

The letter from James

James wrote these words to God's people so that they would know how to live in this world. He told them that they should trust in God and do good all the time.

¹ I am James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing this letter to you, God's people, and I will send it to all the different places where you are living. I am still thinking of you and I won't forget you.

About trusting in God and knowing what to do

² My dear brothers and sisters, all kinds of troubles will come to you, but don't worry. You should be very happy, ³ because when you have any kind of trouble, you can keep on trusting God even more. When you trust in him, you will become strong so that you won't do anything wrong. ⁴ You must keep on being strong so that you will be perfect and you won't need anything more to be good people.

⁵ Maybe you will say to yourself, "What shall I do? What is the right thing for me to do?" Then you should say to God, "Father, what is right, and what is wrong? I don't know, so please help me to know," because you don't know by yourself. God won't refuse, he will listen when you pray to him. He will listen to you and he will help you. He won't blame you for not knowing what to do.

6-8 When you pray to God, you must believe that he will really listen to you and help you. If you say to God, "Please help me," then don't think to yourself, "God won't help me." Don't have two minds like that.

Some people can't make up their minds. First they trust in God and then later they don't trust in him any longer. Those people are like the waves in the sea. The wind blows the sea this way and that way, and those people are like the sea. God doesn't help people like that to know what is right and what is wrong.

About poor people and rich people

⁹ Maybe one of you who belongs to God is poor. But God says, "You are important, you are special." So you should be happy and remember that you belong to God.

¹⁰ Maybe another one of you who belongs to God has a lot of money. But God says, "You are rich but you are not important, you aren't special." You should be happy too. You should not be proud, because you will die, just like the wild flowers die. ¹¹ The hot sun dries the flowers and they aren't pretty any more. They die and fall. And you rich people are like that. You are busy with money because you have forgotten God. Like those flowers you too will die.

God does not tempt us to do wrong

¹² You people who keep standing strong when troubles come to you, you should be happy. God will be pleased with you, and you will stay alive

forever, because God has promised those who love him that they will stay alive forever.

¹³ When troubles come to you and you want to do wrong, don't say, "God is tempting me to do wrong." God never tempts us to do wrong. So where does that wrong come from? It doesn't come from God, ¹⁴ but it is already there in your mind. That's what tempts you and nothing else. If you keep on and on thinking about it, then you will decide to do it. ¹⁵ And if you keep on wanting to do wrong and you are still thinking about it all the time, then you will do it. And if you keep on doing more wrong, you will die and God won't save you.

¹⁶ My dear brothers and sisters, don't be tricked but listen to these true words. ¹⁷ God our Father gives us everything that is good and perfect. He doesn't send us anything bad, and he doesn't send us some good and some bad things. He is the one who freely gives us everything perfect and he doesn't change. He made the sun and the moon and the stars and put them all in the sky. During the day our shadows fall on the ground. When the sun moves our shadows move. But God never changes. ¹⁸ God decided that we should be his children when we obey his true words. He wants us to be his children so that we will be very important. We will be more important than anything he has made.

About us obeying God

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, don't forget this. You mustn't be always telling people God's

word, you should listen to his word. And you mustn't get angry quickly. ²⁰ When you get angry quickly you can't do the good things God wants you to do.

²¹ So get rid of all the bad things you are doing once and for all. Don't think about them any more. Don't be proud, but take in God's word that he puts in your mind and heart. That word will save you.

²² When you listen to God's word, you must do everything he has told you to do. If you listen to it and then you quickly forget it and don't do what God wants, you are tricking yourselves. You should listen to God's word and obey it.

²³ If you listen to God's word but don't obey it, you are like someone who looks carefully at himself in a mirror. ²⁴ Then he leaves the mirror and goes away. He quickly forgets what he has seen. And you are like that man if you hear God's word and don't obey it.

²⁵ So you shouldn't do that. You should listen to God's word every day. His law is perfect and there is no other law perfect like his, because it sets us free. You should never forget it. You should keep listening to it and obeying it and doing what is right all the time. If you do that, God will make you happy.

²⁶ One of you might say, "I obey God and I worship him." But if you speak bad words, speaking carelessly all the time, you will not really be obeying and worshipping God. You will just be tricking yourself.

²⁷ But if any of you are obeying God properly and worshipping him, you will help other people all the time. You are the ones our Father God will see as perfect. When children are sad because their fathers and mothers have died, you will help them. When a widow is sad after her husband has died, you will help her too. You will keep working busily all the time. And if bad people tempt you to do wrong you will take no notice but keep on being good.

2

About loving each other in the same way

¹ Brothers and sisters, listen to this. You believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ our Lord is the greatest one of all. He loves all of us different people in the same way, not only some of us but all of us. So you should love all different people in the same way yourselves.

² When you meet together, suppose a rich man comes and joins you, wearing good clothes and gold rings. And suppose a poor man comes, wearing old, dirty clothes. ³ Maybe when you see the rich man you will say to him, "Come inside and sit down here." But when you see the poor man you will say to him, "Stay outside and sit over there." ⁴ That is wrong. If you say that, you are not loving all different people in the same way. You are not thinking straight, your minds are crooked.

⁵ My dear brothers and sisters, listen to this. God has chosen the poor people in this world to trust in him. He has chosen them to be his

children and to go to heaven. Long ago God said, "Any of you who love me will go to heaven." ⁶ But you have made those poor people ashamed. Poor people are helpless, but rich people are powerful. Rich people are the ones who make trouble for you. Some of them take you to the judge so he will put you in jail. ⁷ They are the people who make fun of Jesus Christ. They speak bad words and they use his name in a bad way. But his name is the one people used when they baptized you. ⁸ God's law tells us, "You should love your neighbour as you love yourself." If you obey that law, you will be doing the right thing. ⁹ But if you only love some people and not everyone, you will be breaking God's laws and doing wrong.

¹⁰ If you break just one of God's laws, even if you don't break the others, God will say, "You have broken all my laws." ¹¹ God said, "Don't take another man's wife." And the same God said, "Don't murder anyone." So, if you don't take another man's wife, but you murder someone, you are breaking all God's laws. ¹² God has given us his laws that set us free. So you should speak and do what those laws say.

¹³ Because of that, you must forgive people when they make trouble for you. If you don't have pity and forgive other people their sins, God won't have pity and forgive you your sins. So remember that God has pity on us. If you forgive other people who have made trouble for you, then you will go with a clean heart because God will also forgive you your sins.

About trusting God and doing good

¹⁴ Brothers and sisters, if one of you says, “I trust in God all the time,” but you don't obey God, you think God will save you just because of what you said, don't you! No, he won't! God won't save you just because you speak like that.

¹⁵ Listen! Suppose some men and women who belong to God are poor. They have no money, and wear old clothes, and are always hungry.

¹⁶ If you don't give them clothes and food, then don't say, “You poor things, may God be with you! Don't worry! Go home and put on some warm clothes to keep yourself warm and have something to eat.” If you don't help those people and don't do anything for them, that's a terrible thing to say to them. You should help those poor people.

¹⁷ When any of you believe in God but don't obey him, that is very wrong. You should believe in God and also obey him. That is good.

¹⁸ Maybe one of you will say to me, “Look! That man believes in God but he doesn't obey him. And this man doesn't believe in God but he is always doing good.” Then I will answer you, “If a person doesn't obey God, how can he believe in him? I obey God and you can see everything I do. When you see me doing good, you will know that I really believe in him.”

¹⁹ You will say to me, “We know there is only one God.” That is very true, but the evil spirits also say, “We know that there is only one God.” But they are afraid of God and shake with fear. And they don't obey him.

²⁰ If you say, "I believe in God," but you don't obey him and you don't love other people, you are tricking yourself. You aren't talking sense.

²¹ Remember Abraham. You know that our ancestor Abraham lived long ago. And God said, "Abraham is right with me." Why did God say that about him? And how did Abraham become right with God? He became right with God when he obeyed him. God said to him, "Give me your son Isaac. Put him up on the stone altar you have made and kill him." And Abraham didn't refuse, he put Isaac on the altar. ²² Then God said, "Don't kill him!" Abraham really believed in God and obeyed him. And when he obeyed God he was showing him that he really believed in him. ²³ Listen to this word from God's book. "Abraham believed God, and so God said, 'This man is right with me.' "

That word became true, and God and Abraham became friends.

²⁴ If any of you believe in God and obey him, God will say, "You are right with me." But if you don't obey God, even if you really believe in him, God won't say that about you.

²⁵ Listen to another story about long ago, when a woman who didn't belong to Israel lived in Jericho. She was called Rahab. She was a bad woman because she slept with many men. Even though she didn't belong to Israel, she helped two men who were from Israel. They visited Jericho to see if it was a strong city. Rahab hid the men and they got away by a different road and went back to Israel safely. Because she helped them, God was pleased with her.

²⁶ Look! If you say, "I believe in God," but you speak carelessly, just speaking words with your lips and nothing more than that, then you are just like a dead person. A dead person can't move, he can't do anything good, he can't obey God. And if you don't obey God, you will be the same as a dead person.

3

About our tongues

¹⁻² Brothers and sisters, only a few of you should become teachers, not many. I say that because God wants us all to be good, but he wants those of us who teach other people to be especially good.

Sometimes all of us say bad words that God doesn't like. But when we teachers do that, it is much worse. You think you never say anything wrong but you speak only good words, do you? If you never said anything wrong, then you would be perfect! You would be able to control your own mind, you would be able to control yourself all the time.

³⁻⁵ Our tongues are very small but they have big words. A tongue is like something that people put in a horse's mouth so they can control the horse. When the horse feels the thing in its mouth pulling it to the right, then the horse turns to the right. When it pulls the horse to the left, the horse turns to the left. So the horse always obeys people.

Now let us think about big ships. A ship has a little rudder. Even if a strong wind blows the

ship away, a man can control the ship with a little rudder. And a little tongue is like that, it is like the little thing in the horse's mouth and the ship's rudder. It is small but it can speak big words about all kinds of things. Look! Even though a fire starts off small, it gets big and spreads and then it can burn big trees and burn off a big area.

⁶ The tongue is like a fire. Our tongues keep on talking carelessly. They speak all kinds of bad words. And those words that come out of our mouths spoil us. They spoil our bodies, our heads and our hearts, just like a fire that spoils the country. Those bad words have spoilt us from when we were born and they will go on spoiling us until we die. Bad words like that come from Satan.

⁷ Some people can make wild animals and birds and snakes and fish tame so they are quiet.

⁸ But we can't tame our tongues. Our tongues are like the bite of a death adder that is poisonous and will make us die.

⁹ You and I praise our Lord and Father with our tongues. But we speak bad words with them too, and we curse other people. God made those people, he made them like himself. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come good words to God and bad words to other people. Brothers and sisters, that is very bad. ¹¹ Look! A freshwater spring on dry land can't make salty water come out of it. Of course not! Only fresh water can flow from it. ¹² And also, sand fig trees never have wild plums on them and a grape vine never has figs. That is impossible! And a freshwater spring on dry land

can't make salty water come out of it. But out of our mouths come both good and bad words, and that is very bad.

About the knowledge that God gives us

¹³ If you are wise, you will do what is good and nothing else. If you are really wise, other people will see that you are good all the time. Don't be proud, go carefully and then other people will see that you are good.

¹⁴ If you are always thinking about yourself, if you are jealous of other people and always arguing with them, don't be proud, saying, "We are wise," because that is bad. Maybe you are not wise, maybe you are tricking yourselves.

¹⁵ God didn't teach you bad things like that. Satan taught you that. People who don't know God are the ones who have that kind of knowledge. ¹⁶ If any of you are jealous and always thinking about yourselves, you will make trouble for yourselves and for other people and you will do all kinds of bad things.

¹⁷ But God taught you to be wise like him. If you follow God's way, then you will go straight, you will go peacefully and you will be gentle and willing to listen. You will have pity on other people and look after them. You will know about doing only what is right and nothing wrong, and so you will keep on doing what is right. You won't tell lies or think bad things about other people. When you do anything wrong, you won't say, "Look, I have done right." You will be honest. ¹⁸ You people who are quiet and

peaceful will stop other people from fighting. When others see you always doing good, they will want to do what is right too.

4

About fighting each other

¹ Why are you always fighting each other? And why are you always arguing with each other? You are doing those things because you keep wanting all kinds of things. You become upset and you don't have any peace. ² You keep on wanting different things. If you can't have them, you are jealous and angry and kill people. You keep on wanting everything. And when you don't get them, you fight and argue with each other. You do not get what you want because you do not ask God for it. ³ And when you ask God, you do not get what you want, because you don't want what God wants but you want everything for yourself.

⁴ You bad people, you have run away from God. You go around with people who are always doing wrong as if you hate God and get angry with him.

⁵ Let us think about this word from God's book. "God has given us his Spirit, and the Spirit wants us for himself." That was not written carelessly, it is true. ⁶ But God makes us strong. That is why this word was also written long ago. "God will make you strong if you are not proud but you trust in him."

About obeying God

⁷ So obey God and fight against Satan. When you fight him he will run away. ⁸ And come close to God. When you come close to him, he will come close to you. You bad people, don't sin any more. You want to follow God's way and you want to follow Satan's way too, but you can't go both ways. So make sure you follow God's way today with one mind.

⁹ Look! Don't be happy and laugh, but cry and wail in sadness. ¹⁰ And when you pray to God, don't be proud but bow down to him and he will lift you up.

About not blaming each other

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, don't blame each other saying, "You did something wrong today." Stop that kind of talk. When God's people blame each other, it is like saying, "God's law is no good." If you say that, you are not obeying God's law. And that is like deciding if God's law is good or bad.

¹² God is the only one who has given us the law. Only God can decide if we are good or bad. He is the only one who can save us or make us die. So who do you think you are, you who keep deciding about each other if you are good or bad?

About not being proud

¹³ Now listen to me, you proud people. Some of you say, "Maybe today, maybe tomorrow, I will go away somewhere else. I will stay there for one year and work and get a lot of money." ¹⁴ But you don't know about tomorrow. You know what mist is like. At dawn it rises and covers everything. Then when the sun gets higher, the

mist quickly disappears. It doesn't last long, it just covers everything for a little while. And you will live here in the world for a short time like the mist.

¹⁵ You know nothing about tomorrow. So you should say, "If God wants me to stay here and keep busy, then I will stay and do that."

¹⁶ But you people are proud and you talk a lot. But that's not good, because you don't know about tomorrow. ¹⁷ If any of you know about doing good but you don't do it, you are very bad.

5

You rich people, watch yourselves!

¹ Listen to me, you people who are so rich. You had better start to cry now, because big trouble is coming to you soon.

² Your things are spoilt now. Your clothes are worn out, ³ and your gold and silver are spoilt. And because they are spoilt I know that you are bad people. Just as your silver and gold have spoiled, your flesh will go bad. You have been busy all the time collecting money for later.

⁴ Look! You haven't paid the men who work for you. They have gathered your food crops and taken them to you, and you haven't given them any money. It is as though that money is speaking bad words about you to God. He is the most powerful Lord and he has heard them.

⁵ You have done whatever you liked here in this world. You have thought about yourselves all the time. You have done just as you wanted

day and night, eating and growing fat. Listen! When bullocks grow fat, what do people do? They kill them, so now you are like that fat bullock! ⁶ You have judged good people and said, "Those people are bad." They couldn't do anything and so you murdered them.

About being patient and praying to God

⁷ Brothers and sisters, keep going carefully along God's road until Jesus comes back again.

Think about yams. When it rains they get fat for you to eat. You wait patiently until they get fat and when the time comes you dig them. ⁸ In the same way we must keep waiting patiently until the Lord Jesus comes back. So don't be upset, because Jesus really will come back here soon.

⁹ Don't grumble to each other, brothers and sisters, so that Jesus will not blame you. He is the one who will decide whether you are good or bad. He has already got up to come here.

¹⁰ Listen, brothers and sisters. Long ago the prophets used to tell God's word to his people. When they suffered and were upset they didn't grumble. ¹¹ We know that God was pleased with them because they didn't grumble.

Think about Job who lived long ago. He suffered but he kept waiting and waiting and at last God helped him, because God is kind and full of pity.

¹² Brothers and sisters, listen to me carefully. You are using God's name to make your word strong. Don't use God's name, or talk about

heaven or any other place in that way. When you want to say something, just say, "Yes" or "No," and that is enough. Then God won't blame you.

¹³ Has something bad happened to one of you and you are upset about it? If you are upset, tell God about it. Don't grumble but pray to God.

Are you happy today? If you are rejoicing, praise God with songs.

¹⁴ Are you sick today? If you are sick, send for the church elders, and they will pray for you. And they will put olive oil on your head, and use Jesus' name. ¹⁵ Those people trust in the Lord Jesus, so when they ask him to heal one of you who is sick, the Lord Jesus will heal you, and he will forgive the wrong things that you have done.

¹⁶ Don't hide your sins, but tell one of God's people about them. Then he will pray to God for you. And you should pray to God for him too, so that God can heal you both. When good people pray to God their words are powerful.

¹⁷ Think of Elijah who lived long ago and was just like us. He prayed that there would be no rain, and no rain fell for three and a half years. There was no rain in all that time. ¹⁸ Then later he prayed to God that there would be rain again. And rain fell and plants grew again for food.

Last words

¹⁹ Brothers and sisters, maybe one of you will leave God's good road and do something wrong. Then maybe another one of you will bring him back to that road. ²⁰ Remember, if you bring a bad person back to God's road you will help him,

so that God will forgive him and so that he won't die.

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