

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE (short review)

The Epistle of James deals with a variety of themes, with an emphasis upon the practical aspects of the Christian life. Some of the subjects that we will be studying include the management of **trials and temptations** that we as Orthodox Christians are faced with on a daily basis. Other subjects include the practicing of a **pure religion/faith**, the understanding of the important relationship between **faith and works**, the **proper use of the tongue**, identifying and displaying **true wisdom, aligning ourselves with God** and not befriending the world and its ways, the important value and virtue of **humility, patience and prayer** within the life of an Orthodox Christian.

James touches upon various subjects and to some they may seem completely unrelated, however they are all crucial to the growth and development of the Christian.

As we have discussed previously in our introduction to James, we recall that James calls us to be **doers of the Word**, manifesting our faith through our works. As we study this important epistle we will observe many imperatives (commands) in relation to living the Christian life.

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

Help us to appreciate the value of enduring trials

To understand how sin develops, from temptation to death (separation from God)

To note the importance of being doers of the Word

OPENING GREETINGS (1:1)

In the first verse of this epistle James begins with a most uncomplicated introduction. He begins by describing himself as "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ..." This self-identification is then followed by a very

concise address, "To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad..." After that he simply adds, "Greetings."

What does bondservant (δοῦλος) mean in this text?

This very concise and to the point greeting can bring us to what two possible conclusions (in relation to his status within the community and his relationship with God)?

Following this simple and most humble salutation, James then begins with his epistle with a call to view trials as occasions to rejoice, with the understanding that these trials can produce patience which leads to maturity in the life of a Christian **(2-5)**. If wisdom is needed, he counsels us to ask God without doubt and with complete faith for the blessing of wisdom **(5-8)**. Then, James addresses the poor where he encourages them to rejoice in their exaltation, while the rich are to be thankful for their humiliation **(9-11)**.

James provides the reader with motivation to endure temptation and provides us with an explanation as to the true source of temptations and the development of sin which leads us to spiritual death **(12-15)**. James emphasizes that we should not be deceived and that God is **NOT** the source of temptation, but instead He is the Father of every good and perfect gift which comes down from above **(16-18)**.

James warns us to be **swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath** and then he segues into a major theme of his epistle: be **doers of the word and not hearers only**. He illustrates the folly of being only a hearer and not a doer by contrasting the difference between religions that is useless and that which is pure and undefiled before God **(19-27)**.

I. TRUE RELIGION/FAITH ENDURES TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS (2-18)

WITH JOY AND PATIENCE (2-4)

How does James address his fellow disciples (ἀδελφός)? How does this reflect on James?

What are the people experiencing at the time of his address (**ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ**) ? We utilize the word trials but what can we learn from the Greek in terms of what is happening to the people James is addressing?

How does James teach us to respond to trials? What are the results of trials?

How does James describe the believer who endures trials?

What does James mean by perfect and intact? In the Greek these words are τέλειος and *olokleros*.

WITH WISDOM FROM GOD (5-8)

What does James teach those of us who feel they lack the knowledge in responding to these persecutions/trials? How does God respond to those who ask of Him (**ΑΠΛΟΣ**)?

According to James how should one petition God?

How does James describe the doubter (*dipsuchos*)?

WITH A PROPER PERSPECTIVE (9-11)

What does James mean in vv. 9-10?

WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEMPTATION (12-15)

What awaits those who endure persecution/trials according to James?

Does God tempt man?

According to James, what lives within each of us (ἐπιθυμία)?

WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE GOODNESS OF THE FATHER (16-18)

How does James address his disciples and what does he warn them about?

What does James teach us about where all good gifts come from?

II. TRUE RELIGION/FAITH CONSISTS OF DOING, NOT JUST HEARING (19-27)

ONE SHOULD BE SWIFT TO HEAR (19-21)

How does James teach us to respond during times of persecution and stress?

One must resist the passion of wrath. How does the Greek word *orge* define wrath?

According to James what is the task of all Christians?

According to James what is the Word and how are we as Christians to respond?

ONE SHOULD NOT BE HEARERS ONLY, BUT DOERS (22-27)

How does James describe a person who is only a hearer of the Word?

What does James mean by continuing in the liberty of the law (*parameno*)?

What are the rewards for being a doer of the Word?

What makes a man's religion useless according to James?

What according to James is a religion that is pure and undefiled before God?

As a doer of the Word, what two examples of piety does James cite?

What is meant by James when he teaches the Christian to remain unspotted or untainted from the world?