



# James

## Faith Without Works Is Dead

*An Urgent Call to Practical Christianity*

### Lesson #1

#### **Word of Hope**

*But a natural [unsaved] man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (1 Corinthians 2:14).*

This is the fact of God's Word! Based on this truth, the information in this book cannot benefit you unless you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The good news is that you can trust the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation right this minute, right where you are, and be eternally saved!

How good can such good news be? The news even gets better: salvation is a free gift! It is the epitome of God's grace! What's more, it is very simple to obtain. It's as easy as ABC!

In Acts of the Apostles 16:30, a man desperate for his eternal destiny asked this urgent question to Paul and Silas: "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*"

The Scriptures alone provide the one and only answer: "*They [Paul and Silas] said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household [if they would also believe]*" (Acts 16:31).

It's that simple! Faith alone in Christ alone!

Elsewhere the apostle John declared,

*"But these [facts, including unique miracles that Jesus Christ performed] have been written [recorded] so that you may [have the evidence to] believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [in Christ alone] you may have [eternal] life in His name" (John 20:31).*

Later, the same apostle affirmed,

*“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ [the Savior] is born of God”* (1 John 5:1).

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever [including you-whomever] believes in Him [will] not perish, but [will] have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

Contrary to public opinion, salvation is not based on morality or good works. It's a free gift (Romans 6:23). The apostle Paul vividly stated, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works [i.e., good works], so that no one may boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It's faith alone in Christ alone!

That's grace! That's God's way! The only way! No other way! Believe on Him and be eternally saved. Right now, you may wish to pause and heed the exhortation of the Holy Spirit: *“For He says, AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU ...behold, now is THE DAY OF SALVATION”* (2 Corinthians 6:2 emphasis added).

You can receive this great and awesome gift of salvation and be forever saved by simply telling God the Father, “God, I am placing my trust entirely on Your Son Jesus Christ as my Savior.”

The Bible gives the only assurance you need: *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him”* (John 3:36).

The moment you believe, you will, for the first time, be indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit, who in turn enlightens you as you read on!

### ***Restoration to Fellowship***

Sin ruptures our fellowship with God and robs us of the filling of the Holy Spirit, the Greatest Teacher of all time.

If you are already a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to ensure that you are filled with the Holy Spirit, so that He will open your eyes to the truth communicated herein; so you may comprehend and appreciate *“with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth”* (Ephesians 3:18) of His unchanging Word! In preparation, you may pause, search your soul, and acknowledge all known sins to God the Father.

The Bible is crystal clear: “*If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown or forgotten sins]*” (1 John 1:9).

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*We approach Your throne of grace with an offering of thanksgiving and petition for all who will be reading this lesson. We pray that its doctrinal content will be a tremendous source of a challenge and blessing to all of us. Father, we humbly ask that You revive us in Your truth so that the impact of Your infallible Word will reverberate and reign supreme in our souls.*

*May the content thereof cause people everywhere to take a fresh look at both personal and national disasters. Please challenge us to turn to You in every sense of the word. We lift our prayer in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Introduction**

Beloved of God, we are indebted to God’s matchless grace for James’ epistle, one of the most unique and most practical in the New Testament.

It is a short epistle, only five chapters. But it’s packed with words of admonition and rebuke for believers who had drifted from their spiritual life as well as words of exhortation and encouragement to the remnant who remained spiritually on course.

Our task is a simple one: to accurately interpret James’ epistle and clarify its message, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, for the edification of the saints.

Many scholars believe that James, the half brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, was the author of the epistle that bears his name. We do not know the exact date of its authorship, although Zane C. Hodges, the Late Greek professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, suggests dates of A.D. 34-35.<sup>1</sup>

Most scholars hold the view that the epistle was written very early and may possibly be the first recorded epistle of the New Testament. Its intended audience was Jewish Christians, which is clear from the text itself.

“*James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve [Jewish] tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings*” (James 1:1). Why did James address his epistle in this manner?

Because at the time of his writing, the Gentiles as a group of people had not yet been included in the Church Age, which began on the Day of Pentecost. Present on that day “*were [only] Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5). Robinson concurs:

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<sup>1</sup> Zane Hodges, *The Epistle of James* (Grace Evangelical Society, 1994), 12.

James is addressing all who form the true, spiritual Israel [i.e., Jews who, like Abraham, had been born again by faith alone in Christ alone in the second Person of the God-head (Yahweh or LORD in the OT, and Christ in the NT)], wherever they are. And he can address them in such completely Jewish terms not because he is singling them out from Gentile Christians but because, as far as his purview is concerned, there are no other Christians [at this time].<sup>2</sup>

Gentiles were added to the Church at a later date, Cornelius and his household being the first (Acts 10). This inclusion began with a dialogue between the Lord and the apostle Peter while he was in a trance.

The Lord introduced forbidden animals to Peter and told him to “*kill and eat*” (Acts 10:13). God used the occasion to assure Peter that the Gentiles were now part of the royal family of God through faith alone in Christ alone.

Later the apostle Peter used the incident to convince his fellow apostles of this. Luke highlights,

*“Therefore if God gave to them [the Gentiles] the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” When they [the Jewish disciples] heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:17-18).*

This epistle was written out of James’ abiding love and passion for his fellow believers. How do we know this? Think of it; James called them “my brethren” or “my beloved brethren” at least fifteen times.

No other author of Scripture, in a single epistle, has addressed his audience this many times. He employed those brotherly phrases because of the bond they shared by means of their “*faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ*” (James 2:1; cf. Hebrews 2:11).

We can presume that some recipients of James’ epistle had been members of the Jerusalem Christian church where he was a leader, before persecution drove them out (Galatians 2:9; cf. Acts 8:1-4). We know that, in God’s plan, persecution or suffering often brings awesome results. That’s Good News!

We look forward to next time as we continue our introduction to the Book of James. It is our prayer that you will join us and that this study is a blessing to you.



10/17/11

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<sup>2</sup> John A. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 122.