

Purpose

To expose hypocritical practices and to teach right Christian behavior

Author

James, Jesus' brother, leader in the Jerusalem church

To Whom Written

1st century Jewish Christians residing in Gentile communities outside of Palestine

Date Written

49 AD, prior to the Jerusalem council held in 50 AD

Setting

This letter expresses James' concern for persecuted Christians who were once part of the Jerusalem church

Key Verse

"Now someone may argue, 'Some people have faith; others have good deeds.' I say, 'I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds.'"

James 2:18

Used Tyndale's "Life Application Bible" (NLT)

An Overview (5 Chapters)

- Genuine Religion (1:1-27)
- Genuine Faith (2:1-3:12)
- Genuine Wisdom (3:13-5:20)

Major Themes

- *Living Faith:* James wants believers not only to hear the truth but also to put it into action. He contrasts empty faith (claims without conduct) with faith that works. Commitment to love and to serve others is evidence of true faith.
- *Trials:* In the Christian life there are trials and temptations. Successfully overcoming these adversities produces maturity and strong character.
- *Law of Love:* We are saved by God's gracious mercy, not by keeping the law. But Christ gave us a special command, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (*Matthew 19:19*). We are to love and serve those around us.
- *Wise Speech:* Wisdom shows itself in wise speech. God holds us responsible for the results of our destructive words. The wisdom of God that helps control the tongue can help control all our actions.
- *Wealth:* James taught Christians not to compromise with worldly attitudes about wealth. Because the glory of wealth fades, Christians should store up God's treasures through sincere service. Christians must not show partiality to the wealthy or be prejudiced against the poor.