

CHAPTER 11

Practical Writings

(James, 1 Peter and 2 Peter)

The Bible is a very practical book! The Bible presents truth that can be **used** and **practiced** every day of the week and every hour of every day! God's message was given, not so that we would just hear it and think about it, but so that we would **act upon it** (James 1:22). The three books which we are going to consider in this chapter are very practical books, showing us how the Christian faith works in everyday life.

James--The Behavior that Springs Out of a Living Faith

Who wrote the book of James (James 1:1)? _____ James wrote this letter, but we must ask, "Who was he?" There are several men in the Bible who were named "James" (just as there are many men today who have the name "James" or "Jim").

The James who wrote this letter was not James the brother of John whose father's name was Zebedee (see Matthew 4:21; 10:2). James the brother of John was one of the Lord's twelve disciples and he was the first disciple to be martyred. This happened in 44 A.D.; see Acts 12:1-2. He did not write the book of James.

The James who wrote this letter was not the other disciple who was named James (see Matthew 10:3). He was the son of Alphaeus, but he was not the one who wrote this letter.

The James who wrote the book of James was the half-brother of Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph (see Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19).

What does the Bible teach us about James, the brother of the Lord? During the earthly ministry of Jesus, did James and the other brothers believe in Christ (John 7:5)? _____ Later we are amazed to discover that this same James became the leader of the church that was in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:17-18). Something happened to this man! In fact, in James 1:1, James describes himself as a "S _____ (slave) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." What was it that changed this man from an unbeliever in Jesus Christ to a servant of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:7)?

You see, James realized that Jesus was more than his brother, He was his **Living Lord**! James was even willing to die for the Christ he loved. History tells us that James was martyred in Jerusalem in 62 or 63 A.D.

The letter that James wrote was probably the first New Testament book that was written. The Epistle of James was probably written between 45 and 49 A.D., less than 20 years after the Lord

rose again from the dead.

In James 1:1, James tells us to whom he wrote this letter. He did not send this letter to one church as Paul often did (such as to the church at Rome or at Corinth). He did not send this letter to one individual (such as to Timothy or to Titus). Rather he sent this letter to the twelve T_____ (Jewish people) who were scattered everywhere. James was concerned about these Jewish believers (see James 1:2--"brethren") who were living outside of Palestine.

When James wrote this letter, most of the Christians were Jews. Later, Paul would go on his great missionary journeys and more and more Gentiles would turn to Christ also. But in the early days of the Church, the great number of believers were Jews.

These Jews would come to the city of Jerusalem at least once a year for the great feasts. For example, in Acts 2:1,5 we learn that Jews had come to Jerusalem from every nation out of heaven for the great feast day of Pentecost. Since James was the leader of the Jerusalem church, the Jewish Christians looked to him for spiritual help and instruction. James had a real concern for these people. Even though they were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, James was able to reach them by sending them this letter.

The truths found in this five chapter letter are just as meaningful to believers today as they were to those Jewish Christians who lived in the first century A.D.

James wanted his readers to know that faith in Jesus Christ is not a D_____ faith (James 2:17,20,26) but a **living** and a **working** faith! This living faith expresses itself in everyday life in daily trials and difficulties (chapter 1); in doing what God says (1:22); in caring for those in need (1:27); in loving our neighbors and not treating people special because they are rich (Chapter 2); in controlling our tongue (Chapter 3); in not loving the world and in resisting the devil (Chapter 4); in including God in our plans (4:13-17) and in our prayer life (Chapter 5).

God's Word really works, but I must put it to work! A shovel really works, but only if it is used! A good vacuum cleaner really works, but only when someone uses it! The same is true with God's Word.

James is a practical book, giving the believer God's wisdom as to how to tackle daily living. In some ways it is like the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament.

James was also a keen observer of nature (just as Jesus was). In the following verses, explain how James uses facts from nature to illustrate spiritual lessons: 1) James 1:6; 2) James 1:10-11; 3) James 1:21 (engrafted means "implanted," just as a seed is planted in the ground); 4) James 3:3; 5) James 3:6; 6) James 3:7-8; 7) James 3:11-12; 8) James 5:2-3; 9) James 5:7.

One teaching in the book of James has been greatly misunderstood by many. It is in chapter 2, verse 24 where James says, "Ye see then how that by _____ a man is justified, and **not** by faith only." Some people think this contradicts what Paul taught in Romans 3:28, that a man is justified by _____ apart from any works. In Chapter 5 of these notes we studied Paul's teaching concerning justification and salvation, and we learned that a man is saved by faith and not by works.

Actually James and Paul taught the very same thing! In fact, Paul and James knew each other very well and had a real oneness in Christ (see Galatians 1:19; 2:9; Acts 15:2,4,13; Acts 21:18-

20). Paul was in full agreement with every word in the book of James and James was in full agreement with every word in the book of Romans.

Did Paul agree with James that faith and works must go together (see Titus 3:8)? _____ Did Paul agree with James that a person may **say** that he has faith but not really have faith (see James 2:14 and Titus 1:16)? _____ Did James agree with Paul that Abraham was justified by faith (compare James 2:23 with Romans 4:3)?

What Paul taught and what James taught were both true! The question Paul answered in Romans is this: **How can I be declared right before God?** The answer is: By faith and not by works. The question James answered in the book of James is this: **How can I show people my faith** (James 2:18)? How can I **show** others that I am a believer and that I am right before God? I show this **by my good works**.

Faith is the **root** of salvation; good works are the **fruit** of salvation. The book of Romans concentrates on the **root**; the book of James concentrates on the **fruit**. It is not enough to **SAY** that I have faith (James 2:14); I must **SHOW** that I have faith! In other words, "If you are really an apple tree, then let me see some apples!" People cannot see my faith. People cannot look into my heart to see if I am really saved and justified. But people can see the way I live and talk and act and behave. James' message is this: If a person really **believes**, then he will really **behave**! James chapter 2 is not talking about how a person is saved; it is talking about how a person can show or prove that he is really saved!

For a more detailed study on these important matters, see our paper on **Justification by Faith and Justification by Works**.

1 Peter--First Suffering, Then Glory!

The Apostle Peter, like James, also wrote a very practical letter, not just to a church or to an individual, but "to the S _____ (people staying for a brief time in a foreign land) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1).

Peter's letter was written almost 20 years after James wrote his book (1 Peter is dated about 64 A.D.). He sent this letter not only to Jewish Christians but to Gentile believers as well (compare 1 Peter 2:10 and 4:3-4).

Peter reminds these believers that they were "strangers and sojourners and pilgrims" (1 Peter 1:1; 1:17; 2:11). This is true of every child of God. The world is not our home (Philippians 3:19-20), but it is necessary for us to journey through this world on our way to our heavenly home. How long will our journey through this world last in comparison to the length of time we will spend in our heavenly home?

Peter knew that the believer's journey through this world would involve **suffering** (we are in a foreign land on enemy territory, representing a Saviour whom the citizens of this world hate--John 15:18-21). The believer's eternal dwelling place involves **glory**. Paul said, "For I reckon that the S _____ of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the G _____ which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). A brief time of suffering is followed by a glorious future in God's presence.

Peter was writing to suffering believers. He reminded them that the dark days are short in comparison with the joy that lies ahead. Consider for example 1 Peter 5:10. This verse teaches that the **suffering** is only for A W _____ but the **GLORY** is E _____! See also 1 Peter 1:11 and 4:13 where Peter mentions **suffering** and **glory**. Peter carefully taught these believers how to handle the trials and the suffering of this life. Here are some of the things Peter taught (*please match*):

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|----------|---|---|
| 1) _____ | Don't be surprised at the fiery trials that will come upon you, but rather expect them. | A. 1 Peter 1:6-7
B. 1 Peter 2:19-23 |
| 2) _____ | Sometimes a believer must suffer wrongfully, even as Christ suffered, though He was completely innocent. | C. 1 Peter 4:12
D. 1 Peter 4:13
E. 1 Peter 4:15 |
| 3) _____ | Sometimes Christians suffer because they have done wrong or broken man's laws. They are getting what they deserve. | F. 1 Peter 4:16
G. 1 Peter 5:10 |
| 4) _____ | One of the reasons God allows suffering is to test our faith. | |
| 5) _____ | Rejoice that those who share in Christ's sufferings will also share in His glory. | |
| 6) _____ | After we have suffered for a short time, we will enjoy the glory which is forever. | |
| 7) _____ | Sometimes a believer must suffer simply because he is a Christian. Often the world gives Christians a difficult time. | |

God's truth is the same, even though He chooses different men to write it down in His Word. Compare 1 Peter 5:5-9 with James 4:6-10. Can you find any similarities between what Peter wrote and what James wrote?

2 Peter--Peter's Farewell Words

Who wrote the book of 2 Peter (2 Peter 1:1)? _____ This may seem like a simple question, but there are many people (including religious leaders, university professors, etc.) who do not believe that the Apostle Peter wrote the book of 2 Peter. They do not believe the very first verse of this book! The writer claims that because he was present on the mount of transfiguration as an eyewitness, and certainly this was true of Peter (see 2 Peter 1:16-18 and compare Matthew 17:1-2).

The book of 2 Peter contains Peter's last words. It is similar in many ways to Paul's last book, 2 Timothy. Peter knew that he would soon die: "knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me" (2 Peter 1:14). In John 21:18-19 the Lord Jesus Christ told Peter that he would die when he was old and also that he would stretch forth his hands and he would be taken where he did not wish to go. As far as we know from history, Peter was crucified by the Romans about the same time Paul was martyred (under the Roman emperor Nero). According to tradition Peter was crucified with his head down (upside down), because he did not feel that he was worthy to be crucified in the same position as His Saviour.

As Peter thought of his approaching death, did he have any hope or any assurance that he might go to heaven (see 1 Peter 1:3-5)? _____

The book of Second Peter was written to remind believers of certain truths (see 2 Peter 1:12 and 3:1). Not only does God need to teach us new truths, but He also must remind us of things we already know. We tend to forget many things!

In 2 Peter, some very important things are said about the Bible (see 2 Peter 1:19-21 and 3:15-18). Peter knew that he and the other apostles were soon to become extinct! Soon there would be no more apostles! Can the church survive without Apostles (without men such as Paul, Peter and Matthew)? Yes, even though the church no longer has apostles, it does have the **doctrine** or **the teaching of the Apostles** (compare Acts 2:42). The church possesses the New Testament which the Apostles gave us!

It would be very helpful if Peter or Paul could visit us today and preach to us and teach us the things of God, but this is not possible. Even though Peter is no longer with us, we do have the two letters that Peter wrote! Paul can no longer be found on this earth, but the letters of Paul can be found (see 2 Peter 3:15-16). God's Word is what we need, even though the Apostles have died long ago.

The key word in 2 Peter is the word "**knowledge**." Can you find the seven places in this book where this word is found? 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ 5) _____ 6) _____ 7) _____ The more we know Jesus Christ, the less we will be led astray by false teachers (2 Peter chapter 2). The more we know Jesus Christ, the more we will grow as a Christian (2 Peter, chapter 1 and chapter 3, and see especially 2 Peter 3:18). When you were saved, you came to know the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:3). As a Christian each day should be spent getting to know Him better and better (2 Peter 3:18). Paul's heart cry as a believer was this, "**that I may _____ Him**" (Philippians 3:10)!

May we never forget Peter's last words:

**But grow [keep on growing] in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
(2 Peter 3:18)**



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