



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

JAMES...TRUE FAITH! - JAMES 1-5

COLORADO

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I. WHO WAS THE AUTHOR OF JAMES? JAMES 1:1

James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ is considered to be the author of this book. An incredible transformation occurred in the lives of James and his brothers following the death and resurrection of Jesus. His life was never the same and he became a prominent leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem. (Acts 12:17, Galatians 2:9) He was martyred in 62 A.D. by the High Priest, putting him to death for his faith in Christ. In Galatians 2:9, Paul lists "*James and Cephas (Peter) and John*" as pillars of the church. James deals with the practical issues of a true and living faith in Jesus Christ.

II. WHAT IS THE THEME OF JAMES?

What is true faith? How would you answer that question? James wrote this book to challenge the Jewish Christians and all believers to examine their faith to see if it is a genuine, saving faith. James answers the question of what is true faith! James is very practical. **It doesn't teach us how to be saved, but rather how to live when we are saved for it matters how we live.** James relates everything he writes to true faith and how it works.

III. OVERVIEW OF JAMES

➤ **James 1:2-12 True Faith...endures trials.**

James teaches us about a faith that endures through trials to maturity resulting in obedience to Jesus Christ and being conformed to His image, not ours. No matter what the test, no matter what the trial, may we "*give way*" to God's sovereignty in our lives allowing Him to refine and mature us into His likeness. We must submit to our Lord's refining flames, trusting in His greater purpose and "*give way*" to His fire that burns in our lives for our good and His glory. May we have the heart of David expressed in Psalm 139:23-24, inviting God to search out even the hidden parts of our lives and purify us to the depths.

➤ **James 1:13-17 True Faith...endures temptations!**

James directs our focus from the outward trials to the inward temptations to sin. Temptations can bring about sin and death instead of eternal life. One we are to *endure through* and the other we are *never to give in to* because it is sin. Satan *tempts* us to sin which destroys. The solution for not yielding to sin in our lives is found in a close relationship with Jesus Christ and submitted to the Word of God to the point that we actually respond to God's Word with obedience and godliness. He will always give immeasurably; just what we need to live the life He has called us to live. We must arm ourselves with His Word and prayer, together with the enabling

power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives so that we can resist temptation and sin, and endure to maturity.

➤ **James 1:18-21 True Faith...receives the Word resulting in salvation!**

Not only is the Word of God the originator of our faith, but it now must become the focal point of our faith for the rest of our lives. James points back to the regenerating power of God's Word in verse 18, which brings about a new birth in Christ thus referring to salvation. But James doesn't stop there for he reminds the ones he loves so deeply that the regenerating power of the Word of God must also lead to a new life directed by God's Word. We are to continually submit to His Word, allowing it to continue its' divine work in and through our lives.¹ James gives us an urgent command that we are to readily receive God's Word, responding favorably to what it has to say. We are to dial in and be turned on to the Word of God just like a radio tunes into a station. As believers, God's Word has been implanted in our heart through the Holy Spirit. It is that Word which is able to save us from the *penalty of sin* through salvation, save us from the *power of sin* through sanctification and save us from the *presence of sin* through our ultimate glorification.

➤ **James 1:22-27 True Faith...is a doer of the Word!**

True faith not only receives the Word of God resulting in salvation, but is willing to put the Word into practice. Since the Word of God has power to save your soul, then we do more than just listen to what it says, our listening must lead to action. Not only do we put away all sin, but we must become a "*doer of the Word*". This word means so much more than "*just do it*". The idea is to convey the difference between one who builds their home verses the one who is a builder. I might say I am building a house, but I am not the one hammering the nails; *my builder is*. James is saying that true believers are the ones carrying out the action, the doing of the Word of God, the hammering of nails if you will. The first one in this example has carried out an action like making a decision to build and putting up the money. But the second one is actually doing the work, pouring their whole life into being a builder of the house and doing the work day by day. James exhorts us day in and out, more and more, as true believers to become people who pour our whole being into a life of obedience. We then carry out the principles and precepts of God's Word each and every day. For the mark of true faith is not just hearing the Word of God, but doing the Word of God. Obedience is the dividing line between any who would call themselves believers and those who truly are. It is important to note that our obedience is

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not to win our salvation, for that has already taken place in James 1:18-21. Jesus Christ in His love and grace has already purchase that for us through His death on the cross. Our works can never save us; Christ alone is our hope for salvation. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Instead, we obey because we now belong to God. In gratitude, because of all that Christ has done, the very least we can do is to please Him with our lives in obedience. Has the Word been implanted in your heart and saved your soul? Then obey it! James knows obedience is no simple matter. But we must commit ourselves to God and His Word, daily seeking His face and doing His will by the power of the Holy Spirit which enables us live godly lives that please Him. Everything we are and have must be devoted to hearing and doing, loving and honoring, adoring and serving God. And really loving God means honoring Him by obeying.

➤ ***James 2:1-11 True Faith...doesn't show partiality but love!***

The quality of your love for others reveals the quality and genuineness of your faith. If you are committed to your faith in Jesus Christ, you will be committed to impartiality. Anyone who seeks forgiveness at the foot of the cross is invited to come to Jesus. Impartiality has always been the essence of our Lord's character. The quality of your love for others reveals the quality and genuineness of your faith. If you are committed to your faith in Jesus Christ, you will be committed to impartiality. Is your life characterized by showing favoritism? Are you merciful and compassionate to your neighbor, those in need? The depth of our love for our neighbor has a direct correlation to the depth of our love for Jesus Christ. To show favoritism to others is totally against the very nature and character of God. We are called to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, and mind and then secondly to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Our neighbor is anyone God puts in our path that has a need. James shows that just as those who love their neighbor as themselves fulfill the royal law and reveals a true and genuine faith, so conversely the one who shows partiality habitually, demonstrates their lack of love and gives evidence of a faith that is not genuine. This is serious and James does not deal with it lightly. If this sin of partiality is habitual in our lives, there is reason to conclude that we may not be a true believer in Jesus Christ. Redemption will always bring about obedient living, even though there will be times of disobedience.

➤ ***James 2:14-26 True Faith...produces good works!***

James would say that a faith which doesn't result in obedience is a dead faith and then contrasts that dead faith with a living faith. If we

say we have faith, it will be seen in obedience. Redemption will always bring about obedient living, even though there will be times of disobedience. If you say you have faith, if you say you are a believer, then you will demonstrate that by how you live. James will challenge us to examine our faith in light of our works. Why does James go to great lengths to show how true faith works? A living faith must express itself in good works and they demonstrate the reality of that true and living faith. You can never separate good works from true faith. If that faith is true and genuine, it will be demonstrated by active obedience whereby I submit my heart, my will and my life fully to Him. James is so concerned that we are not deceived about the genuineness of our faith and that we possess the right kind of faith. God wants us to be assured beyond a shadow of a doubt that just as the body has no life apart from the indwelling spirit and is a useless, dead corpse, so also a faith without works is a useless and dead faith. And if that's the kind of faith you have, don't be deceived, you are not a true believer in Jesus Christ. Yours is a dead and lifeless faith, powerless to save, vain and useless. One could easily confuse these verses with other Scripture. James is not saying that our salvation results from good works. James says that true salvation will result in good works. This is an important difference.

We must be clear about what true salvation is. Paul makes it crystal clear that good works play no part in attaining salvation. There is no way we can earn our salvation. We can never do enough good works because salvation comes purely by God's grace alone. We receive salvation purely as a gift from God. In Galatians 2:16, Paul again makes it clear that we are not justified, by good works. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not of any good works that we could ever do. From Ephesians 2, how is a man saved? Paul makes it clear that a man is saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. It is clear that man's good works play no part in bringing salvation. Works are not a contributing factor to our salvation because there is nothing we could do to meet God's standard of holiness. We are sinners and can never be holy. We receive salvation only as a free gift from God. By God's grace alone we are given the gift of salvation that we don't deserve and could never earn. We cannot take any credit for our salvation. All the work is done by God. As believers we are different, because Christ has made a difference. James has continued to emphasize the fact that it matters how we live, not because we earn our salvation from our works. But rather because our actions, our works reveal whether our faith is true and genuine. If we say we believe, there will be a

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difference in our life. Look at your life. A redeemed life will manifest righteous works. Are you an obedient doer of the Word of God? James instructs us that a faith which doesn't result in obedience is a dead faith and worthless. But true faith is characterized by love and obedience to Scripture. Where are you?

➤ **James 3:1-12 True Faith...controls its' tongue!**

James insists that a living faith must be revealed by a demonstration of good works. There is no place where we can see the relationship between faith and works demonstrated more clearly than in a person's speech. Our speech, our words reflect what's in our heart and controlling the tongue is a matter of the heart. Christianity is a doctrine that must be lived out. The genuineness of one's faith will eventually be evidenced by one's speech. A faith that is real and genuine is able to bridle, control the tongue. A faith that is real will be seen by what the tongue talks about. We will all give account for every word we say. James begins a discussion about perhaps the most difficult way that we will demonstrate true faith and that's with our words, our speech, *and our tongue*. And James will insist that a living faith will produce an inward change resulting in the development of self-control. Self-control is tested most readily by controlling the tongue. And the righteous "*doer of the Word*" has a heart that is transformed by God and thus has righteous speech. A true believer that possesses a genuine faith is able to bridle their tongue and that tongue reveals a wisdom that comes from above. True faith will be demonstrated by the tongue under control.

➤ **James 3:13-18 True Faith...has a wisdom from above!**

We have learned from James 3 that a true believer will have a life of growing righteousness that is sown in peace and is sowing in peace while living in the midst of a turbulent, strife filled world. One who possesses a real and genuine faith will possess a wisdom from above revealed through a righteous, selfless and peaceful life. This one will be marked by peace and cooperation rather than strife. The character of this wise person will be consistent, stable, trustworthy, and transparent. Their life will overflow with words and works of good deeds. They will be willing to extend mercy giving what is needed rather than what is deserved. They will be ready to cooperate when a better way is shown, approachable and willing to listen. They will be equitable and fair, courteous and considerate, pursuing peace but never at the expense of purity. They are not given to anger and strife, dissention and dispute but rather seek peace and cooperation. The true believer will be revealed through a righteous life that pursues and promotes peace. James chapter 3 has laid down the

foundation for believers to live and operate from a wisdom that comes from God. Worldly wisdom is evidenced by jealousy, selfish ambition and pride rooted in Satan's lies rather than God's truth. It stands in direct contrast to "*wisdom that comes from above*" characterized by humility and gentleness that's from God.

➤ **James 4:1-10 True Faith...submits to God!**

We learned in James 4 that you can't be a friend of the world and a friend of God. There is no middle ground for if you are a friend of the world, pursuing the lust of your flesh and selfish desires, then you have made yourself an enemy of God. James has wasted no words in dealing clearly with sin, exposing our hearts and motives. And it is that sin that separates us from God. This stands as a warning to all, demonstrating a true need for salvation found in Jesus Christ alone offered in James 4:7-10. The heart of this letter is a plea to wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ with an urgent call to repentance. James exhorts us to an uncompromising Christian life, not a half-hearted faith. James diagnosed their selfish strife as a result of their sin and pursuit of worldliness. This reveals the gravity of their condition. But James doesn't end with his reproof; rather he exhorts them to an urgent call of repentance with a godly, sincere sorrow for their sins that begins with submitting to God. Beginning with "Submit therefore", the "therefore" point back to the condition that has just been revealed in previous verses as the basis for what will be expressed next. Because they have yielded to their selfish desires and have fallen prey to the world's allurements, their sin has thus separated them from God. Consequently, James directs them to submit to God. Here in verses 4:7-10, he conveys a sense of urgency with a need for immediate compliance as he calls each of us to deal with our sin. Each of the 10 directives are aorist, imperative verbs not to be taken lightly for they reveal the path to true repentance and salvation. They are like military commands, demanding incisive action and radical repentance from each of us. Never forget that the sinner's sincere approach to God is assured of God's favorable and immediate response, He will draw near to you! If we sincerely draw near to God, then we can be confident of His promised response, "and He will draw near to you." Just as in Luke 15:20, the prodigal son received his father's favorable response when he repented and returned in humility to his father, so believers find God watching; waiting to welcome and restore His children into His waiting arms of fellowship. God wants us to know Him, to seek Him and we will find Him; in rich fellowship and communion when we search for Him with all our heart. (Jeremiah 29:12-14) How do we come to God? With a sincere, repentant, clean and pure heart! How

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do we draw near to God? Daily, individually and corporately; devoted to communion with Jesus Christ and cultivating constant fellowship with God. And what comes from drawing near to God- a sweet fellowship with our living Lord and eternal God!

➤ ***James 4:11-12 True Faith...doesn't speak against its' brother!***

Humility and the right attitude toward God will and must give us the right attitude towards other people, especially fellow believers. But is this the attitude we find towards each other? As James proceeds into these next verses, it is with the chief call to humble ourselves before God and submit to Him for the mark of true faith will be humility. Yet, because of malicious attitudes and actions in the church, obviously humility is seriously lacking. Here in these verses, the issue of habitual slander becomes a test of genuine faith and a measure of spiritual maturity. James once again addresses critical speech and condemning words because slander is so widespread. In fact, it may be so common that we fail to recognize its significance unless we are the other end of the slander, but James demands a reality check for all believers because this is such a destructive sin. James deals with a conduct that was ravaging the church in the form of personal attacks and critical speech, and condemning words and judgmental attitudes. This had become a habitual practice among them and it reveals a pride and arrogance that would so denigrate others. Not only were believers condemning one another, but the ones condemned were reciprocating with the same actions. James calls on believers to terminate immediately all such malicious evil slander and condemning, judgmental words and actions against one another, our brothers and sisters in Christ whom we are called to love. For this is a serious rebuke of such an unbrotherly practice. We will always be tempted to judge and condemn others and we must be careful. And we must remember, humility and the right attitude towards God will give us the right attitude towards people. We need a high view of God, submit to Him and a proper humble view of ourselves. This is where we must start. And so James demands not to speak against or judge our brother or sister in Christ with malicious intent. For when we do, we set ourselves above God's law and as a judge of God's law; a position which belongs to God alone.

➤ ***James 4:13-17 True Faith...seeks God's will!***

James exhorts us to evaluate our planning and pursuits in life in accordance with the Lord's will as expressed in Scripture. We must view life from the Lord's purpose and work for us and live obedient

to that good work. And James has taken us one step further. James says that if we aren't obedient to the Lord's will, it is sin because it shows a disregard for God's rightful sovereignty and rule. We cannot ignore His will. That's pride and arrogance. "The Scriptures give many marks of a true Christian, such as love for God, repentance from sin, humility, devotion to God's glory, prayer, love for others, separation from the world, growth, and obedience. But nothing more clearly summarizes the character of a genuine believer than a desire to do the will of God."¹ We all live within the providence of God whether we acknowledge it or not. He holds our life in His hands and that life is a gift.² And if there is a continual disinterest in the will of God, that clearly reveals a mark of pride and arrogance because it shows a disregard for God's rightful sovereignty and rule. We cannot ignore His will. James is a book that shows what true faith is like. And in these verses we find that a true and genuine faith lives dependently on God knowing that even our very existence is granted by His mercy. True faith recognizes that all plans must be made in light of His will and we must acknowledge that all our intentions are subject to His will.

➤ ***James Chapter 5***

And so we now begin our study with the final chapter of the book of James which will continue with our theme of true faith! We will be challenged with these further truths:

- ***James 5:1-11 True Faith waits in patience for the Lord's return!***
- ***James 5:12 True Faith...keeps its' word!***
- ***James 5:13-18 True Faith...prays in faith!***
- ***James 5:19-20 True Faith...holds brothers accountable to true faith!***

May we count the cost and live a life of courage and commitment as we fulfill our commission of pleasing, loving, serving, obeying and submitting to Jesus Christ. And in that great privilege of service, may we find the abiding joy of intimacy with our Lord whereby He calls us friends! There can be no deeper relationship and no greater fulfillment than this. For this is a true and genuine life of faith that works! May our greatest pleasure be found in submitting, obeying and following God's will and work for our life!

¹MacArthur, John F., *James: Guidelines for a Happy Christian Life*. Word Publishing: Nashville, TN. 2001. Pg. 95.

²Martin, Ralph P., *Word Biblical Commentary: James*. Word Books: Waco, TX., 1988. Pg.170.