

Insights From James

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Insights From James

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Introduction

One of the ways I've been studying the Word of God is by making a list of everything that each book of the Bible teaches. This has resulted in more than a thousand pages of material. Although it's interesting and I've learned a lot from writing it, that's a lot of bullet points to read through!

The purpose of this book is to extract the most interesting insights from that massive list. This isn't intended to summarize each book of the Bible because that's what my "Chapter Summary of the Bible" is for. It's also not intended to list the major points of each book because you're probably already familiar with them. Finally, it's not intended to offer in-depth commentary because that's what my regular commentary is for. This book is simply a collection of points that I found interesting.

I hope there's some material here that you find edifying.

Jon Cooper
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James

- James wrote this letter to Jews who had been scattered throughout the world (James 1:1).
- Christians should look at trials and suffering as a source of joy (James 1:2-3). In fact, we should rejoice when we live through periods of suffering! This is because times of suffering test our faith, and that testing produces patience.
- If we want to be perfect and have everything that we need to faithfully serve God then we must have patience. The way to develop patience is through suffering (James 1:4).
- If anyone lacks wisdom then he should ask God to give him wisdom. The Lord will give wisdom to those who ask Him for it (James 1:5).
- It's foolish to pray without faith and expect God to hear and answer that prayer (James 1:7).
- Those who are rich should rejoice when they're humbled (James 1:10).
- The wealth of the rich isn't as secure as they might believe. Wealth only exists for a time and is then gone (James 1:10).
- Since wealth is temporary and quickly lost, it's foolish to trust in it for safety (James 1:10).
- There's a great blessing promised to those who endure trials and don't fall away (James 1:12).
- The reward for those who love God is the crown of life (James 1:12).

- The way we demonstrate our love for Jesus is by enduring trials. Those who endure trials and keep the faith are the ones who genuinely love Him (James 1:12).
- God isn't tempted by evil in any way (James 1:13).
- God doesn't tempt anyone (James 1:13).
- Temptations come from the things we desire. Our own desires are what entice us to sin (James 1:14). This means the source of temptation is within ourselves.
- Sin always ultimately leads to death (James 1:15).
- Christians don't have a license to sin (James 1:16).
- James didn't say that Christians should focus on the core doctrines of the Bible and agree to disagree on the rest. Instead he said we must be free from error. James didn't permit any amount of error in any matter (James 1:16).
- God is the one who gives us the good things that we have in this life. All of them come from Him (James 1:17).
- God doesn't grow over time, nor does He change. Instead He remains exactly the same (James 1:17).
- The reason God gave us the word of truth is so we could be the firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18).
- Christians should prioritize listening over speaking (James 1:19).
- It's good to be slow to wrath. James doesn't say that wrath is evil, but he does say that we must be careful with our wrath (James 1:19).
- James taught that we must get rid of *all* sin in our lives (James 1:21). He didn't teach that we should try to get

the big moral issues right, and the rest aren't important.

- Christians must humble themselves before God's Word (James 1:21).
- The word of God is able to save our souls (James 1:21).
- It's not enough to simply hear the word of God. We must also do whatever it says (James 1:22).
- Those who hear the word of God but don't obey it are false believers. They're deceiving themselves into thinking they have faith when they actually don't. (James 1:22). The way you can tell the difference between a genuine Christian and a false one is by obedience. Those who don't obey the Word of God aren't saved. (This doesn't mean we're saved by our works. What it means is that genuine salvation *always* produces obedience to God. The reason unbelievers don't obey God is because they lack salvation and are therefore still slaves to sin.)
- James compares the Word of God to a mirror that shows us who we truly are (James 1:23).
- The law that's found in the Scriptures is perfect. It doesn't need any additions, corrections, or modifications (James 1:25).
- The Scriptures give us liberty because it frees us from sin. Freedom from sin is liberty because slavery to sin leads to death (James 1:25).
- Those who don't control their tongue aren't saved. Their religion is vain (James 1:26).
- The Bible doesn't teach universalism. Not everyone is saved (James 1:26).

- Genuine religion involves helping those who need help (such as the fatherless and the widows) (James 1:27).
- The Biblical standard for Christians is to remain unspotted from sin in all areas of our life (James 1:27).
- It's wrong to judge a person based on their external characteristics (such as their nationality or wealth). Instead we must judge people by their actions (James 2:1).
- James referred to the "assembly", which was a gathering of Christians (James 2:2). James didn't call this "going to church" because the church is actually *a group of people*, not a building!
- Not everyone came to the assembly of believers wearing fancy clothing (James 2:2).
- James expected both the rich and the poor to be treated equally in the assembly of believers (James 2:3). Treating the rich better than the poor is an example of showing partiality.
- It's wrong to treat one person better than another on the basis of their wealth (James 2:4).
- God has chosen the poor! He has given them much faith and made them heirs of His kingdom (James 2:5).
- Showing partiality to someone is a violation of the commandment to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (James 2:8). After all, we don't want to be discriminated against! Showing partiality isn't an act of love.
- The commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is the royal law (James 2:8).

- Transgressors are those who break the law of God and sin (James 2:9). This means those who sin are transgressors.
- Those who break even one commandment are guilty of breaking the whole law (James 2:10).
- Christians will be judged. Our actions matter, and God will hold us accountable for them (James 2:12).
- Those who showed no mercy will be judged without mercy (James 2:13). If we want to receive mercy from God then we must show mercy to others.
- Those who have faith will also have works, because genuine faith always produces works. If a person lacks works then that's evidence he lacks faith as well (James 2:14).
- There may be times when fellow Christians lack food or clothing (James 2:15). We must provide those things to fellow believers who need them, because God expects us to take care of one another.
- If the only thing a Christian gives to those who need food and clothing are kind words, and he does nothing to actually provide for their physical needs, then he hasn't helped them at all. In that situation his kind words are empty and vain (James 2:16).
- The way that we can tell whether people have genuine faith is by looking at their works. If they have no works then they have no faith either (James 2:18).
- It's not enough to simply believe that there's one God. Even the devils believe that (James 2:19).
- Abraham's faith was accompanied by works. He proved his faith when he offered his son Isaac on the altar (James

2:21). Since Abraham's faith produced works, his faith was genuine. This is why we're told that Abraham's faith was made perfect by works.

- A faith which produces no works is meaningless because that means a person's beliefs don't influence their actions! A belief that doesn't change anything in a person's life is meaningless. That belief is worth nothing because it produces nothing (James 2:22).
- Abraham proved his belief in God by his obedience. The reason he obeyed God was because he believed in God (James 2:23). Since Abraham's belief in God produced obedience, his obedience was imputed to him for righteousness.
- Abraham was called the friend of God (James 2:23).
- We have both a body and a spirit. Our body is alive as long as our spirit is within it. However, that body dies once the spirit leaves it (James 2:26). This means our body needs a spirit, but our spirit doesn't need a body. Our spirit can exist outside of our body (which is what happens when we die).
- Christians should avoid ruling over many people, because those who have authority over people risk greater condemnation (James 3:1).
- Words can be very dangerous (James 3:6).
- Christians shouldn't speak both blessings and curses. We should bless others and not curse them (James 3:12).
- There are some in the church who are wise and have knowledge (James 3:13). Those who are wise should demonstrate their wisdom through their actions.

- It's good to be meek (James 3:13).
- It's wrong to glory in ourselves and boast in ourselves (James 3:14).
- We must not lie about the truth (James 3:14).
- Wisdom that leads to bitterness, envy, or strife is not from God (James 3:15).
- Not all wisdom is good (James 3:15). Wisdom which bears bad fruit is devilish and evil. Godly wisdom will bear godly fruit.
- Christians must not envy one another (James 3:16).
- Christians should be characterized by peace (James 3:18).
- The source of conflict in the church are people's desires. People fight with one other to obtain the things they want (James 4:1).
- If we want something then the way to get it is to ask God – *not* to fight with one another over it (James 4:2).
- Those who ask God for worldly and sinful things shouldn't expect to get them (James 4:3).
- James called the Christians he was writing to adulterers and adulteresses. The reason he did that was because they had made friends with the world, which was a form of spiritual adultery (James 4:4).
- Those who make friends with the world are making an enemy of God (James 4:4).
- If we desire worldly things then we're making ourselves the enemies of God (James 4:4).
- One of the root causes of conflict in the church is the

desire for worldly things (James 4:4).

- The Scriptures don't speak in vain. The Bible means what it says! Its words are true and carry weight (James 4:5).
- There's a spirit within us that's full of lust and envy. It's a dangerous spirit that seeks to lead us to sin, and it causes much conflict in the church (James 4:5).
- In order to overcome our sinful desires we need the grace of God (James 4:6).
- Christians must submit themselves to God (James 4:7).
- The key to overcoming the attacks of the devil is to resist him (James 4:7). If we resist the devil then he will flee from us.
- If we draw near to God then He will draw near to us (James 4:8).
- Christians must cease from sin (James 4:8). We must purify our heart.
- The way to draw near to God is to cleanse our hands of sin and do what's right. In order to draw near to a holy God we must be holy (James 4:8).
- Christians should mourn and weep over their sins (James 4:9). That means our sins should bother us.
- Instead of judging God's law we must obey it (James 4:11).
- It's foolish to boast about the future because no one knows what the future will hold (James 4:14).
- Whether or not we accomplish something is up to the will of God. The only way we will accomplish it is if it's His will

(James 4:15).

- We can't accomplish anything that God doesn't want us to accomplish. If He doesn't bless us then it won't happen (James 4:15).
- Our lifespan is determined by God (James 4:15).
- Our accomplishments in life are determined by God (James 4:15).
- It's wrong to boast about the future or rejoice in things that we haven't accomplished yet (James 4:16).
- It's evil to act as if we're in control of our lives and are responsible for our accomplishments. It's wrong to act as if our future is in our hands and we're the captains of our fate (James 4:16).
- If a person knows to do good but doesn't do it, that person is sinning (James 4:17). This means there's more to sin than just doing evil things. Sometimes the sin is failing to do something good.
- The day is coming when the rich people who obtained their wealth through wickedness and oppression will be judged by God for what they've done. In that day their ill-gotten riches won't save them (James 5:1).
- God cares about where riches come from. He's against ill-gotten wealth (James 5:3). One day the ill-gotten riches of the wealthy will testify against them. The rich may think that their ill-gotten riches are a great blessing, but in reality they're a curse which will one day destroy them.
- James didn't show favoritism to the rich. Instead he condemned them for their wickedness and warned them that judgment is coming upon them for all the evil things

they've done (James 5:3).

- Ill-gotten wealth, which was obtained by defrauding people, cries out to God (James 5:4).
- God is angry when laborers are defrauded of their wages (James 5:4).
- James condemned the rich for living in pleasure while denying their laborers the money they needed to feed themselves and their families (James 5:1-6). He also condemned rich people who murdered the righteous, and warned that one day God would hold the rich accountable for their sins.
- The Bible forbids mob violence and personal vengeance, even in cases of robbery and murder. God placed criminal justice into the hands of the government and doesn't allow vigilante justice (James 5:6).
- James didn't tell Christians to take matters into their own hands. Even though Christians were being killed, he commanded the church to wait until the Lord comes because He will bring justice with Him (James 5:7).
- Christians should be waiting for the Lord to return. We should be watching and waiting with hope and expectation, just as farmers wait for their crops to grow and yield fruit (James 5:7).
- Christians who hold grudges against others will one day be condemned for it (James 5:9).
- Christians should live with the knowledge that the Lord is coming and the day of His return is drawing nearer. We must be careful how we live our lives so that we aren't condemned when He appears (James 5:9).

- The prophets of the Old Testament serve as examples for us. Even though they spoke in the name of the Lord, they were afflicted. Since they suffered with patience and remained faithful in the face of terrible affliction, they serve as an example of being patient through suffering (James 5:10).
- Those who patiently endure affliction are happy because the day is coming when they won't regret their faithfulness (James 5:11). This means it's good to patiently endure affliction, for there's joy in store for those who patiently endure.
- The Lord is full of pity toward those who are suffering (James 5:11).
- Christians must keep their word. We must let our "yes" be yes and our "no" be no (James 5:12). This means we must do what we say we will do.
- Those who are afflicted should pray. Our response to affliction should be prayer (James 5:13).
- Those who are merry should sing the psalms that are in the Bible (James 5:13).
- Christians should confess their faults to one another (James 5:16).
- If we want our prayers to be effective then we need to be righteous, and we need to pray fervently (James 5:16).
- James used Elijah to illustrate that the fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much. Elijah is an example of the power of *prayer*, not the power of Elijah (James 5:17).
- There may be times when a Christian errs from the truth (James 5:19). When this happens we should try to bring

him back to the truth, because departing from the truth is a very serious matter.

- Those who err from the truth are putting their soul to death in some way. The end result of error is death (James 5:20).
- Those who save sinners are saving a soul from death (James 5:20).