

BACKGROUND ON JAMES ...

- Written by James (Greek "Ἰάκωβος") the brother of Jesus. Probably written between A.D. 44-49. Maybe the first book of the New Testament written.

THEMES IN JAMES ...

- Trials and spiritual maturity, steadfastness under trials, relationship to God's word, pure religion, genuine faith, the royal law, warning concerning becoming a teacher, the perils of the tongue, the evidence and character of true wisdom, the reason for wars among us, grace and humility in our relationship with God, submission to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God, judging one another, the Lord's will, the perils of ill-gotten gain, patience in the work of the Lord, swearing, confessing sin and praying.

MENTION OF "FAITH" IN JAMES ...

- In the ESV "faith" is found twice in chapter one, thirteen times in chapter two, once in chapter five.

HOT TOPIC ... JAMES VERSUS PAUL? ... FAITH VERSUS WORKS? ...

- (James 2:17 ESV) So also **faith** by itself, if it does not have **works**, is dead.
- (James 2:18 ESV) But someone will say, "You have **faith** and I have **works**." Show me your **faith** apart from your **works**, and I will show you my **faith** by my **works**.
- (James 2:20 ESV) Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith** apart from **works** is useless?
- (James 2:22 ESV) You see that **faith** was active along with his **works**, and **faith** was completed by his **works**.
- (James 2:24 ESV) You see that a person is justified by **works** and not by **faith** alone.
- (James 2:26 ESV) For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also **faith** apart from works is **dead**.

WATERSHED ... The trials of life present the great watershed that divides the mature in faith and those who languish in immaturity.

- **The mature believer embraces God's plan.** Trials are part of that plan. No matter where it leads, holding to a biblical perspective and submitting to the sovereign, providential will of God. In other words, the mature believer buys into God's plan for his or her life.
- **The immature person cannot let go of his own plan.** This person perpetually struggles with bitterness and disappointment because things have not gone his or her way. His mindset is that "if only this would happen" then I would be happy. Trials are the enemy. The selfish ambition of the immature believer will bring strife, jealousy and envy into the fellowship. This person is also unskilled in the word of God and unable to accurately discern between right and wrong.

Immaturity ... jealousy ... selfish ambition (James 3:14–16 ESV)

- (3:14) Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. Arrogant. False understanding. (3:15) Think have wisdom from above but is actually earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (3:16) Allow jealousy and selfish ambition to cause disorder and every vile practice.

COMMON DENOMINATOR:
CANNOT ACCEPT WHEN LIFE
DOES NOT GO MY WAY.

Babes ... infants ... mere humans (1 Corinthians 3:1–9 ESV)

- (3:1) Infants in Christ (3:2) Milk drinkers. Unprepared to hear what they need to hear. (3:3) Still controlled by sinful nature—there is jealousy and strife among you. (3:4) Merely human: "I follow Paul" ... "I follow Apollos."

Child ... immature ... unskilled in Scripture (Hebrews 5:12–14 ESV)

- (5:12) Still in grade school learning your numbers. Still taking milk from a bottle. (5:13) Unskilled in the Bible ("word of righteousness"). (5:14) Untrained in distinguishing good from evil.

Children ... fickle ... immature ... (Matthew 11:16–17 ESV)

- (11:16) Play at the faith. (11:17) Manipulative. Games. Selfish.

Immaturity ... selfish desires ... jealousy ... (James 4:1–3 NCV)

- (4:1) Fighting and arguments from inner conflict with selfish desires. (4:2) Do not know what you want or how to get it. "Kill" people of whom you are jealous. Argue and fight to get what you want instead of asking God. (4:3) When you do ask God, ask for wrong reason. Motivation for prayer is your own pleasures.