

Understanding the New Testament

Romans

Ephesians

Be Doers of the Word (1)

(by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

Be doers of the word of God, Not simply those who hear.	James 1:22
Be ones who look into God's word, Obey, and persevere.	James 1:25
Be quick to listen, slow to speak, And slow to anger, too.	James 1:19
Put wrath aside; instead, be meek And let God work in you.	James 1:21

Be Doers of the Word (2)

(by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

Religion that is undefiled,
 Religion that is pure
 Will reach to help the orphaned child
 And welcome all the poor.
 If people come here poorly dressed,
 To judge them is a sin.
 The rich aren't better than the rest;
 God welcomes poor ones in.

James 1:27

James 2:1-7

Be Doers of the Word (3)

(by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, alt.; Tune: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

O Christ, you save us by God's grace
 From having our own way.
 Then freed to love, we can embrace
 A life that seeks your way.
 May we be doers of the word;
 May faith shine through our deeds;
 And as we seek to trust in God,
 May ethics follow creeds.

Ephesians 2:8

Ephesians 5:1-2

1 John 3:18

1 John 3:23

Opening Prayer

- Day by day,
O dear Lord,
three things I pray:

- to see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly,
day by day. Amen.

-Richard of Chichester, 13th c. / Godspell, 20th c.



November 5, 12

***"Gratitude to
First Baptist"
days.***

A Tale of Two "Faiths"

■ Paul/Ephesians

- ⁸For by grace you have been **saved through faith**, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹**not the result of works**, so that no one may boast.
- See also Romans 4: ²For if Abraham was justified by **works**, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? "Abraham **believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.**" ... ⁹**Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.**"

■ James

- ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham **justified by works** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that **faith was active along with his works**, and faith was brought to completion by the works. ²³Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is **justified by works and not by faith alone.**

Some Unique Features of Ephesians

- One of the **"disputed"** letters
- Best manuscripts **omit "in Ephesus"**





Ephesus



Terrace "Condos"
in Ephesus

Outline of Ephesians



- 1:1-2 Opening
- 1:3–3:21 The *Missio Dei* (Mission of God):
God's Eternal Plan in Christ
- 4:1–6:20 Life in Christ: Worthy of God's Calling,
Empowered by the Spirit
- 6:21-24 Final Matters

A Few Highlights from Ephesians (1)



- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places.... (1:3)
- ⁹[God] has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, **to gather up all things in him**, things in heaven and things on earth. (1:9-10)
- ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—.... ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹**not the result of works**, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (2:4, 8-9)

Faith, Salvation, and Works in Ephesians: The Faith Story of the Nonbeliever

- Works → Salvation
–wrong!
- Faith → Salvation
–inadequate!
- Faith → Salvation → Works
–right!



A Few Highlights from Ephesians (2)



- ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For **he is our peace**; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has **broken down the dividing wall**, that is, the hostility between us. (2:13-14)
- ⁴There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (4:4-6)
- ³¹Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³²and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **as God in Christ has forgiven you**. ⁵ ¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and **live [walk] in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us**, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (4:31-5:1)

A Challenging Text from Ephesians 5 (a)

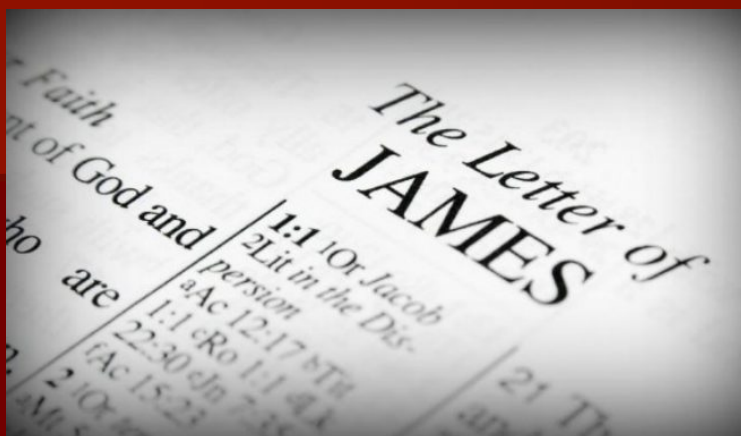


- ²²Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. ³³Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

A Challenging Text from Ephesians 5 (b)— MJG Revision of NRSV



- ¹⁸... [B]e filled with the Spirit [and here are some specifics],
 - ¹⁹singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves,
 - singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,
 - ²⁰giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ²¹being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,
 - ²²Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord....
 - Husbands: note repetition of “Christlike sacrificial love” and see also 5:1.

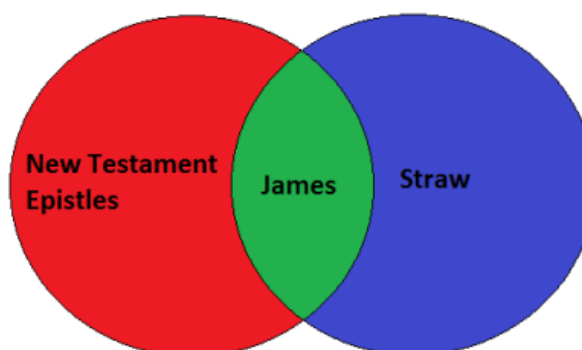


Some Features of James

- Similar to
 - Wisdom Literature (like Proverbs)
 - Prophetic Literature
 - Sermon on the Mount/Jesus/Matthew
 - Greco-Roman moral teaching
- Series of short “essays”
- “Jesus” only 2x (1:1, 2:1), though “Lord” 14x (several = Jesus)
- 59 imperatives
- Justification by works?
Contradiction of Paul?
- Possibly by James “the Just,” the “brother” of Jesus
 - See Mark 6:3; John 7:5; 1 Cor 15:7; Acts 12:17; 15:19-29; Gal 1:19; etc.

The Epistle of Straw?

Luther on Scripture



Outline of James

- 1:1 Salutation
- 1:2-27 Overview and Statement of Theme: Be **Doers of the Word**
- 2:1-13 **Partiality toward the Poor**, not the Rich as Fulfillment of the "Royal" Law
- 2:14-26 Faith without **Works** is Dead
- 3:1-12 Taming the **Tongue**: Avoiding Sins of Speech
- 3:13-18 The Wisdom of **Peacemaking**
- 4:1-12 Choosing **Friendship with God** rather than the World
- 4:13-17 More on Sins of **Speech**: Judging and Boasting
- 5:1-6 Indictment of the **Wealthy**
- 5:7-12 Call to Patience in **Suffering**
- 5:13-20 **Prayer** for the Sick, Concern for Sinners



The Letter of James

"Whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy" (1:2).

"You may be mature [*teleioi*] and complete, lacking in nothing" (1:4).

"Ask God . . . and it will be given you" (1:5).

"Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (1:22).

"Has not God chosen the poor in the world . . . to be heirs of the kingdom?" (2:5).

"Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (2:10).

"Judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy" (2:13).

"What good is it . . . if you say you have faith, but do not have works? Can faith save you?" (2:14).

Sermon on the Mount (Gospel of Matthew)

"When people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you . . . rejoice and be glad" (5:11-12).

"Be perfect [*teleioi*] . . . as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48).

"Ask, and it will be given you" (7:7).

"Everyone then who hears these words . . . and acts on them will be like a wise person" (7:24).

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3).

"Whoever, then, relaxes one of the least of these commandments . . . shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (5:19).

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy" (5:7).

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father" (7:21).



**Powell:
James
and
Jesus/
Matthew
(1)**

"Can a fig tree . . . yield olives, or a grapevine figs?" (3:12).

"A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace" (3:18).

"Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (4:4).

"Purify your hearts" (4:8).

"Who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?" (4:12).

"Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten; your gold and silver have rusted" (5:2–3).

"Do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged" (5:9).

"Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no" (5:12).

"Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?" (7:16).

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (5:9).

"You cannot serve God and wealth" (6:24).

"Blessed are the pure in heart" (5:8).

"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (7:1).

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal" (6:19).

"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (7:1).

"Do not swear at all, either by heaven . . . or by the earth. . . . Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'" (5:34–37).

Other passages in James that parallel sayings of Jesus include 1:6 (cf. Matt. 21:21); 1:9 and 4:10 (cf. Matt. 23:12); 1:12 (cf. Matt. 10:22); 1:21 (cf. Mark 4:14); 4:9 (cf. Luke 6:21, 25); 4:17 (cf. Luke 12:47); 5:1–6 (cf. Luke 6:24); 5:9 (cf. Matt. 24:33); 5:17 (cf. Luke 4:25).

Powell: James and Jesus/ Matthew (2)

	James	Proverbs
Wisdom is given by God.	1:5	2:6–7
Wealth is ephemeral, and riches will "wither away."	1:10–11	11:28
It is a virtue to be "slow to anger."	1:19	14:29
Impartiality is to be encouraged.	2:1	18:5
Partiality to the rich dishonors the poor.	2:6	14:20–21
The wise are attentive to controlling their speech.	3:2	10:19
The tongue can be a deadly "fire."	3:6	16:27
It is arrogant to boast of tomorrow.	4:13–14	27:1
Multiple sins may be "covered" by worthy acts of love.	5:20	10:12

See Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 501.

Powell: James and Proverbs

The epistle of
straw?
OR
part of the
social
conscience of
the New
Testament?

- But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. (1:22)
- Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (1:27)
- Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? (2:5b)
- And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. (3:18)
- Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted... (5:1-3a)

Faith, Salvation, and Works in James: The Faith Story of the Believer

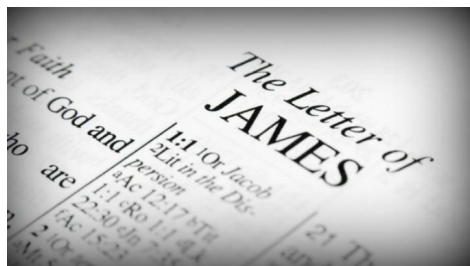
- Works → Salvation
–wrong!
- Faith (= belief) → Salvation
–inadequate!
- Faith (= belief) + Works → Justification/Salvation
–right!



Faith in James

- ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder....²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is also dead.**

A Question



- As you hear or read the words of James, what part of his message do you find significant and/or challenging?