

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

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James

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James

1 I, James, serve God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. I am writing this letter to you who believe in Jesus and are living in various parts of the Roman Empire. I greet you all.

2 My fellow believers, consider it something to rejoice over greatly when you experience various kinds of hardships. 3 Understand that as you trust God in hardships, this helps you to become a stronger person. 4 Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow the Messiah in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

5 If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, and God will tell him. God gives generously to everyone. God does not scold people *who ask for things*. 6 But when you pray to God, you must trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and help you. People who doubt God first decide to do one thing, but then they want to do something else. They never settle on a single course of action. 7 Indeed, people who doubt should not think that God the Lord will give them what they ask for *so uncertainly*. 8 People like this can never decide what to do. They make a plan, but then they do not follow it.

9 Believers who do not have much money should be glad, because God has honored them. 10 But believers who have a lot of money should be glad that God has humbled them *by showing them that their wealth does not make them better than other people*. After all, like wildflowers *that bloom for only a short time and then wither*, rich believers will die *like anyone else*. 11 A wildflower only lasts a short time because when the sun rises, its scorching heat dries out the plants so that their flowers fall off. They are no longer beautiful. Like the flower that dies, rich people will die while they are trying to make money.

12 God honors those who remain faithful to him in difficult circumstances. Indeed, God will reward them by having them live forever. That is what God has promised to do for all who love him.

13 When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us. No, no one can persuade God to do evil, and God never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. 14 But people want to do evil because of their own desires. When they do, it is just as if they had fallen into a trap. 15 Then, because they have desired to do evil things, they begin to do them, and eventually they do them habitually. *If they do not turn away from their sinful behavior,* they will be separated from God forever.

16 My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. 17 Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He created the sun, moon, and stars. But God does not change the way shadows change, appearing and disappearing. God never changes. He is always good! 18 God became our spiritual father when we trusted in his true message. That was what he wanted to do. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to experience the kind of relationship with God that many more people will have in the future.

19 My fellow believers whom I love, I want you to know that every one of you should listen patiently *to what others have to say*. You should speak *your own thoughts* carefully. You should control your anger, 20 because when we get angry, we cannot do the good things that God wants us to do.

21 So stop doing all kinds of evil. Without resisting proudly, do what God has told you to do. God will help you to remember and understand it. This will show that you belong to God. 22 It is important to what God commands, do not just listen to it. People who only listen to it and do not obey it are fooling themselves *into thinking that this will save them*. 23 Now some people hear God's message, but they do not do what it says. Those people are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. 24 Although he looks at himself, he goes away *from the mirror* and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But other people consider God's message carefully. It is perfect and it enables people to do voluntarily *what God wants them to do*. If these people remember what they have heard and continue to do what God tells them to do, then God will bless them because of what they do.

26 Some people think that they worship God properly, but they say bad things. Those people are wrong in what they are thinking. God is not impressed with our worship activities if we continually say bad things. 27 *One of the things that God has told us to do is* to take care of orphans and widows who suffer hardship. People who do that truly worship God, who is our Father. People are also truly worshiping God if they do not think or act immorally like others who do not obey God. God approves of people who do these things.

2 My fellow believers, do not honor some people more than others and at the same time trust in our great Lord Jesus the Messiah. 2 For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine clothes joins you for worship. And suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes joins you as well. 3 And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes. You tell him, "Please sit here in this nice seat!" But you tell the poor one *to go to a less honorable place, saying*, "You stand over there," or, "Sit on the floor!" 4 This would show that you thought rich people were better than poor people. It would show that you were making your judgments *about how to treat people* based on evil thinking. 5 Listen to me, my fellow believers whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to own nothing of value to trust in him very much. He will give them great things when he reigns everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. 6 But you have treated poor people disrespectfully! Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court *to accuse you in front of judges*! 7 And they are the ones who insult you because you are Christians! 8 *So you should not treat rich people better than poor people.* Instead, you should obey the commandment that Jesus said was so important. It is from the law of Moses: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you show love to everyone equally, you will be doing what is right. 9 But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong.

And *because you are not doing what God has commanded,* God will say that you have broken his law.

10 *God will say this* because if you break one of God's laws, even if you obey all the other ones, it is just as if you had broken all the laws. 11 For example, God said, "Do not commit adultery," but he also said, "Do not murder anyone." So if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder someone, then you have become a person who disobeys God's laws.

12 *Always* speak and act towards others knowing that God will judge you based on the commandment he gave us *to love others*. When we follow that commandment, we obey God freely. 13 You should speak and act in this way because when God judges us, he will not act mercifully toward those who have not acted mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we can expect that God will be merciful to us when he judges us.

14 My fellow believers, some people say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus the Messiah," but they do not do loving things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. 15 *To illustrate,* suppose that a fellow believer, whether a man or a woman, is continually lacking clothes and food for each day. 16 And suppose one of you says to them, "Do not worry, get warm, and have the food you need." But suppose that you then do not give them any clothing or food. Then that will be no help to them! 17 Similarly, if you just say that you believe in Jesus but you do not do anything that demonstrates that, you do not really believe in Jesus.

18 But someone might say *to you* that you have faith, while I have works. *He might claim that a person can express his religion through either faith or works and that he does not need to have both. But I would say in response that you cannot* show me your faith without works. I*, on the other hand,* can show you my faith by my works. 19 *Let me illustrate how believing in God without doing what God wants you to do cannot save you.* You believe that there is only one true God. You are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they shake *with fear* because they also know that the one true God is going to punish them. 20 Also, you foolish person, I will give you proof that if someone says he believes in Jesus but he does not do anything that demonstrates that, then what he says does not help him in any way. 21 *Here is the proof.* Abraham, from whom we are descended, showed that he was willing to offer his son Isaac *to God* as a sacrifice *if God wanted him to do that*. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person because he showed that he would obey him *and that proved that he genuinely trusted God*. 22 In this way, Abraham obeyed God because he trusted him. When he obeyed him, that helped him trust God completely. 23 That was how the scripture came true that says, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did what was right." Other scriptures say that Abraham was God's friend. 24 *From the example of Abraham,* you should recognize that God considers people to be righteous because of what they do, not simply because they trust in him. 25 Just as he did for Abraham, God also considered Rahab to be righteous because of what she did. She had been a prostitute, but she took care of the messengers *Joshua sent to spy out the land*. She then helped them to escape by sending them back on a safer road.

26 All of this illustrates an important truth. Just as a person's body is not alive if he is no longer breathing, in the same way, a person does not really trust in God if he does not express that trust through what he does.

3 My fellow believers, most of you should not desire to become teachers *of God's word*. As you know, God will judge us teachers more severely *than he will judge other people*. 2 *I will tell you why most of you should not become teachers.* All of us often do things that are wrong. But if anyone is able to avoid saying things that are wrong, he has become the person God intends him to be. He will be able to control all of his actions as well. 3 To illustrate, we can put a small metal bar into the mouth of a horse and use it to make the horse go where we want it to go. When we do that, we can direct the horse's large body *just by means of that small device*. 4 Think about ships too. A ship may be very large and the winds that propel it forward may be very strong. Even so, by using a tiny rudder, the pilot can direct the ship wherever he wants it to go. 5 Similarly, although our tongues are very small, we use them to brag that we have done great things. Note also that a fire that starts as a small flame can burn up many trees.

6 Just as a fire burns a forest, when we say bad things, we hurt many people. *What we say reveals that* there is much evil within us. When we say bad things, this contaminates all that we think and do. It can ruin our whole life. It is Satan himself who influences us to speak what is evil. 7 To give another example, people have been able to tame a wide variety of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and animals that live in the water. 8 But no one can control the things he says. The things people say are like a dangerous creature that never stops killing people with its venom. 9 We use speech to praise *God, who is* our Lord and Father. But we also use speech to say that we want bad things to happen to people. *That is very wrong, because* God made people like himself. 10 Someone may use his speech to praise God. But then he will use that same speech to wish that bad things would happen to people. My fellow believers, this should not happen! 11 Surely good-tasting water and bad-tasting water do not come from the same source! 12 My fellow believers, a fig tree cannot produce olives. And a grapevine cannot produce figs. Nor can a salty source produce good water. *Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.*

13 If any of you are very understanding, you will demonstrate that by living your life properly. Being wise leads us to act gently toward others. 14 But if inwardly you grudgingly resent other people and you think you are more important than they are, you should not claim to be wise. That would be saying that what is false is actually true. 15 People who are envious and selfish are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are thinking and acting like people who do not respect God. They are following their own evil desires. They are doing what demons would do. 16 We can tell that people who are resentful and selfish are not wise, because they do not control themselves. They take part in many different sinful activities. 17 But the person whom God has taught to be wise is, first of all, morally pure. Such a person also makes peace with others. He is kind to them and gets along with them well. He is generous to people who do not deserve it, and he does practical things to help others. He does not favor one person

over another, and he does not pretend to be something that he is not. 18 When people work quietly to help others get along, they can help those others to have good relationships.

4 I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It is because each of you inwardly desires to do evil things. Those desires lead you to fight *in order to be able to do those things*. 2 You desire to have things, but you do not get *them*. This makes you bitterly resent the people who do have them. But you *still* do not get *what you want*, so you quarrel and fight *with others*. If you pray *to God* instead *for the things you desire*, then God will give you *what you truly need*. 3 But even when you do ask God for things, he does not give them to you, because you are asking with bad motives. You are asking for things just so that you can use them to enjoy yourselves in wrong ways.

4 You are being disloyal to God *by not obeying him*! You must realize that those who behave as evil people do are hostile to God. So if that is how you decide to live, then you will be choosing to be hostile to God. 5 You must realize that God has purposely told us about this in the Scriptures. There he teaches us that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our lives in ways that please him. 6 If we are living in ways that do not please God, he is very kind to us. *He will help us live differently if we humbly admit that we have been doing wrong.* That is why this teaching is in the Bible: "God does not help those who are proud, but he does help those who are humble."

7 So choose humbly to obey God. Firmly determine not to give in to the devil's temptations. This will make the devil give up on trying to tempt you. 8 Be honest and open with God. If you do, he will welcome you into his presence. You who are sinners, turn away from doing what is wrong and do only what is right. You who cannot decide whether you will commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts and think only right thoughts. 9 Show sorrow and be sad and weep *because of the wrong things that you have done*. You have been enjoying yourselves, but you should be serious *and realize how much you need to change*. 10 Humbly show the Lord how sorry you are for your sins. If you do that, he will honor you.

11 My fellow believers, stop accusing one another of doing wrong. Anyone who accuses and condemns a fellow believer is really accusing and condemning God's commandment *that we should love one another*. But if you speak against that commandment, you are not obeying it. Instead, you are acting like a judge who condemns it. 12 The only one who can judge people *according to the law* is the one who gave the law. That is God, who is able not just to condemn people *for breaking the law* but also to pardon them *even though they have broken the law*. You certainly are not entitled to take God's place and judge others.

13 Some of you are *arrogantly* saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money." Now you listen to me! 14 You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. In fact, you do not even know how long you will live! After all, your life is short, like a mist that is visible briefly but then vanishes. 15 Instead *of what you are saying,* you should say, "If the Lord is willing, we will still be alive and we will be able to do one thing or another." 16 But what you are doing is bragging about all the things you plan to do. That kind of bragging is sinful.

17 So if anyone does not do something even though he knows it is the right thing that he should do, he has committed a sin.

5 Now I have something to say to you rich people *who say you believe in Jesus*. Listen to me! You should weep and wail loudly because you are going to experience terrible troubles! 2 Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotten. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though moths had ruined them. 3 Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded. *When God judges you,* this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are guilty *of being greedy*. Just as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You should not have been trying to get richer and richer knowing that Jesus was going to return. *When he returns, your riches will be worthless.* 4 Think about what you have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workers who harvested your fields. These unpaid wages show how unfair you were to these workers. They are crying out to God because of the way you have treated them. The Lord is a God of great power, and he is listening to their loud cries *and he will punish you for what you have done*. 5 You have bought all the luxuries you wanted for yourselves. Just as cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you. 6 You have arranged for others to condemn honest people. You have arranged for others to kill people who had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. *But God will judge and punish you for doing all these things.*

7 So, my fellow believers, *even though rich people cause you to suffer,* be patient until Jesus the Messiah comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they have to wait for their valuable crops to grow. They have to wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. *This rain is necessary for the crops to grow and mature so that the farmers can harvest them.* 8 Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust Jesus the Messiah firmly, because he is coming back soon *and he will judge all people fairly*. 9 My fellow believers, do not grumble about each other. That way the Lord Jesus will not have to punish you. He is the one who will judge us, and he will come back soon to do that. 10 My fellow believers, as an example *of how to be patient*, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently. 11 Consider how, when people are able to endure suffering *patiently and faithfully*, we say that God has blessed them. *One example of this is the man named* Job. You know about him *from the Scriptures*. You know that he suffered many things patiently. You also know that God planned *to do good things through what Job suffered*. And from that you can tell that God is very caring and kind.

12 Now this, my fellow believers, is something very important for you to realize. You must never take an oath by calling on heaven or the earth or anything else to guarantee a promise that you make. All you need to say is "Yes" or "No." God will judge you *if you go beyond that and make an oath but then do not keep your promise*.

13 Any one of you who is experiencing trouble should pray
that God would help him. Whoever is happy should sing songs
of praise *to God*. 14 Any one of you who is sick should call
the leaders of the congregation to come and pray for him *to*
recover. They should put olive oil on him *to help him recover*
and, with the Lord's authority, pray. 15 When these leaders
pray to God in faith, God will answer that prayer and heal
the person who is sick. The Lord will restore his health. If
that person has sinned, God will forgive him *for those sins*.
16 Because the Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins,
admit to each other the sinful things you have done and pray
for each other. Then God will heal you. If people who are
right with God pray, God will answer their prayers in powerful
ways. 17 The prophet Elijah was an ordinary person like us.
But when he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, the land
of Israel had no rain for three and a half years. 18 Then Elijah
prayed again*, asking God to send rain*, and God made it rain
and plants grew and produced crops again.

19 My fellow believers, if one of you stops obeying the true
message from God, then another one of you should persuade
that person to do once again what God has told us to do.
20 I want anyone who helps a sinner to repent to know that
because of what he has done, God will save the sinner from
spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.