

The General Epistle of James

Introduction and Chapter 1 — Confident Stand



But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.

— **James 1:22**

Introduction to the Epistle of James

Central burden: Christian faith must be more than confessed; it must be lived. James joins hearing with doing, belief with conduct, wisdom with obedience, and worship with compassionate service.

Why James Matters

James reads like New Testament wisdom literature. Its short, direct exhortations echo Proverbs and repeatedly draw the reader from doctrine into practice. The letter asks how faith behaves when life is difficult: under pressure, amid economic difference, in conversation, in decision-making, and in care for vulnerable people.

The book does not oppose grace. It exposes empty profession. James insists that living faith produces visible fruit, not as a substitute for salvation but as the evidence of a life genuinely shaped by the Word of God.

Vital Statistics

Field	Study Overview
Purpose	To expose inconsistent practice and teach practical Christian living — a faith that works.
Author	James, the half-brother of Jesus and a recognized leader of the Jerusalem church.
Date	Most likely in the mid-to-late A.D. 40s, before the Jerusalem Council; the attached sources place it approximately A.D. 44–49.
Audience	Jewish believers among ‘the twelve tribes ... scattered abroad,’ with application to Christians everywhere.
Setting	Believers dispersed by persecution and learning to live faithfully without the security of their former Jerusalem community.
Key Verse	James 2:18 — faith is shown by works; James 1:22 states the chapter’s practical keynote: be doers of the Word.

James and Jude: Brothers and Servants



James is named with Jude among the brothers of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and Jude identifies himself as ‘the brother of James’ (Jude 1). Both men open their letters by emphasizing servanthood rather than family privilege. James had not believed during our Lord’s earthly ministry (John 7:5), but the risen Christ appeared to him (1 Corinthians 15:7), and he later became a recognized pillar of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9).

Early church tradition identifies James the Just as the first bishop or overseer of Jerusalem. Eusebius preserves a tradition that he was thrown from the Temple height, stoned, and finally struck on the head with a fuller’s club. Josephus independently reports that the high priest Ananus brought James—the brother of Jesus who was called Christ—before the council and delivered him to be stoned, about A.D. 62.

- Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18 — James appears as a leading figure in Jerusalem.
- Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12 — Paul identifies James as the Lord’s brother and a recognized pillar.
- James 1:1 and Jude 1 — the brothers introduce themselves as servants and direct attention to the Lord they serve.

Historical witnesses: Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.1 and 2.23; Josephus, Antiquities 20.9.1.

Author and Historical Setting



The traditional writer is James the Lord's brother: a witness of the risen Christ, a recognized pillar, and a guide to the Jerusalem believers. Yet he introduces himself simply as 'a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

The Twelve Tribes Scattered Abroad

The phrase identifies Jewish Christians in the dispersion—believers displaced under pressure and learning to live faithfully amid instability, poverty, and social tension.

Context: James repeatedly alludes to the Old Testament and closely echoes the teaching of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount.

Themes and Interpretive Guardrails

- Trials and temptation: tests can strengthen faith; solicitations to evil do not come from God.
- Faith and works: Paul rejects works as the basis of justification; James rejects a fruitless claim to faith.
- Wisdom: God-given skill for faithful living under pressure.
- Speech: the tongue reveals the heart; listening and restraint mark maturity.
- Rich and poor: earthly status is temporary; believers meet on equal ground before God.
- Pure religion: credible worship joins controlled speech, compassionate care, and integrity.

James at a Glance



Life Application Chapter Summary

Chapter	Movement	Christian Life
Chapter 1	Confident Stand	What a Christian has
Chapter 2	Compassionate Service	What a Christian does
Chapter 3	Careful Speech	What a Christian says
Chapter 4	Contrite Submission	What a Christian feels
Chapter 5	Concerned Sharing	What a Christian gives

Chapter summary transcribed from the attached Life Application Bible page for James 1.

The Blueprint

1. Genuine religion — James 1:1–27
2. Genuine faith — James 2:1–3:12
3. Genuine wisdom — James 3:13–5:20

James writes to believers scattered in a hostile world. The letter refuses to let intellectual agreement pass for mature faith. Genuine faith transforms life and produces loving action toward others.

Central Themes of the Text

Theme	Importance
Living faith	Hearing truth must lead to doing it; service and love are evidence of living faith.
Trials	Adversity can produce endurance and mature character when met with wisdom and trust.
Law of love	Believers fulfill the royal law by loving neighbors without partiality.
Wise speech	God's wisdom governs listening and speaking; the tongue can either heal or destroy.
Wealth	Earthly status fades. Possessions are stewardship, not a basis for pride or favoritism.

Companion Bible Structure — James 1

The Companion Bible marks the chapter by correspondences and alternations. The structure is not merely decorative: it shows that the chapter moves from tested faith to the Word of truth, and from hearing the Word to embodied religion.

How to read the letters: Matching letters identify related sections. ‘C + E’ below means that two linked outer movements work together to frame the contrast between the lowly and the rich; it is not a verse range.

Letter	Verses	Movement	Description
A	1:1	Salutation	James the servant; the twelve tribes in the dispersion
B	1:2–8	Testing and wisdom	Trials produce endurance; wisdom is asked in undivided faith
C + E	1:9–11	Linked status contrast	The paired outer sections work together: the lowly brother is exalted; the rich are humbled and fade
C	1:12–16	Endurance and temptation	Blessing upon endurance; evil desire conceives sin and death
D	1:17	The source above	Every good and perfect gift comes from the unchanging Father
E	1:18	The Word of truth	God brings forth a firstfruits people by His own will
F–G	1:19–25	The Word received and obeyed	Exhortation, reason, exhortation, reason: hear, receive, and do
F	1:26–27	True religion	Controlled speech, compassionate visitation, and an unspotted life

Chapter 1 Study Map



#	Passage	Study Focus
1	1:1	A servant writes to a scattered people.
2	1:2–4	Trials test faith and form endurance.
3	1:5–8	Wisdom is sought from God in undivided faith.
4	1:9–11	Earthly rank is reversed under the perspective of eternity.
5	1:12	Endurance looks toward the crown of life.
6	1:13–16	Temptation is traced from desire to sin to death.
7	1:17–18	The unchanging Father gives good gifts and new birth by the Word.
8	1:19–21	Receive the Word with meek, restrained attention.
9	1:22–25	The blessed life belongs to the doer, not the forgetful hearer.
10	1:26–27	Pure religion joins speech, compassion, and holiness.

Salutation

1 James,

- † a servant of God
- † and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
- † to the twelve tribes
- † which are scattered abroad,
- † greeting.

Faith Under Trial

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.

Asking for Wisdom

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.

The Lowly, the Rich, and the Crown of Life

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.

Temptation, Desire, Sin, and Death

- 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.

The Father of Lights and the Word of Truth

- 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.

Listening, Receiving, and Doing

19 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.

The Mirror and the Perfect Law of Liberty

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.

Pure and undefiled Religion

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.

Biblical Observations

Observation 1

A Servant and a Scattered People

James 1

1 James,

- † a servant of God
- † and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
- † to the twelve tribes
- † which are scattered abroad,
- † greeting.

- *James, a servant...* James begins without self-promotion. Though he is the Lord's brother and a leader in Jerusalem, he identifies himself by service. His authority is expressed through submission: he belongs to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- *to the twelve tribes...* The recipients are scattered, but they are not spiritually abandoned. James addresses them as the covenant people of God living away from familiar supports. Their dispersion becomes the setting in which genuine faith will be tested and made visible.
- *greeting...* The word translated 'greeting' carries the sense of rejoicing. That greeting prepares for verse 2: joy is not denial of hardship but a settled evaluation of what God can produce through it.

Study Notes

- Servant — Greek *doulos*: bondservant; one whose life belongs to another.
- Twelve tribes — a complete designation for the Jewish people, not a claim that any tribes were lost from God's knowledge.
- Scattered abroad — diaspora: Jews living outside the land, here especially believers dispersed under pressure.

Personal Application — Where has God placed me that feels scattered or unsettled? How can I treat that place as a field of service rather than evidence that He has forgotten me?

Biblical Observations

Observation 2

Trials, Joy, and the Perfect Work of Endurance

James 1

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.

- *Count it all joy...* James says ‘when,’ not ‘if.’ Trials are expected in a faithful life. ‘Count’ means to consider or evaluate. Joy is therefore a deliberate conclusion rooted in what the test can accomplish, not a demand to call pain pleasant.
- *the trying of your faith...* The trial tests faith as metal is proved. When met with trust and obedience, pressure produces endurance — the ability to remain under the load until God’s work reaches its intended result.
- *let patience have her perfect work...* ‘Perfect and entire’ describes maturity and completeness, not sinless perfection. The goal is a whole, stable character that is not fragmented by circumstances.

Study Notes

- Trial/testing — peirasmos and related words can describe hardship that proves faith; in verses 13–15 the same word family shifts toward temptation to evil.
- Patience — better understood as endurance or perseverance.
- Perfect — mature, brought to its intended goal; entire — complete in all its parts.

Personal Application — What trial am I only trying to escape? What might endurance, wisdom, and Christlike character look like if I let God finish His work in me?

Biblical Observations

Observation 2 — Continued

6 Perfect Things in James

James 1

- 4 But let patience have her perfect work,
† that ye may be perfect and entire,
† wanting nothing.

1	Perfect work of patience (1:4)
2	Perfect knowledge (note v, Phil. 3:15)
3	Perfect gifts (1:17)
4	Perfect law of liberty (1:25)
5	Perfect faith by works (2:22)
6	Perfect man by restraint (3:2)

Discuss: Which of these six ‘perfect things’ most stands out to you in your present season, and why?

Biblical Observations

Observation 3

Wisdom Asked in Undivided Faith

James 1

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.

- *If any of you lack wisdom...* The need created by trials is not merely more information. James directs the believer to wisdom: practical, God-centered skill for choosing and living well under pressure.
- *giveth to all men liberally...* God gives generously and without reproach. He does not shame the sincere petitioner for needing help. The command to ask is therefore an invitation to dependence.
- *ask in faith, nothing wavering...* Wavering is pictured as the restless sea. The problem is deeper than a passing question; it is a divided allegiance that wants God and the world on equal terms. Undivided faith trusts God's character enough to receive His wisdom and obey it.

Biblical Observations

Observation 3 — Continued

Study Notes

- Wisdom — practical discernment shaped by God's revealed will.
- Liberally — generously, with singleness of purpose.
- Upbraideth not — God does not reproach the person who comes in faith.
- Double-minded — literally 'two-souled,' divided between competing loyalties.

Personal Application — Am I asking God to endorse a decision I have already made, or am I genuinely willing to obey the wisdom He gives?

Biblical Observations

Observation 3 — Continued

15 Ways ‘Wisdom’ Is Used

James 1

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.

1	Human education (Acts 7:22)
2	Man’s wisdom (1 Cor. 1:19-22; 2:1-13)
3	Human philosophy and religion (Col. 2:23; 1 Cor. 3:19; 2 Cor. 1:12; Gal. 1:14)
4	Earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom (Jas. 3:14-16)
5	Prophetic anointing (Lk. 11:49)
6	Godly training (Lk. 2:40, 52)
7	Anointing to speak (Lk. 21:15; Acts 6; 1 Cor. 2:7)
8	Ministerial ability (Eph. 1:8, 17; 3:10; Col. 1:19, 28)
9	Christ the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3; 3:16)
10	Divine gift of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8)
11	Divine attribute of God (Rom. 11:33)
12	Heavenly wisdom (Jas. 3:17-18)
13	Spirit of revelation (2 Pet. 3:15)
14	Ability of Christ (Mt. 12:42; 13:54)
15	Native insight (Rev. 13:18; 17:9)

Discuss: Which use of wisdom most speaks to you, and where do you most need God’s wisdom today?

Biblical Observations

Observation 3 — Continued

6 Secrets of Answered Prayer

James 1

- 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.

1	Lack—consciousness of needs (v 5)
2	Let him ask of God (v 5; Phil. 4:6)
3	That giveth to all men liberally (v 5; Mt. 7:7-11; 21:22; Mk. 11:22-24)
4	Upbraideth not (v 5). Gr. oneidizo. Trans. upbraid (v 5; Mt. 11:20; Mk. 16:14); revile (Mt. 5:11; Mk. 15:32); cast in one's teeth (Mt. 27:44); and reproach (Lk. 6:22; Rom. 15:3; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Pet. 4:14). Men have been rebuked for unbelief, but never for having faith (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 11:20; 17:17; Mk. 16:14)
5	It shall be given him (v 5; Mt. 7:7-11; 17:20; 21:22; Mk. 9:23; 11:22-24; Lk. 11:1-13; 18:1-14; Jn. 14:12-15; 15:7, 16; 16:23-26; 1 Jn. 3:21-22; 5:13-14)
6	But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering (v 6; Heb. 11:6)

Discuss: Which of these prayer principles stands out to you most, and what would it change in the way you pray?

Biblical Observations

Observation 4

The Lowly Exalted and the Rich Made Low

James 1

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.

- *the brother of low degree rejoice...* Trials level believers before God. The poor believer can rejoice in a spiritual standing the world cannot take away. The rich believer can rejoice when trials expose the limits of wealth and bring him back to dependence upon grace.
- *the rich, in that he is made low...* James reaches for Palestine's grass and flowers, beautiful for a season but quickly withered by burning heat. Earthly prosperity is real but temporary; it cannot bear the weight of identity, security, or eternity.
- *as the flower of the grass...* The passage does not romanticize poverty or condemn possession. It confronts the false measure of people by possessions and calls both poor and rich to boast only in their relationship to Christ.

Biblical Observations

Observation 4 — Continued

Study Notes

- Low degree — humble circumstances, without worldly status.
- Glory/rejoice — legitimate boasting in God-given standing, not in possessions.
- Made low — humbled by the recognition that grace, not wealth, is true riches.

Personal Application — What earthly measure most affects how I view myself or other people? How would the cross and the coming kingdom reorder that measure?

Biblical Observations

Observation 5

The Crown Promised to Those Who Love Him

James 1

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.

- *Blessed is the man that endureth...* Verse 12 completes the opening movement. The person who remains faithful under testing is called blessed — genuinely favored, even when circumstances do not feel happy.
- *when he is tried...* ‘When he is tried’ means approved after testing. The crown is the victor’s wreath, here described as the crown consisting of life. The final horizon of endurance is not mere toughness; it is life with God.
- *the crown of life...* James joins endurance to love. Faithfulness is not sustained by willpower alone but by love for the One who has promised the reward.

Study Notes

- Blessed — spiritually favored; compare the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3, 10–12).
- Endureth — remaining under the trial without abandoning faith.
- Crown of life — the victor’s wreath, signifying the life God promises to those who love Him.

Personal Application — What promise of God must become more real to me than the pressure I feel today?

Biblical Observations

Observation 6

The Anatomy of Temptation

James 1

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.

- *God cannot be tempted with evil...* A difficult circumstance can become either a proving ground for faith or an occasion for sin. God may permit and use the trial, but evil does not originate in His character. James refuses the excuse that God is morally responsible for our choices.
- *drawn away of his own lust...* Temptation is pictured first as bait that draws and entices, then as conception and birth. Desire is entertained, the will yields, sin is acted upon, and death is produced. Sin is not random; it develops through a discernible process.
- *lust... bringeth forth sin...* 'Do not err' means do not wander into deception. Blame-shifting blinds the heart, while confession interrupts the process by bringing desire and choice into the light.

Biblical Observations

Observation 6 — Continued

Study Notes

- Drawn away — lured from safety, like game drawn toward a trap.
- Enticed — caught by bait, a fishing image.
- Lust — strong desire seeking satisfaction apart from God's will.
- Death — sin's mature fruit; Scripture presents spiritual, relational, and even physical consequences.

Personal Application — At what point in the sequence — thought, imagination, delight, enticement, yielding, action — can I most honestly interrupt temptation and take God's way of escape?

Biblical Observations

Observation 6 — Continued

7 Steps in Temptation

James 1

- 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.

1	Tempted: thought of evil (v 14)
2	Drawn away: strong imagination (v 14)
3	Lust: delight in viewing it (v 14)
4	Enticed: weakening of the will (v 14)
5	Lust conceived: yielding (v 15)
6	Sin: sinful act committed (v 15)
7	Death: result of actual sin (v 15)

Discuss: Which step in this progression stands out to you as the place where temptation can be interrupted most effectively?

Biblical Observations

Observation 7

Every Good Gift and the New Birth

James 1

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.

- *Every good gift... is from above...* James corrects deception by turning the reader from evil's true source to God's true character. Everything genuinely good and complete comes from above. God is not the author of temptation; He is the gracious giver.
- *the Father of lights...* The heavenly lights change position and cast shifting shadows, but their Creator does not change. His character and generosity are not unstable.
- *Of his own will begat he us...* The greatest example of His giving is regeneration. By His sovereign will and through the Word of truth, God brings forth a people who are firstfruits — the beginning and pledge of His renewed creation.

Study Notes

- Two words for gift emphasize both the act of giving and the gift bestowed.
- Father of lights — the Creator of sun, moon, and stars; unlike them, He does not vary.
- Word of truth — Scripture and the gospel as God's instrument in bringing new life.
- Firstfruits — the first and best of the harvest, anticipating more to come.

Personal Application — Which good gifts have I treated as entitlement? How can gratitude strengthen me against temptation's false promises?

Biblical Observations

Observation 8

Swift to Hear, Slow to Speak, Slow to Wrath

James 1

19 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.

- *swift to hear...* The ‘wherefore’ connects listening with the Word of truth in verse 18. The first response to God’s life-giving Word is receptive attention. Speech and anger must be restrained so that the heart can hear.
- *slow to speak...* The command also shapes human conversation. Talking too much and listening too little communicates that our viewpoint matters more than another person’s. James reverses that habit.
- *the wrath of man worketh not...* Human wrath cannot manufacture God’s righteousness. Anger rooted in wounded ego, resentment, or refusal of correction may feel morally powerful while actually resisting God’s work.

Study Notes

- Swift to hear — eager receptivity to Scripture and careful attention to others.
- Slow to speak — restraint, not silence; words governed by truth and love.
- Wrath — deep resentment or rejection, especially of the Word’s correction in this context.

Personal Application — In my next difficult conversation, what would change if I measured how much I listen, how carefully I speak, and what is driving my anger?

Biblical Observations

Observation 8 — Continued

4 Kinds of Disposition

James 1

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren,

† let every man be swift to hear,

† slow to speak,

† slow to wrath:

1	Those easily angered and easily pacified
2	Those easily angered and difficult to appease
3	Those not easily angered and easily appeased
4	Those not easily angered and difficult to appease

Discuss: Which disposition most resembles your usual response, and which response is James calling you to cultivate?

Biblical Observations

Observation 9

Receiving the Implanted Word

James 1

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness

- † and superfluity of naughtiness,
- † and receive with meekness
- † the engrafted word,
- † which is able to save your souls.

- *lay apart all filthiness...* James uses the picture of taking off dirty clothing. Sin is to be put away, not defended, before the Word is received. The tense stresses a decisive removal that makes room for humble reception.
- *receive with meekness the engrafted word...* The Word is ‘engrafted’ or implanted. God plants it within, where it can take root and bear fruit. Yet implanted truth must be welcomed with meekness — teachability that submits to correction.
- *able to save your souls...* The Word is able to save the soul. Salvation here is not reduced to a past profession; the saving Word continues to rescue, transform, and bring the believer toward wholeness.

Study Notes

- Lay apart — put off as dirty garments.
- Filthiness — moral uncleanness that obstructs spiritual hearing.
- Superfluity — overflowing abundance; wickedness allowed to accumulate.
- Meekness — humble, teachable strength under God’s authority

Personal Application — What must I put off so that I can receive what Scripture is saying without defensiveness?

Biblical Observations

Observation 9 — Continued

7 Commands to Christians

James 1

19 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.

1	Be swift to hear (v 19)
2	Be slow to speak (v 19)
3	Be slow to wrath (v 19)
4	Lay aside all filthiness (v 21)
5	Lay aside all overflowing of wickedness (v 21)
6	Receive the Word with meekness (v 21)
7	Be doers of the Word (v 22)

Discuss: Which command most speaks to you today, and what concrete act of obedience would put it into practice?

Biblical Observations

Observation 10

The Mirror and the Perfect Law of Liberty

James 1

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.

- *Be ye doers of the word...* James does not merely command occasional obedience. ‘Be doers’ describes a whole identity: people whose lives are characterized by acting upon the Word.
- *beholding his natural face in a glass...* The hearer-only makes a spiritual miscalculation. Ancient mirrors were polished metal. A person could look carefully, see what needed attention, walk away, and immediately live as if the reflection had never appeared.
- *looketh into the perfect law of liberty...* The contrast is the person who bends down for a sustained look, continues in the Word, remembers, and acts. The law is ‘perfect’ because it fully reveals God’s will and a ‘law of liberty’ because grace frees the believer from sin’s bondage for joyful obedience.

Biblical Observations

Observation 10 — Continued

Study Notes

- Doers — people whose character is marked by obedience, not merely isolated acts.
- Deceiving — reasoning beside oneself; a false calculation that hearing equals obedience.
- Beholding — careful observation, not a casual glance.
- Continueth — remains beside, stays with, and perseveres in the Word.
- Liberty — freedom from sin for obedience, not freedom from God's moral will.

Personal Application — What specific action did the Word last show me to take? Have I obeyed promptly, or have I walked away from the mirror?

Biblical Observations

Observation 10 — Continued

The Word—A Mirror

James 1

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
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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.

Study Note: *Beholding his natural face...* With this expression James is stating that a believer sees his blemishes and imperfections and is moved by what he sees. As long as he sees his deformities, spots, and ugliness he tries to do something about them. But on going away from the mirror he forgets and his imperfections no longer bother him. So it is with the Bible. As long as one studies it he sees himself as he really is and constantly seeks to improve himself and conform to its teaching (v 25). If he gets away from the Bible a man soon forgets the real picture of himself, what manner of man he is (v 24).

Discuss: What part of Scripture's reflection most stands out to you, and what change should you make before you walk away and forget?

Biblical Observations

Observation 11

Pure and undefiled Religion

James 1

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.

- *bridleth not his tongue...* James chooses a word for outward religious practice. Ceremonies, routines, and public worship can appear impressive while the uncontrolled tongue exposes a deceived heart.
- *visit the fatherless and widows...* Pure religion is measured before God the Father. It moves toward people with little power to repay: in the first century, orphans and widows often lacked social and economic protection. ‘Visit’ means more than a courtesy call; it is personal care that takes responsibility for need.
- *unspotted from the world...* Compassion is joined to holiness. The believer serves within the world without absorbing its system of pride, greed, partiality, and self-centered desire. James gives a threefold test of credible worship: controlled speech, sacrificial love, and moral integrity.

Study Notes

- Religious — outward ceremonial worship and observable practice.
- Bridle — keep under a tight rein; speech reveals the heart.
- Pure and undefiled — clean before God, expressed through compassionate action.
- Unspotted from the world — not conformed to the world’s value system.

Personal Application — If someone evaluated my worship only by my speech, my care for vulnerable people, and my resistance to worldly values, what would they conclude?

Sources Used

- The Companion Bible, James pages 1848–1854 — biblical text, lexical notes, and literary structure.
- Dake Annotated Reference Bible, James pages 455–463 — introduction, marginal notes, and extended James 1 lists supplied in the attached photographs.
- Life Application Bible, James pages 2182–2192 — introduction, blueprint, megathemes, chapter summary, and application notes.
- Attached verse-by-verse study-note screenshots for James 1 — historical, lexical, theological, and practical synthesis.
- King James Version — chapter text.
- Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.1 and 2.23; Josephus, Antiquities 20.9.1 — early historical testimony concerning James’s leadership and death.

Chapter 1 Review



Summary

James chapter 1 teaches believers to stand confidently in God rather than in themselves. Trials can produce endurance; God gives wisdom to those who ask in undivided faith; earthly status fades; and the person who endures in love looks toward the crown of life. God is the source of every good and perfect gift, not the author of evil. The Word of truth must be heard, humbly received, remembered, and obeyed. The chapter closes by making faith visible through restrained speech, compassionate care, and an unspotted life.

Key Movements in the Text

- 1:1 — Servanthood and a scattered people.
- 1:2–4 — Trials producing endurance and maturity.
- 1:5–8 — Wisdom requested in undivided faith.
- 1:9–12 — Earthly status fading; endurance crowned with life.
- 1:13–16 — Desire traced to sin and death; God cleared of blame.
- 1:17–18 — The unchanging Giver and the Word that brings new birth.
- 1:19–21 — Listening, restraint, repentance, and meek reception.
- 1:22–25 — Hearing completed by doing.
- 1:26–27 — Religion tested by speech, compassion, and holiness.

Chapter 1 Review



Questions for Reflection

- Which present trial could become a school of endurance rather than only a source of frustration?
- Where is my mind divided between God's wisdom and the world's way?
- At what stage in temptation do I most often surrender?
- Do my conversations show that I am swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath?
- What has Scripture recently shown me that I have not yet done?
- Who is vulnerable or unable to repay me whom God is calling me to serve?
- What worldly value threatens to leave a spot on my life?

One Memory Verse

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.



Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that every good and perfect gift comes from above. Give us wisdom for the trials before us, and make our faith steadfast rather than divided. Let endurance complete its work so that our character becomes mature and whole.

Guard us from the evil that grows from our own desires. Expose temptation early, strengthen our wills to choose the way of escape, and turn our hearts toward the life You have promised to those who love You.

Make us swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. Help us lay aside sin, receive the implanted Word with meekness, remember what it reveals, and obey without delay. Bridle our tongues, open our hands to the vulnerable, and keep us unspotted from the world.

May our religion be pure before You, our faith visible in love, and our lives faithful to Jesus Christ. Amen.