraint, seek divine cleansing, obey God's Word, and practice pure religion. This gives an outward demonstration of faith.

I. God Has Given Spiritual Birth (1:18)

- A. He gave it of His own will
- B. He gave it by the Word of Truth
- C. He gave it to make firstfruits

II. Believers Should Exercise Self Restraint (1:19-20)

- A. They should be swift to hear (19)
- B. They should be slow to speak (19)
- C. They should be slow to wrath (19-20)

III. Believers Should Seek Divine Cleansing (1:21)

- A. Set aside all sin
- B. Receive the Word of God
 - 1. The Word is implanted
 - 2. The Word is able to save souls

IV. Believers Should Obey God's Word (1:22-25)

- A. Be a doer and not a hearer only (22)
- B. Disobedience makes God's Word ineffective (23-24)
 - 1. One who hears and does not do is disobedient
 - 2. It is like a forgetful mirror experience
- C. Obedience makes God's Word effective (25)
 - 1. It is the Perfect Law of Liberty
 - 2. Continuance, remembrance and obedience are required
 - 3. God blesses such obedience

V. Believers Should Practice Pure Religion (1:26-27)

- A. Vain religion is deceptive and slanderous (26)
 - 1. The tongue is not bridled
 - 2. The heart is deceived
- B. Pure religion is benevolent and spotless (27)
 - 1. Widows and orphans are protected
 - 2. The life is kept spotless from worldliness
 - 3. This religion is acceptable to God the Father

Conclusion: Christianity is practical: a forgiven sinner obeys God's Word to produce righteous living.

Lesson 5: Partiality Transgresses God's Nature (James 2:1-13)

Key Verse: "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." (James 2:1)

Introduction: Although the early Christians were suffering from discrimination, James exposed their own practice of showing partiality. He proved that partiality transgressed God's choices and His law, and was subject to future judgment.

I. Partiality Transgresses God's Choices (2:1-4)

- A. Partiality is prohibited to Christians (1)
- B. Slighting the poor is partiality (2-4)
 - 1. They gave preferred places to the rich (2-3)
 - 2. They gave lower places to the poor (2-3)
 - 3. This was showing partiality (4)
 - 4. This was evil-minded judging (4)
- C. Slighting the poor dishonors God's choices (5-7)
 - 1. God has chosen the poor to be spiritually rich (5)
 - 2. Partiality dishonors the poor whom God honors (6)
 - 3. The rich often maltreat God and His people (6-7)

II. Partiality Transgresses God's Law (2:8-11)

- A. God's royal law of love is operative (8)
- B. Partiality breaks the royal law of love (9)
- C. So partiality transgresses the whole law (10-11)
 - 1. Breaking one point of law makes one guilty of all (10)
 - 2. Adultery and murder illustrate the principle (11)

III. Partiality Will Be Judged by God (2:12-13)

- A. Live in light of coming judgment (12)
- B. Judgment will be by the law of liberty (12)
- C. Judgment will be on the basis of one's mercy (13)
 - 1. No mercy will be given to the unmerciful
 - 2. The merciful will triumph over judgment

Conclusion: Christians should avoid all forms of partiality, knowing it violates God's nature and merits future judgment.

Lesson 6: Faith without Works Is Dead (James 2:14-26)

Key Verse: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2:17)

Introduction: James refuted the error that theological orthodoxy is saving faith. He proved that effectual faith produces good works that demonstrate faith's vitality. The absence of good works is evidence of a futile faith that cannot justify.

I. Workless Faith Is Futile (2:14-16)

- A. Workless faith is profitless (14-16)
 - 1. It fails to supply the needs of others (15-16)
 - 2. It gives hypocritical blessings (15-16)
 - 3. It profits nothing (14, 16)
- B. Workless faith is powerless (14)
- C. Workless faith is lifeless (17)

II. Works Demonstrate Effectual Faith (2:18-20)

- A. Works show forth faith's vitality (18)
- B. Monotheistic belief is insufficient (19)
 - 1. Monotheistic belief is good
 - 2. But demons believe in one God
 - 3. Demons are doomed to a fearful fate
- C. Do not be ignorant of dead faith (20)

III. Working Faith Is Necessary for Justification (2:21-26)

- A. Abraham was justified by a working faith (21)
- B. Works bring faith to perfection (22)
- C. Abraham's works fulfilled Scripture (23)
 - 1. Scripture declared Abraham justified by faith (Genesis 15:6)
 - 2. Abraham's works fulfilled this truth
 - 3. So Abraham was the friend of God (Ex. 33:11; 2 Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8)
- D. Only a working faith justifies (24)
- E. Rahab was justified by a working faith (25)
- F. Workless faith is like a lifeless body (26)

Conclusion: A workless faith is absolutely incapable of anything. Only a working faith can justify and sanctify.

Lesson 7: Teachers with Tamed Tongues (James 3:1-12)

Key Verse: "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." (James 3:2)

Introduction: In addition to good works, true faith produces words consistent with sound doctrine and holiness. Men with uncontrolled tongues should not be teachers, because uncontrolled tongues can do great harm and are inconsistent with God's plan in nature.

I. Teachers Must Control Their Tongues (3:1-2)

- A. Have only a few teachers (1-2)
 - 1. Teachers receive stricter judgment (1)
 - 2. All people are prone to offend (2)
- B. A perfect man controls his tongue (2)
 - 1. He does not offend in word
 - 2. So he is able to control the whole body

II. A Controlled Tongue Can Accomplish Much (3:3-5)

- A. A small bridle controls a strong horse (3)
- B. A small rudder controls a massive ship (4)
- C. The tongue is a small member with similar power (5)

III. An Uncontrolled Tongue Can Destroy Much (3:5-6)

- A. A small flame may kindle a blazing forest fire (5)
- B. The tongue is a flame that can kindle destruction (6)
 - 1. It can be a world of iniquity
 - 2. It can defile the whole body
 - 3. It can kindle the course of nature
 - 4. It can be ignited by hell

IV. A Person Must Tame His Own Tongue (3:7-12)

- A. Every kind of wild creature may be tamed (7)
- B. But a person's tongue cannot be tamed by another (8)
- C. Yet an untamed tongue ought not to be (8-10)
 - 1. An untamed tongue is an unruly evil (8)
 - 2. An untamed tongue is full of deadly poison (8)
 - 3. An untamed tongue blesses and curses (9-10)
- D. For an untamed tongue is contrary to nature (11-12)
 - 1. Springs yield only one kind of water (11-12)
 - 2. Trees yield only one kind of fruit (12)

Conclusion: A person can learn only from God how to control his own tongue, then he may be ready to be a teacher.

Lesson 8: Demonstrate Wisdom by Godliness (James 3:13-18)

Key Verse: "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." (James 3:13)

Introduction: Just as genuine faith is demonstrated by good works, so is godly wisdom demonstrated by godly conduct. James proved that worldly wisdom and godly wisdom are incompatible and contradictory. Worldly wisdom emphasizes self; godly wisdom emphasizes holiness and service.

I. Godly Wisdom Must Be Demonstrated by Good Works (3:13)

- A. Good conduct demonstrates godly wisdom
- B. Meekness demonstrates godly wisdom

II. Godly Wisdom Is Incompatible with Worldly Wisdom (3:14-16)

- A. Worldly wisdom displays ungodly attitudes (14-16)
 - 1. It displays bitter envy
 - 2. It displays self-seeking
 - 3. These attitudes contradict the truth
- B. Worldly wisdom is not from God (15)
 - 1. It is earthly not heavenly
 - 2. It is sensual not spiritual
 - 3. It is demonic not divine
- C. Worldly wisdom produces confusion and evil (16)

III. Godly Wisdom Displays Nine Perfections (3:17-18)

- A. It is pure
- B. It is peaceable
- C. It is gentle
- D. It is compliant
- E. It is merciful
- F. It is fruitful
- G. It is impartial
- H. It is sincere
- I. It is righteous

Conclusion: Christians should not boast of worldly wisdom, but should seek the perfections of godly wisdom.

Lesson 9: Cultivate Humble Godliness (James 4:1-10)

Key Verse: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)

Introduction: Just as godly wisdom produces peace, and worldly wisdom produces confusion and evil; so proud worldliness produces church strife, unanswered prayer, and broken fellowship with God, whereas humble godliness is blessed by God.

I. God Resists Proud Worldliness (4:1-6)

- A. Worldly desires produce church battles (1)
- B. Worldliness prevents the satisfaction of desires (2-3)
 - 1. Lustful desires prevent satisfaction (2)
 - 2. Hostile methods prevent satisfaction (2)
 - 3. Prayerlessness prevents satisfaction (2)
 - 4. Selfishness prevents satisfaction (3)
- C. Worldliness alienates God's love (4)
 - 1. It is spiritual adultery
 - 2. It is spiritual hostility
- D. Worldliness violates God's Word (5-6)
 - 1. God is jealous for faithfulness (5)
 - 2. God is gracious toward humility (6)

II. God Exalts Humble Godliness (4:7-10)

- A. Submit to God's Sovereignty (7)
- B. Resist God's enemy (7)
- C. Draw near for God's fellowship (8)
- D. Cleanse yourself from sins against God (8)
- E. Sorrow for sins against God (9)
- F. Humble yourself in God's presence (10)

Conclusion: Christians should turn away from worldliness and pride, and should cultivate godliness and humility.

Lesson 10: Ignoring God's Word and God's Will (James 4:11-17)

Key Verse: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
(James 4:17)

Introduction: In developing godly wisdom and cultivating genuine humility, Christians should avoid two dangerous traps: judging the actions and motives of fellow Christians, and planning apart from the will of God. Judging a brother amounts to assuming the role of God in his life; and independent planning amounts to assuming the role of God in one's own life.

I. Judging a Brother Is Judging God's Word (4:11-12)

- A. Do not speak evil of a Christian brother (11)
- B. Evil speaking amounts to judging a brother (11)
- C. Judging amounts to speaking evil of the law (11)
- D. Speaking evil amounts to judging the law (11)
- E. Judging amounts to assuming authority over the law (11)
 - 1. The critic ceases to be under the law
 - 2. The judge asserts authority over the law
- F. But there is only one Lawgiver (12)
- G. Therefore Christians have no authority to judge (12)

II. Ignoring God's Will Is Arrogance and Sin (4:13-17)

- A. Do not make plans apart from God's will (13)
- B. Because the future is uncertain (14)
 - 1. You do not know the future
 - 2. Your life is a mere vapor
- C. Instead, plan according to God's will (15)
- D. Independent planning is arrogant boasting (16)
- E. Failure to do known good is sin (17)

Conclusion: A Christian should judge only himself, and that only by the standard of God's Word. Plans should be made only in conformity with God's will.

Lesson 11: The Miserly Rich Are Condemned (James 5:1-6)

Key Verse: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." (James 5:1)

Introduction: The miserly rich live for their own pleasure by oppressing the just and ignoring God's will. This behavior will bring judgment from the LORD of Sabaoth who views them as fattened for the slaughter.

I. The Miserly Rich Will Be Judged (5:1-4)

- A. The miserly rich should mourn (1)
- B. Their judgment is impending (1)
- C. Their hoarded riches will witness against them (2-3)
 - 1. Their riches are corrupted (2)
 - 2. Their garments are moth-eaten (2)
 - 3. Their gold and silver are corroded (3)
 - 4. These will witness against them (3)
- D. They hoarded treasures in the last days (3)
- E. Withheld wages will witness against them (4)
 - 1. Their employees labored in their harvest
 - 2. They fraudulently withheld employees' wages
- F. The LORD Sabaoth has heard their victims' outcry (4)

II. The Miserly Rich Are Worthy of Judgment (4:5-6)

- A. They have lived in pleasure and luxury (5)
- B. They have fattened themselves for slaughter (5)
- C. They oppressed the just (6)
 - 1. They condemned the just
 - 2. They murdered the just
- D. The just have not resisted them (6)

Conclusion: Rich Christians should learn to exercise good stewardship over the wealth entrusted to them by God, and poor Christians should leave vengeance to the Lord.

Lesson 12: Patience Produces Precious Profit (James 5:7-12)

Key Verse: "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." (James 5:8)

Introduction: Christians may suffer deprivation, sickness, or persecution. They should learn patience so that they may gain the benefits God intends for them. They should remain unwaveringly faithful without grumbling, following Biblical examples.

I. Patience Unwaveringly Endures to the End (5:7-9)

- A. Patience endures until the Lord's Coming (7)
- B. Patience waits for the expected result (7)
 - 1. Patience is like a farmer
 - 2. The farmer waits for the precious fruit
 - 3. The farmer waits for the seasonal rains
- C. Patience keeps the heart established (8)
- D. Patience does not grumble (9)
 - 1. Grumbling brings condemnation
 - 2. The Judge stands at the door

II. Patience Follows Excellent Examples (5:10-11)

- A. Patience follows the prophets' examples (10)
 - 1. They spoke the word of God
 - 2. They endured suffering with patience
 - 3. They are counted blessed
- B. Patience follows Job's example (11)
 - 1. Job persevered in suffering
 - 2. God had a good purpose for Job's suffering
 - 3. God is very compassionate and merciful

III. Patience Is Truthful without Oaths (12)

- A. Patience needs no oaths
- B. Patience's word is wholly reliable
- C. Patience avoids the judgment of oaths

Conclusion: Patience yields precious fruit to those who wait for God to work out His unseen purposes.

Lesson 13: Maintain Physical and Spiritual Health (James 5:13-20)

Key Verse: "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."
(James 5:16)

Introduction: James concluded his letter to Jewish Christians of the Dispersion with some practical instruction about suffering, sickness, and restoration. Suffering saints should pray, cheerful saints should sing, sick saints should seek possible healing, and straying saints should be restored.

I. The Saints Should Pray and Praise (5:13)

- A. Saints suffering wrong should pray about it
- B. Cheerful saints should sing psalms

II. The Sick Saints Should Seek Possible Healing (5:14-18)

- A. The sick should call the church elders (14-15)
 - 1. The elders will pray for them (14)
 - 2. The elders will anoint them with oil (14)
 - 3. The sick will be healed (15)
 - a. Believing prayer will save them
 - b. The Lord will raise them up
 - 4. Their sins will be forgiven
- B. The sick should confess any trespasses (16-18)
 - 1. Confession should be to the offended party (16)
 - 2. The affected parties should pray for one another (16-18)
 - a. They should pray for forgiveness (16)
 - b. They should pray for healing (16)
 - c. The prayer should be by the righteous (16)
 - d. The prayer should be fervent (16)
 - e. Such prayer accomplishes much (16)
 - f. Elijah is an example of fervent prayer (17-18)
- C. God does not always heal (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

III. Straying Saints Should Be Restored (5:19-20)

- A. Wanderers should be restored (5:19; Galatians 6:1)
- B. Restoration saves lives (20)
- C. Restoration covers many sins (20)

Conclusion: Christians should do their best to keep themselves physically and spiritually healthy so as to be the best possible servants of God.