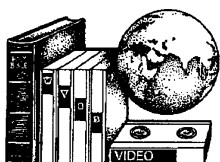


World Video Bible School®

Established 1986



J A M E S

This set of notes is designed to be used by non-credit students of World Video Bible School® and correspondent students enrolled in the Video Bible Institute (VBI). VBI students should pay particular attention to the syllabus. Students not taking the course for credit may bypass the syllabus and use the notes as they see fit for their spiritual enrichment.



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JAMES

∞ Syllabus ∞

I. GENERAL INFORMATION.

- A. Instructor: Chuck Horner.
- B. This course consists of 21 lessons on 7 DVDs.
- C. Each class is approximately 38 minutes long.

II. DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE.

- A. This is an in-depth study of the book of James.
- B. Students will understand the relationship between faith and works, James' instructions to the Christian teacher, and "anointing with oil" as used by James.
- C. Students will better understand how to teach this book to others.
- D. Much attention will be given to practical application.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.

- A. Required.
 - 1. Bible (ASV, KJV or NKJV).
 - 2. 21 video lessons.
 - 3. Spiral bound class notes.
- B. Optional: Any good (conservative) commentary on James.

IV. MEMORY WORK.

- A. Memory verses must be written (or typed) from memory, then mailed to VBI for grading. Verses must come from the ASV, KJV or NKJV, according to what you indicated on your original VBI application.

- B. All verses must be written out or typed at one sitting. You may study more and start over if you make a mistake, but you must still start again from the beginning and write all the verses at one sitting.
- C. For *James*, the following verses must be memorized.

1:2-5	2:26	4:17
1:13-15	3:1	5:13
1:27	4:7	5:16
- D. Memory work is due when you mail VBI your written test.
- E. Hint: A good method of memorizing is to write the verses on flash cards that can be easily reviewed throughout the course.

V. TESTS.

- A. There is one written test.
- B. When you near the end of the course, contact us and request the test. When you receive the test, you have permission to look at it and study it prior to taking it.
- C. However, when you actually take the test, you must do so completely from memory, with no help from notes, Bible, textbook or tapes.

VI. TERM PAPER.

- A. Write a paper in which you give an overview of *each* of the five chapters in James. In the overview, include *four* lessons to be learned from *each* chapter.
- B. The paper should be a minimum of seven pages, typed and double spaced. If handwritten, the paper should be a minimum of ten pages, single spaced.
- C. The paper is due when you mail VBI your test and memory work.

VII. GRADING.

- A. Memory work, term paper and test will be graded separately.
- B. Final grade is based on an average of all assigned work, with the written test counting twice.

- C. You may request that a grade be explained or reconsidered, but VBI will have the final say.

VIII. SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS.

- A. Read James in its entirety at least five times.
- B. View each video lesson in its entirety.
- C. Complete all memory work (explained under point IV).
- D. Submit a term paper (explained under point VI).
- E. Take one written test (explained under point V).
- F. Have a combined grade average of at least 70.

IX. CREDIT.

- A. Credit will be issued, including a certificate, only after all work has been successfully completed, tapes have been returned (if rented) and all invoices for this particular course have been paid in full.
- B. Thank you for studying in the Video Bible Institute and we pray it is a blessing to your life on your way to eternity!

JAMES BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Martin Luther dubbed this letter “a right strawy epistle” and placed it in the appendix to his translation of the New Testament into the German language.
 - 1. He found its emphasis on good works unattractive.
 - 2. He thought the theme of “good works” contradicted Paul’s teaching on “faith.”
- B. This is actually one of the most practical and needed letters for Christians of every generation.
 - 1. His rebuke of worldliness and pretense in religion are urgent messages for our time.
 - 2. His denunciation of social injustices has caused some to call James the “Amos of the New Testament.”
 - 3. From the beginning to the end of his letter James appeals to Christians to make their lives consistent with their profession of Christianity.
- C. The practical wisdom of this book will impress all who study it closely.
- D. There is no book in the New Testament that is more Jewish than the Epistle of James.

I. ATTESTATION AND AUTHORSHIP.

- A. The book of James was recognized as canonical at the third Council of Carthage in 397.
- B. This epistle is in close harmony with the books of Acts (15:13-21; 21:17-25) and Galatians (1:19; 2:9,10).
- C. Authorship is attested to James the half-brother of Jesus.
 - 1. Four appear in the New Testament with the name of James.

2. Two of these are almost unknown and the third was martyred in 44 A.D.
3. This leaves James the half-brother of Jesus and he was well known enough to identify himself with just the name James only.
4. See: James, The Brother Of The Lord, by Jerry Moffitt, 1983.

II. BACKGROUND AND DESTINATION.

- A. James probably intended this letter for all the Jewish Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire - 1:1.
- B. Some feel it was written primarily to the Jewish Christians in the eastern dispersion.
- C. This dispersion had come about because of attacks from unbelieving Jews. Cf: Acts 8:1ff (ca. 33 A.D.); 12:1ff (ca. 41 A.D.).
- D. These people had looked to James as their teacher and counselor when living in Palestine.

III. OCCASION AND DATE.

- A. The epistle seems to be the result of trials and misconceptions of doctrine held by Jewish Christians.
- B. An early date for the writing of this letter is the most popular view.
 1. If James died in 62 or 63 it had to be written before that time.
 2. The character of doctrine also indicates this.
 3. It apparently comes after the persecutions of 33 and 41.
 4. But the controversy over accepting Gentiles into the church had not yet become a problem - ca. 48 A.D.
 5. We will set the date for writing at 45-48 A.D.

IV. PURPOSE AND PLAN.

- A. The book of Hebrews was written to discourage Christians from turning back to the Old Law. James was written to correct improper attitudes and conduct that had come about in the midst of trials.

- B. James knew of the severe trials these saints were having to endure for their faith - 1:2.
 - 1. He wrote to encourage them in their difficulties.
 - 2. He warned them against spiritual laxity and neglect of their duties.
- C. He wishes his readers to become perfect men.

Spiritual immaturity is a major problem in the church. God is looking for mature Christians to do His work – but usually He finds little children (immature Christians) who cannot even get along with one another.

V. THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE.

The practice of true religion.

VI. JAMES' METHOD OF WRITING.

- A. The style of James is like the Hebrew prophets in that his thoughts were influenced by the Hebrew gnomologists (using proverbs - from the Greek word γνώμη). He has nothing of the Pauline method of dialectic (using question and answer type arrangement). He is never swept away like Paul by the tide of his own feelings. His moral earnestness shines with the steady glow of a furnace, he never rushes with the uncontrolled force of an open fire. He first says in the plainest and most straight forward manner exactly what he means to say and then enforces it later.
- B. There is more of the appreciation of nature in this one short epistle of James than in all the epistles of Paul put together. Human life was more interesting to Paul than natural scenery. James is interested in human life just as much as Paul, but James was constantly endowing things with living qualities. He presents sin as a harlot, conceiving and bringing forth death - 1:15. The word of God has power and conceives and brings forth life to those who live up to God's praise - 1:18. Also compare 4:1,2; 4:4; 5:3,4.

VII. COMPARISONS BETWEEN JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND JAMES' LETTER.

<u>What James Said</u>	<u>What Jesus Said</u>
Jas 1:5	Mt 7:7
“ 1:17	“ 7:11
“ 1:22	“ 7:24
“ 2:5	“ 5:3
“ 2:8	“ 7:12; 22:39
“ 3:12	“ 7:16
“ 3:18	“ 5:9
“ 4:11	“ 7:1
“ 5:2	“ 6:19
“ 5:10	“ 5:12
“ 5:12	“ 5:34-37

JAMES OUTLINE

- I. The Gifts of God. 1:1-18
- II. Our Attitude Toward the Word. 1:19-27
- III. The Sin of Respect of Persons 2:1-13
- IV. The Relationship of Faith and Works. 2:14-26
- V. Admonition to Teachers. 3:1-18
- VI. Worldliness in the Church. 4:1-10
- VII. Judging Our Brethren. 4:11,12
- VIII. Presumptuous Self-Sufficiency. 4:13-17
- IX. Concerning Rich Oppressors. 5:1-6
- X. Christian Attitude Toward Mistreatment. 5:7-12
- XI. The Christian in Illness and Sin. 5:13-20

JAMES EXTENDED OUTLINE

- I. THE GIFTS OF GOD..... 1:1-18**
 - A. Salutation. 1:1
 - B. The Christian Attitude Toward Suffering..... 1:2-4
 - C. Wisdom in Trials. 1:5-8
 - D. Trials of Poverty and Riches. 1:9-11
 - E. Patient Endurance in Trials Rewarded. 1:12
 - F. Temptations Negatively Considered:
They Do Not Come From God. 1:13-16
 - G. The True Nature of God's Giving. 1:17,18
- II. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD..... 1:19-27**
 - A. Meekness in Hearing the Word..... 1:19-21
 - B. Being Doers of the Word Not Hearers Only. 1:22-25
 - C. The Application: Pure and Vain Religion..... 1:26,27
- III. THE SIN OF RESPECT OF PERSONS. 2:1-13**
 - A. Must Not Be a Respector of Persons. 2:1
 - B. Practiced By Some. 2:2-4
 - C. Riches of Poverty and Poverty of Riches. 2:5-7
 - D. The Royal Law. 2:8-11
 - E. The Law of Liberty and of Mercy..... 2:13,14

IV.	THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND WORKS.	2:14-26
A.	Profession and Practice.	2:14-17
B.	It is Both, Not One or the Other.	2:18,19
C.	Proof of Our Faith.	2:20-26
V.	ADMONITION TO TEACHERS.	3:1-18
A.	Peril of Being a Teacher.	3:1,2
B.	Problem of the Tongue.	3:3-6
C.	Problem of Taming the Tongue.	3:7,8
D.	Inconsistent Use of the Tongue.	3:9-12
E.	Those Who Shouldn't Teach.	3:13,14
F.	Wrong Kind of Wisdom.	3:15,16
G.	True Wisdom.	3:17,18
VI.	WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH.	4:1-10
A.	Source of Strife.	4:1-7
B.	Godly Attributes Needed to Overcome.	4:8-10
VII.	JUDGING OUR BRETHREN.	4:11,12
VIII.	PRESUMPTUOUS SELF-SUFFICIENCY.	4:13-17
A.	Prevalent Attitude.	4:13
B.	Mistaken Attitude.	4:14
C.	Proper Attitude.	4:15
D.	Rebuke of Attitude.	4:16,17

IX.	CONCERNING RICH OPPRESSORS.....	5:1-6
A.	Admonition to the Rich.	5:1
B.	Condition of Wealth.....	5:2,3
C.	Selfishness and Its Ends.....	5:4-6
X.	CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD MISTREATMENT.....	5:7-12
A.	Be Patient, the Lord is Coming.	5:7,8
B.	Be Strong Because of the Promise.....	5:9
C.	Patience Has Always Been Triumphant.	5:10,11
D.	Swearing Forbidden.	5:12
XI.	THE CHRISTIAN IN ILLNESS AND SIN.....	5:13-20
A.	Prayer and Singing.	5:13
B.	Illness and Efficacy of Prayer.	5:14-18
C.	Converting Erring Brethren.	5:19,20

JAMES

I. THE GIFTS OF GOD..... 1:1-18

Theme: How to live through trials.

Not just existing through them BUT your conduct and reactions during them. Some of the subjects discussed do not seem to be “gifts.” Some of God’s blessings are in the form of trials.

This section deals with the purpose or value of trials. The trials here to be considered are those outside of one’s self. The right view of trials is presented, with the implication that wisdom is needed from God to accept this concept of suffering. This wisdom is promised as an answer to believing prayer. In this connection, a warning is given to the doubting petitioner.

As such trials are heaped upon the poor disciple, James presents the view of the acceptance attitude of both the rich and the poor. James then promises the reward for faithful endurance of trials. He assures the readers that temptations come from within the man himself and cannot be thought of as coming from God, because God gives good gifts only.

Finally, the best gift of all is mentioned, salvation. It is presented in the figure of birth into the family of God. The material of this section is calculated to help us count our blessings even in the midst of seeming adversity.

A. SALUTATION..... 1:1

1. James. Ἰάκωβος, he introduces himself as James or Jacob.

Servant. Δοῦλος, “servant, bondservant, slave.” All other writers of the New Testament who identify themselves by name call themselves δοῦλος:

Paul - Rom 1:1
Peter - 2 Pet 1:1
Jude - Jude 1
John - Rev 1:1

Servant (slave) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At least three implications in this title:

- a. It implies ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE.

A slave has no rights of his own and he is the absolute possession of his master.

- b. It implies ABSOLUTE HUMILITY.

This is a person who has lost himself in the service of his master.

- c. It implies ABSOLUTE LOYALTY.

This person does not consider his own profit or preference, only his loyalty to his master.

The meaning of δοῦλος is well illustrated in the story told by Clayton Wallers: They were in Africa trying to translate the N.T. into five different dialects and came to the word “redeemed.” They would take each word and explain it as fully to the people as possible and then asked them what word in all five dialects explained it best. They spent 30 minutes explaining the word “redeemed” and asked them for the correct word. The word they gave meant, “to take the neck out.” The translators decided they needed to explain the word better, so they started all over, but the men said, “No!” They said they understood exactly what the word meant but that the translators did not understand the word they gave back as its meaning. Back when the slave traders came over to capture their people they put their necks in chains. If one of the locals who was rich enough and a freeman he could buy back one of these people and they would “take his neck out.” Their custom then was to bow down in front of this person and become his slave voluntarily for the rest of his life.

This is exactly what Jesus has done for us!

We have been caught and are being taken off into slavery, but Jesus is a free-man because He did not go into slavery. He has bought us and it should be our desire to bow down in front of Him and be His slave for the rest of our lives.

Twelve tribes. To all Christian Jews, not originally intended for Gentile Christians, so this is one evidence for an early writing.

Scattered abroad [of the dispersion]. This phrase was used to denote all the Christian Jews who had been scattered all over the world.

Three possible meanings for this phrase:

- a. All of the Jews outside Jerusalem.
- b. All of the Christian Jews outside Jerusalem.

- c. All Christians, for the church is the true Israel.

Greeting. Χαίρειν, an infinitive, “to be greeting.” Used in this fashion only two other places:

Acts 23:26 - by Lysias in a letter.

Acts 15:23 - by James’ authored letter.

This was, however, often used in the papyri as a regular communication.

B. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD SUFFERING. 1:2-4

2. Count it all joy. The trials themselves are not joy but rather the joy is knowing that the working of your faith works patience.

All joy, wholly joy without any admixture of sorrow.

If we value the material and the physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to “count it all joy” (Wiersbe).

When caught up in a trial is not the time to make a decision. Decisions must be made before the trial starts!

Example: How will we respond when we have the opportunity to take something that is not ours without anybody’s knowledge?

Never make a decision while in the valley of despair, neither highs or lows! How many divorces could be avoided by not making decisions when angry or under stress?

Fall into. Περιπέσητε, subjunctive. “To fall around or upon, to fall in with, to fall into, to light upon, to be involved in, to be surrounded by falling into.” NASB translates it as “encounter.”

Cf: Lk 10:30 - “Fell among.”

Acts 27:41 - “Striking a place.”

Various (divers) [manifold]. Ποικίλοις, “varied.”

This same word is used in the LXX to describe Joseph’s coat - Gen 37:3. It means “many kinds.”

It refers to the variety of trials as opposed to the number of trials. It is talking about the various types of trials, not just the same ones over and over. As Christians mature they should be overcoming these trials. What was a trial before should no longer be a trial, i.e.: lies, drinking, etc.

Trials (temptations). Πειρασμοίς. This signifies trials with a beneficial purpose and effect. Or trials or temptations divinely permitted.

These Jewish Christians were undergoing trials (2:6,7; 5:1ff; 5:6; 5:13ff) and are being exhorted not to be grieved but joyous over the effect that the trials would bring.

Trial - Outward opportunity to sin.

Temptation - Inward desire to sin.

God himself, does not tempt anyone - 2:13-15.

If God placed within you the desire to sin it would be part of your nature to sin. Then if God condemned you for sinning He would be unjust. This opposes the very nature of God.

Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted - Mt 4:1.

He must have had, as a human, an inward desire to sin - Heb 4:15.

It was through suffering He learned obedience - Heb 5:8; 2:18.

There is no need to feel guilty because we are tempted! Remember, help is available - 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 4:16; 2 Pet 2:9.

3. Testing (trying) [proving]. Δοκίμιον. This originally meant sterling coinage and came to mean money that had not been alloyed.

God tests us to bring out our best – Satan tempts us to bring out our worst.

It is as if you were put into a furnace and melted down, just as ore is, to get all the impurities out of your spiritual life. Then when you come out you will be as pure gold or silver - 1 Pet 1:6,7.

James would have us understand that the trying gives us a chance to prove what we are made of as Christians.

Produces (worketh). Κατεργάζεται. “Works down through (to patience).”

Patience. Ὑπομονήν. “Steadfastness, active endurance.”

This is what enables a Christian to resist continually the pressure of external circumstances.

Most people feel this word means to “sit down and take whatever comes along.” This is wrong!

The best meaning is: Active Endurance.

If an enemy were overrunning your lines, some would flee. Others would stay to fight on and on. These were called ὑπομονήν.

Ὑπό = under and μένω = remain; therefore to remain faithful under all trials.

Illustrations:

Opposite: If you were once faithful in attendance and something came up and you had to miss Sunday worship, while you were gone you probably felt guilty. But, three months later someone asks you to miss Sunday night services and it does not bother you as much. Each time you miss it becomes easier and easier.

Positive: When one overcomes the trial, he comes out with more steadfastness and patience. The first trial was very hard to overcome but it becomes easier the next and easier the next, etc.

If your attitude is to “count it all joy” in your trials, you will come out more steadfast, with more patience.

Cf: Rom 5:3; Heb 12:5-12; Lk 21:19; Mt 24:13; Rom 12:12; Jas 1:12; 2 Cor 6:4; 12:12; 2 Tim 3:10.

Impatience and unbelief usually go together just as patience and faith do. Cf: Heb 6:12.

4. Perfect. Τέλειοι, “full grown, mature, fit for a purpose” - Eph 3: 19; 4:13.

It does **NOT** mean sinless!

Illustration (fit for a purpose):

If I had a chair falling apart that was held together by Phillips screws, I would need a Phillips screwdriver to put it back together. I ask you for a

screwdriver. You open up a black velvet case with a beautiful battery powered light in the lid and take out a chrome plated regular screwdriver. It would do me no good!

Somebody else takes out an old box that contains a rusty Phillips screwdriver with a chipped handle. That would fit the purpose! This has nothing to do with how it looks but rather, is it fit of for the purpose?

A Christian who is walking in the light is fit for the purposes of God, thus perfect!

You do not go through trials in order to come out sinless BUT to be perfect, fit for God's purposes.

Complete (entire). Ὁλόκληροι. "Sound, without blemish, complete."

Compare 1 Thess 5:23 where Paul is NOT asking for your soul, spirit and body to be together, but to be sound and without blemish.

This is a Christian who lacks none of the graces that are essential to the Christ-like life (love, mercy, Knowledge, kindness, etc.).

This signifies whole or complete in every part. Therefore, a Christian will have to endure many kinds of trials to be able to come to maturity in Christ in all areas.

If you use afflictions, ridicule, pain, sufferings, adversity or any other trial for the purpose that God intended for them you will come out more like God wants you to be.

If you frustrate those purposes, you will frustrate the reason for God allowing those trials to come. You will have gone through bad times for nothing.

Lacking nothing. From the spiritual standpoint only. Cf: Mt 7:7; Rom 5:3-5; Eph 3:9; 4:13.

C. WISDOM IN TRIALS..... 1:5-8

The wisdom James has in mind here, is the effective understanding of the believer's journey through life. Wisdom from above is needed in order to see the value in trials.

In this context, this is not asking God for plain wisdom BUT the wisdom to see the value in trials.

It is asking for the necessary sense to put into practice the principles and instructions given to us in the revelation of God's Word. James elaborates on wisdom from above later - 3:13ff.

If one finds himself deficient in this wisdom, let him ask for it from God who gives it liberally and without reproach.

5. If. Εἰ δέ, "but if." Adversative, as opposed to what has just been said.

Let him ask. Αἰτέῖτω. A present, active, imperative - "Let him keep on asking."

This wisdom is necessary to our understanding God's providence – His sending trials for our good. Cf: Rom 8:28; Heb 12:2-13.

The source of wisdom is God; the method of obtaining it is prayer. Cf: Mt 7:7; 1 Kgs 3:5-15; Prov 2:6.

Liberally. Ἀπλῶς. "In simplicity, sincerely, really, liberally, bountifully."

Eph 3:20 - God is able to give us more exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Many look upon God as a limited God.

Illustration: Think of God as an active force field around the entire universe. But this is a personal God NOT an impersonal force. He is intelligent and has emotions, such as love. Now, here you are in that universe on a speck of dust called earth and you are asking that gigantic force, "Can you do something?"

Without reproach (upbraideth not). God does not rebuke us for lack of wisdom when He gives it to us.

Illustration: A small child asks a question that he has no way of knowing the answer. Our sharp answer (upbraiding) is, "Don't you know that!?"

6. Ask in faith, with no doubting (nothing wavering) [doubting]. Διακρινόμενος, "by means of judging."

This is a difficult exhortation. However, God still gives us blessings even when all of our doubts are not cleared up.

Those who prayed for Peter in Acts 12 did not believe even when he was at the door. Still, God answered their prayers.

Abraham did not believe he would have a child by Sarah even after God had told him so.

Doubt: hesitancy or even unbelief in God.

Dependence on something or someone other than God is unbelief.

There must be no wavering, nor debating, nor indecision in the asking.

There is an old saying, “Pray as if everything depends on God and work as if everything depends on you.”

7. That man. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος, emphatic, “the man, that one.”

Any thing. Not one thing that he asks for.

The context limits anything to be received to those prayed for. Of course, the doubting, unstable petitioner may continue to receive many good things in life, but not in answer to his prayer.

8. Double minded. Δίψυχος, “two souled.”

Partly wanting our own way and partly God’s, a man wishing to secure the best of two worlds.

Cf: 4:8 - here is a man who is trying to serve God and be in the world also.

We are weak in the faith in many areas.

How about an attendance or growth goal of 10,000 in two years?

How about 800?

“No, let us set an attainable goal!”

The type of person James is talking about wants to be what he wants to be BUT he also wants the advantages of what the Lord has to offer.

This person is a hypocrite.

This person might have said, “I will pray to God because I am supposed to.”

Unstable in all his ways. Unstable — Ἀκατάστατος. Lit: Unsteady, fickle, staggering, reeling (like a drunken man).

D. TRIALS OF POVERTY AND RICHES. 1:9-11

- 9,10. But (NOT in the translations). This is a completely new section but it still deals with trials.

Far from being undecided and unsettled, the Christian should glory in his profession.

Illustration: You are a slave owner in the first century and become an elder. You give Bible lessons to your slaves and one becomes a Christian. Years later he also becomes an elder. Should this pose a problem?

There can be no respect of a person's wealth or estate. James will come back to this in 5:7-9. Their attitude in their persecution was that they were angry with their brethren rather than at their persecutors.

Everyone is equal in the church!

If a brother is poor, he should glory in the church where all are brothers and sisters and there is no respect of persons. He should realize his own dignity as a child of God and an heir of heaven.

If he is rich, he should cease to pride himself on wealth and rank and rejoice that he has learned that the things of this world are valuable only when they are used in the service of God and for the good of man.

11. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat [scorching wind].

In Palestine this really happened. It rained only twice a year and the rest of the time everything lived as best it could. When the burning heat came everything died.

The rich man also will fade away. Worldly wealth is not permanent.

It is as short lived as the patches of grass or the flowers of the fields under the scorching winds and blazing sun which caused their beauty of form and color to perish.

Compare:

2 Cor 4:18 - "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporary; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

1 Cor 6:19,20 - "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

E. PATIENT ENDURANCE IN TRIAL REWARDED. 1:12

12. Blessed. Μακάριος, "happy", as in the Beatitudes. Cf: 1 Tim 1:11; 6:15.

This word was used to describe the way the Greek gods lived on Mt. Olympus.

The man, rich or poor, who endures trials and does not break down under them is truly blessed because it is promised to him.

Endures temptation. He does not go through it just because he has to, but he actively takes it head on.

This does not mean that the Christian will never slip, stumble or falter. BUT the person in mind here is the one who keeps getting up and will not remain in sin.

When he has been proved (is tried) [approved]. Δόκιμος, "tried and found true" (same as verse 3).

The Holy Spirit is willing for us to be tested along the way. It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted - Mk 1:12; cf: 1 Pet 1:6,7. This knowledge of the use of trials leads the Christian to joy in meeting them.

The Christian who does not understand about trials and how he is supposed to use them becomes frustrated and asks, "Why God? Why me?"

Will (shall) receive. Our belief is often stronger in relationship to biblical commands than to biblical promises.

However, if we do not truly believe in the promises it is ridiculous to do the commands.

Crown. Στέφανον, the same word as for "Stephen" (Στέφανος).

This was the victor's crown in an athletic contest. Cf: 1 Thess 2:19 - crown of exultation.

This is not the ruler's crown, διάδημα - Rev 12:3; 13:1; 19: 12.

This is objective genitive case, it is the crown which consists of life.

Example: Acts 2:38 where we receive a gift which is the Holy Spirit.

This promise is not made anywhere before in the New Testament until here in James. Jesus taught things not recorded in the gospels - Acts 20:35; 1 Cor 7:12 and here.

“To those who love Him” – Love is the spiritual motivation behind every imperative in this section. Where there is love there is surrender and obedience (Wiersbe).

**F. TEMPTATIONS NEGATIVELY CONSIDERED:
THEY DO NOT COME FROM GOD..... 1:13-16**

James is contrasting the kind of excuse a tempted person might make with the actual truth about temptation.

Some Jews blamed God for sin. They observed an evil tendency in man, which they called YETZER HARA. Therefore, they would be able to excuse themselves from their evil deeds.

13. When he is tempted. Πειραζόμενος, a present participle meaning “while being tempted.” In the course of being tempted one should not excuse himself into yielding by thinking he can blame another — including God.

Sin appeals to the entire personality [emotion (promises) / intellect (facts) / willpower (commands)] just as the gospel does.

“I am tempted by God.” We are not to think that because God permits us to be tested He is therefore to blame if we yield to an urge to sin which Satan may present on that occasion. Cf: 1 Cor 10:13.

God cannot be tempted by (with) evil.

The truth here expressed is that God’s nature is such that He is not susceptible to evil or sin.

Illustration: Imagine God as the size of your body and a speck of dust as our galaxy. Within those 100 billion stars there is one planet called earth. And on that earth is 5 billion specks with one of them trying to get God to do evil.

It is ridiculous to think that we are great enough to tempt God!

This is not the same thing as the testing of God’s holiness in the Old Testament - Mal 3:10.

We can try God - 1 Cor 10:9.

God will try us - Heb 11:17.

Nor does he himself tempt anyone (neither tempteth he any man). This is emphatic, "He, Himself tempts no man!"

God does not put inside a person the have-to-be-carried-out desires to do evil.

God did make man with a free will — each man has the opportunity to choose whether to follow God or to go against him. Some say from this that God created evil.

Evil. Κακῶν, that which is contrary to God's nature and law.

God did not create evil. He made laws and when Satan disobeyed the laws, that was evil.

Evil is not an entity — a thing or a person.

Evil, wrong, transgression and lawlessness have to do with God's nature and His law.

Anything that we do contrary to the nature and law of God is evil.

It is evil to murder because God said so!

When we are tested by God, Satan may use this trial to seduce us into sinning.

14. But each one (every man) is tempted.

Compare: 1 Jn 1:8 - "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Heb 4:15 - "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

1 Cor 9:27 - "But I discipline (keep under) [buffet] my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (be a castaway) [rejected]."

When he is drawn away of his own desires (lust). Note the "when," not "if."

You are drawn away by your own desire to do evil.

Drawn away. Ἐξελκόμενος, a lure, such as on a fishing line or bait in a hunter's trap.

Sin drags or pulls us (cf: 4:1) by our own desires, and they are not given by God - 2 Tim 4:3; 2 Pet 3:3; Jude 18,19.

Enticed. Δελεαζόμενος, used of hunters who set traps with bait and later came to be used in the sense of a prostitute or wicked woman seducing a man.

This shows us that modern philosophers are wrong when they tell us we can blame our surrounding circumstances, natural forces or inheritance factors.

Whenever you are faced with temptation, get your eyes off the bait and look ahead to see the consequences of sin: the judgment of God (Wiersbe).

Notice in verses 14 and 15 the usage of terms regarding birth: lust, conceived, brings forth [beareth], death.

15. Then when desire has (lust has) conceived, it gives birth to sin.

The conception of sin is at different points — if mental, it is at the point of thinking about it and committing the sin mentally.

Lust dwelt upon, or entertained in the heart, brings forth sin; for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

At the point where one has the desire, there is no sin.

At the point where one is drawn away, there is no sin.

It is when the desire for self-gratification is yielded to that the deadly offspring of sin is brought forth.

Compare: Rom 8:6ff; Eph 2:1ff; 1 Jn 5:16.

When it is full grown (finished). Ἀποτελεσθεῖσα from τέλειος, a participle, "having been fully formed."

It is completed and has reached its maturity.

Brings forth death. This is speaking of spiritual death, not physical death. Cf: 5:20; Gen 3; Rom 6:23.

Sin brings forth death unless it is repented of.

1 Jn 5:16 states that if one sins without repenting until he dies physically, it is a sin unto death.

16. Do not be deceived (do not err) my beloved brethren.

This is a transition and can refer:

To the previous section and mean, "Do not be deceived about the source of temptation, it is not from God or

To the next verse and refer to the fact that God is a giver of good only and does not vacillate.

G. THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD'S GIVING. 1:17,18

17. Every good gift. The act of giving.

Every perfect gift. The gift itself.

Is from above. This tells us two things:

- a. God does not ever give bad gifts.
- b. Every good gift we have ever received has its source in God.

Comes down from the Father of lights. God is always connected with lights.
"God is light and in him is no darkness at all" - 1 Jn 1:5.

With whom there is no variation (variableness) shadow of [neither shadow that is cast by] turning.

The comparison is like one going to sleep in the shade of a tree but when he wakes up, he is in the sun.

This also has to do with the apparent variation that the heavenly bodies have:

Length of day or night.

Variation of the course of the sun with the seasons.

Different brilliancies of the stars or planets.

Variableness is characteristic of all created things.

BUT God is the Creator of all things (Including sun, moon, stars, etc.) and there is no variableness in Him!

Because God has no variableness He constantly gives us good, whether or not we deserve it - Mt 5:45.

His gifts bestowed on us are, like Himself, free from anything that is dark, base or uncertain (Toole).

Satan never gives any gift, because you end up paying for them dearly (Weirsbe).

God, being so good, would not and could not be the father of temptations.

Just as sin begets death (v.15), God our Father begets us as his children.

18. Of his own (free) will. God is NOT obligated to offer us salvation!

He could have just let man sin and then said, "Too bad!"

It is our fault that everyone on this earth has not heard the gospel!

Brought us forth (begat us). This is the same phrase as v. 15 — a birth.

This is the aorist tense, indicating a point in time; it refers to the point of salvation which is in baptism. We have been brought forth out of spiritual death.

1 Pet 1:23 - born again through the word.

1 Cor 4:15 - begotten through the gospel.

Many passages speak of the rebirth of souls dead in trespasses and sin - 1 Pet 1:3; Titus 3:5; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:19; 4:7; 5:1; Jn 3:5.

By (with) the word of truth. Not just by words BUT by the word of truth.

No explanation of the new birth is scripturally sound that makes it independent of the preached (read, spoken) word and obedience to the ordinances of that word.

The idea that there is a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, acting in some mysterious way apart from the "word of truth," is not a Bible teaching.

A confidence that one is saved, gained from some subjective feeling apart from obedience to God's word, is not the assurance that the N.T. gives regarding forgiveness of sins - 1 Jn 2:3.

That we might (should) be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

The first-fruit of the Old Testament was the first portion of the produce which belonged to God and was offered to Him before the rest could be put to ordinary use - cf: Deut 18:4.

Firstfruits:

It is NOT used here in the same sense as:

1 Cor 16:15 - "You know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia."

1 Cor 15:20 - "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

It is used here in the same sense as:

Rev 14:4 - "These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."

Jer 2:3 - "Israel was holiness to the Lord, and the firstfruits of His increase."

Not the first called, but the first set aside as God's increase.

While Christ is the true fulfillment of the firstfruits, James says that we too are a "kind of" firstfruits. In other words, God is seeking to perfect Christian character in us now in order that we may be specimens of what He, through the gospel of Christ, is able to make of ordinary human beings.

We are also designed to be the special possession of God and the pledge and earnest of a redeemed race.

II. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD. 1:19-27

Theme: This section connects with the preceding one by the occurrence of the "word of truth." That "word" has been described as the means of God's bringing us forth to be His children. If the word can do so much, then it ought to be accorded the proper attention and response. It must be received with meekness; it must be acted upon; it must be put into active use in a life of benevolence, morality and self-control.

A. MEEKNESS IN HEARING THE WORD. 1:19-21

19,20. Therefore (wherefore) [ye know this]. Second person imperative in the Greek, “Know ye this,” or “Ye know this.”

This emphasizes that Christians are begotten by the word.

Many times we are really strong on baptism but weak on other parts of God’s commands.

It is possible for one to hear the word in becoming a Christian and then let himself become offended at the teaching in it if he disagrees with it.

Swift to hear. The context shows this does not mean that we are to listen better.

The subject of verses 18 and 22 is the word of God and James did not change his subject in between.

We ought to be eager to hear God’s word; we must come to worship with a readiness of mind - Acts 17:10,11.

The Bible, as a whole, encourages listening - Acts 10:33; Prov 28:9; 3 Jn 9,10.

Are we hungry for the word?

This is one of the 54 commands of James in this letter.

Slow to speak. The idea is “slow to speak back” at God’s word.

A. T. Robertson gives the meaning as “slow to begin speaking.”

Do not just start speaking — even after you have heard enough to know what you are speaking about - 3:1.

One who is quick to speak rather than to hear is a very poor learner of anything, especially God’s word.

In Antioch (Acts 13:45) the Jews *became jealous* and *contradicted the word* spoken by Paul and in Gal 4:16 others became angry at his teaching.

Slow to wrath. Why slow? For “the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.”

Slow to become angry at the teaching of the word. King Jehoiakim, in the Old Testament, became so angry at the reading of God's will to him that he cut the Scripture off of the scroll which the scribe was reading and burned it - Jer 36.

James is not talking about people who do not believe, he is talking to Christians. For example: those who become angry about the teaching of the word on divorce and remarriage. These are Christians who do not like what God's word says about it, therefore they will not teach it correctly.

We must tell our brothers who are teaching wrong of their error, even if persecution results!

20. Wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God: cf: Acts 10: 35; Gal 5:6.

Christians who speak in a wrathful, argumentative, abusive spirit are offenders of the gospel, not defenders of it.

21. Lay aside (apart) [putting away] all filthiness. Moral uncleanness, vulgarity.

Do not allow ourselves to continue in or make provision to fulfill the lust of the flesh - Rom 13:14.

Sermon Seed: The Devil Will Provide.

If you want to do something evil, the opportunity will be provided.

Example: when Jonah was preparing to flee from the presence of the Lord, a ship was available.

Lay aside (apart) [putting away]. Ἀποθέμενοι, stripping away, as a dirty garment.

Filthiness. ῥυπαρίαν, a medical term meaning "wax in the ear."

If you had wax in your ear you could not hear and could not receive instruction on how to get rid of your problem (filthiness).

Overflow of wickedness (superfluity of naughtiness). This overflow means surplus and implies evil is not a normal part of character, but an excess. Cf: Rom 6:12-14.

Receive with meekness. This is a key phrase.

Those who think that all that is needed to please God is to hear the word suffer from the worst kind of self delusion (Toole).

Meekness. Πραύτης. This is not the word for “humility.” It is used of a wild horse brought under control when under rein.

The meaning is not readily expressed in English, for the terms “meekness” and “mildness,” as commonly used, suggest weakness to a greater or lesser extent, whereas πραύτης does nothing of the kind.

It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power.

The common assumption is when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself. BUT the Lord was meek because He had the infinite resources of God at His command.

We are to accept and show approval of the word in a yielding and receptive attitude, as opposed to receiving it in wrath.

This is being subject to the will of another.

“God’s word says it; I believe it; that settles it!”

Better: “God’s word says it; that settles it!”

I (you) do not have to agree with God’s word; it is already settled because it is God’s word! (Psa 119:89)

The teachable person receives the instruction without resentment and without anger and is, therefore, able to face the Truth, even when it hurts and condemns.

The Implanted (engrafted) word. The idea is of the truth becoming infused and engrafted in our hearts and minds or of the word whose essence, or tendency, is to root itself in our hearts - Mt 13:21.

This means that one is not born with it, it is not inborn!

This was used of a graft in a tree.

In Mt 13:21 the sower had to sow the seed; it was not there originally.

Why must we receive it with meekness? Because it is able to save our souls!

Do we implant enough seed in our hearts?

A farmer who puts a half-ounce of seed on an acre does not reap much of a crop compared to one who implants much more seed.

It is the same with one who comes to the services three times a week but does not get much out of it and does nothing with it. He is bound to be weak spiritually. Not enough seed is being *implanted*!

Which is able to save your souls. Any conversion apart from the word of God is unscriptural and unacceptable to God.

God's word is not a dead or inactive thing but is the source of salvation - Heb 4:12.

If the word of God is going to judge us we had better know what it says - Jn 12:48-50.

Compare: Rom 1:16; Jn 5:24; Lk 1:27; 2 Tim 2:9.

B. BEING DOERS OF THE WORD NOT HEARERS ONLY..... 1:22-25

22. Be (ye) doers. Γίνεσθε, coming into a state or condition.

These readers were not doers but hearers only. He is writing to Christians so this applies to all.

Jesus abhorred the hypocrisy of those who "say and do not." What about those who hear and do not?

Hearers only. Those who hear, read or study the "perfect law of liberty" but do nothing about it.

Deceiving yourselves (your own selves). This is the second time James returns to the idea of one deceiving himself.

We deceive ourselves into thinking we are in good standing before God when we frequently hear the word even if we do not do anything about it.

Illustration: A congregation who constantly brags on how good its preacher is and how good his sermons are but does nothing in response to those sermons. In this neglect to obey the word of God, their religion is vain.

Sunday school classes have the same problem; many people attend Bible class just to see if they agree with the instructor.

The difficulties are always multiplied when one deceives himself.

23,24. If any ...he is like...observing his natural face (beholding his face).

Illustration: You get up in the morning and look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I surely need to get cleaned up." But something comes up and you are called away. Immediately you forget about what you saw wrong with yourself in the mirror. All day long people can see what you forgot! God's word is a mirror and you can see what is wrong in you but you go away and do nothing about it. That is wrong!

God sees you the way you were and are, whether it bothers you or not.

25. But he who looks (whoso looks) into the perfect law. A blessing is pronounced on this one.

The "perfect law" is God's word, the law of Christ.

The Law of Moses is never called a "law of liberty." Cf: Gal 5:1.

This is the same as "that which is perfect" in 1 Cor 13:10.

This is so because "that which is perfect" has to be the completion of "that which is in part," which was prophesying (inspired teaching).

Those who examine thoroughly or minutely God's word will see what is wrong with their lives.

The idea of law in relation to the new covenant can be seen in this manner: the law of Christ brings liberty and consists not so much in restraints, as in guiding and guarding the new life in Christ. Nevertheless its precepts still require obedience - Rom 8:2.

The term "law of liberty" is actually a paradox, for law in its very nature is restraint or limitation rather than freedom.

One can understand the gospel of Christ only when he understands this paradox, because failure to understand it leads either to legalism or to unrestrained excess.

There can be true liberty only where there is law. Law is a restraint; where there is no restraint the most hopeless and abject slavery exists.

James himself shows the "law of liberty" does not mean the Christian is free from regulation:

- a. If one shows partiality and is without pity for the poor, he sins (2:9) and will be judged without mercy (2:13).
- b. If one errs as a teacher, he will receive the heavier judgment (3:1).
- c. If one is worldly, he becomes God's enemy (4:4) and is a sinner (4:8).
- d. If one swears, he falls under judgment (5:13).

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SIX OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE "LAW OF LIBERTY:"

- 1. A person is free (at liberty) to come under subjection to Christ's rule. He is not forced, he volunteers - 1 Cor 9:21; 2 Cor 3:17; Jer 31:31-34 cf: Heb 8:10-13; 10:16,17.
- 2. A person, by exercising his liberty, elects to be born again of water and the spirit - Jn 3:3-5; and thereby, brings himself knowingly into subjection to Christ's rule of action. He is under it because he wants to be!
- 3. The law of liberty is to be preferred to the law of sin and death - Rom 5-7.
- 4. As a volunteer, who counts the cost (Mt 16:24), he receives with meekness the Lord's rule of action. He is happy to be subject to it.
- 5. No one is "drafted" into the Lord's army. All volunteer, therefore, we must act like volunteers. Many Christians do not desire to live in accordance with their choice (Christ's rule of action in their lives). Why not?
- 6. The law of liberty must not be abused - Gal 5:1,13; 1 Cor 8:9; 10:23-32; 1 Pet 2:16.

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SEVEN REASONS WHY THE GOSPEL IS PERFECT:

- 1. It was given by the Holy Spirit - Jn 14 and 16.
- 2. It will judge us in the last day - Jn 12:48; Rom 2:26.
- 3. It contains all things necessary for life and godliness - 2 Pet 1:3.
- 4. It cannot be improved upon - Psa 19:7; Gal 1:6-9.

5. It cannot be added to - Jude 3; Rev 21:18,19.
6. It is complete for its given purpose, bringing salvation - Rom 1:14-16.
7. It shall never pass away - Mt 5:18.



Guy N. Woods in his commentary on James says, "To insist that there is no law in the new covenant is to urge that there is no rule by which we are to walk today. In complete contrast with such a view, there is a 'law of Christ' (Gal 6:2; 2 Cor 9:21); a 'law of the Spirit of life' (Rom 8:20); a 'law of liberty' (James 1:25; 2:-12); the 'law of love' (Rom 13:10); and, to insist that there is no law in the New Testament is (a) in conflict with these plain affirmations of inspiration; (b) implies that we are without an enforceable standard of conduct; and (c) disregards the significance of the word law."

Continues in it (continues therein) [abides by it]. Παραμείνας, to continue in a state of being or quality.

The good hearer:

- a. Looks deeply and with much thought into the scriptures.
- b. Remains with them, not allowing the world to distract him from the "perfect law."

The perfecting of character, and thus our salvation, depends upon both continual contemplation of the word and translating it into fruit in our lives.

Eph 2:10 tells us what our purpose as Christians is here on earth (good works).

We must not only continually look into God's word but also do what it requires, not for a means of forgiveness but because it is a result of our becoming a new man in Christ.

A story – A primitive savage looked into a mirror for the first time and was so shocked he broke it – many Christians do the same thing in that they criticize the preacher or the lesson when they should be judging themselves (Wiersbe).

A Christian not doing, is not continuing in God's word, nor His favor.

Will be blessed in what he does (shall be blessed in his deed). The doer is the one who is blessed, not the one who just hears.

Compare the words of Jesus in Jn 13:17; Mt 7:24ff.

C. THE APPLICATION: PURE & VAIN RELIGION..... 1:26,27

Summary: James now selects three things which illustrate how a man may be a hearer of the word and how he may, in fact, be very faithful in attending the services of the church and still be a forgetful hearer whose religion is vain. The three areas of control are:

- a. The tongue,
 - b. Benevolence and
 - c. Purity of life.
26. If anyone among you thinks he is (seems to be) religious. This refers to a man who deceives himself and fancies or supposes himself to be religious.

Religious carries the idea of external “rights” or “service.”

Many people “go to services” but the scriptural idea from this verse is that they may do so in vain.

- a. This was also taught in the Old Testament as well.
- b. A church or member of the church can have a name that it/he lives but be dead - Rev 3:1 or
- c. Think himself rich (spiritually) when he is poor - Rev 3:17.

Does not bridle (bridleth not) his tongue. This does not speak of taming the tongue because it cannot be tamed - 3:8. BUT it can be controlled.

This also includes what you are thinking!

This refers back to verse 19.

FOUR AREAS OF BRIDLING:

- 1. The man who has a tongue which produces vile language shows a lack of respect for what God’s word commands regarding language - Ch 3.
- 2. This may be a reference to the Christian teacher who he comes back to in chapter 3.

3. A person who speaks against God's word when it does not suit his own life or thinking - 1:19,20.
4. One who speaks against his brother - 4:11,12.

But deceives his own heart. When you deceive your heart (your intellectual self) you also deceive your emotional self.

The deception of the emotional self (such as a Pentecostal) is even more difficult to overcome.

This one's religion is useless (vain). If someone thinks he is religious but does not perform his religion in practical areas, such as control of the tongue, his religion is useless even though, in all good conscience, he has deluded himself into believing he is acceptable to God.

The devil would have us all to be deluded with a false sense of security or indifference.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" 1 Cor 10:12.

We are not ignorant of the Devil's devices (2 Cor 2:11), and one of his devices is to get you to believe you are religious but also feel you do not have to bridle your tongue.

"How delicate and fine then is St. James's choice of *θρησκός* and *θρησκεία* (i. 26,27). 'If any man,' he would say, 'seem to himself to be *θρησκός*, a diligent observer of the offices of religion, if any man would render a pure and undefiled *θρησκεία* to God, let him know that this consists not in outward lustrations or ceremonial observances; nay, that there is a better *θρησκεία* than thousands of rams and rivers of oil, namely, to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with his God' (Mic. vi 7,8); or, according to his own words, 'to visit the widows and orphans in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world' (cf. Matt. xxiii. 23). St. James is not herein affirming, as we sometimes hear, these offices to be the sum total, nor yet the great essentials, of true religion, but declares them to be the body, the *θρησκεία*, of which godliness, or the love of God, is the informing soul. His intention is somewhat obscured to the English reader from the fact that 'religious' and 'religion,' by which we have rendered *θρησκός* and *θρησκεία* possessed a meaning once which they now possess no longer, and in that meaning are here employed. The Apostle claims for the new dispensation a superiority over the old, in that its very *θρησκεία*

consists in acts of mercy, of love, of holiness, in that it has *light for its garment*, its very *robe* being righteousness; herein how much nobler than the old, whose θρησκεία was at best merely ceremonial and formal, whatever inner truth it might embody” - Trench, *Synonyms Of The New Testament*.

27. Pure and undefiled religion. As opposed to vain religion.

Pure. Καθαρὰ. This would have been used of cloth that was free from any stain.



POSITIVE & NEGATIVE



Undefiled. Ἀμίαντος, almost the exact same meaning as “pure.”

Before God and the Father. Many have a pure religion according to the latest church council, a creed book or some tradition. But this religion must be done according to the standard of what is acceptable, and what is not acceptable, as determined by God and not man. Cf: 1 Tim 2:1-4.

“For not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends” - 2 Cor 10:18.

Will-worship is condemned - Col 2:23.

Additional warnings about vain worship: Rom 2:13; Job 9:2; 1 Cor 3:19; Gal 3:11; 2 Thess 1:6; 1 Pet 2:4; 2 Pet 3:8; 2 Cor 10:18.

To visit orphans (the fatherless) and widows in their trouble (affliction). James does not intend to describe here the whole of religion but later in the book gives additional things which are a part of, or a defect in, our service to God.

Visit. Ἐπισκέπτεσθαι. This does not mean you are a good Christian if you spend twenty minutes at an orphan’s home and twenty minutes at a widow’s home. It means to discover a need and supply it! Cf: Jer 23: 2; Zech 11:16; Mt 25:36,43.

Helping widows and orphans was a characteristic of the Old Testament saints: Deut 27:19; Psa 94:6; 146:9; Jer 7:6; Mal 3:5; Psa 68:5; Gen 21:1 Ex 3:16; 4:31.

Care for the widows was practiced by the early church - Acts 6:1.

“Visiting” is linear (continuing) action and does not mean a social call but actually helping them as their needs become evident as indicated by “in their affliction.”

The Lord’s church has been split over this command which is the least practiced in Christianity.

“Fatherless” does not necessarily mean that both parents are dead.

There is no reference as to whether these widows and orphans are Christians or non-Christians. Cf: Gal 6:10.



ORPHANS’ HOME ISSUE

There are three distinctive realms:

1. State,
2. Home and
3. Church.

The home is not a substitute for the civil government and the church is not a substitute for the home, etc. The design of the home is to supply food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, supervision, etc.

When a court takes a child from delinquent parents, it is obvious that the state is not going into the home business. However, the court sees to it that the child has a home, and the home supplies the needs of the child. The court may even obligate the State to contribute to the financial support of the child, but it still has not destroyed or even replaced the home.

There are many people on welfare, but the fact that they are receiving funds from the government does not mean that the state has displaced the home.

When a child’s home is destroyed, whether by death or abandonment, may a group of Christians place that child in a foster home and contribute to his support?

When we establish a home for children who are bereft of their parents, we are establishing a HOME and are not displacing the church.

The missionary society is wrong because it displaces the church. It is an unauthorized institution doing the work of the church. But the Orphan’s Home reestablishes the

home which the child lost. It has not displaced the church and is not doing the work of the church. It is doing the work of the home.

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Keep himself unspotted from the world. To guard one's self from the world of evil and corruption so that he is not defiled by it, especially if his worship is to be acceptable - 4:4.

Micah 6:6-8 elaborates on this. They were trying to appease God and still live the way they wanted to live.

We are not to love the world. Cf: 1 Jn 2:15,16.

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10).

III. THE SIN OF RESPECT OF PERSONS. 2:1-13

Theme: This chapter begins with a warning against the sin of partiality or respect of persons. It is related to the previous discussion by furnishing a further example of inconsistency on the part of those whose practice of pure and undefiled religion was defective.

It must have been a sin of the early church which James had come to know about. Just as those who were hearers and not doers lacked self-control of their tongues and did not exhibit the love that led to visiting the fatherless and the widows, so they also showed they did not possess the right attitude toward the poor.

The thought of 1:26,27 that religion must reflect the great importance of conduct is now enlarged in a special illustration of something in which many of his readers were guilty.

A. MUST NOT BE RESPECTER OF PERSONS..... 2:1

1. My brethren. This is used by James 15 times as a form of address -1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12,19.

It was frequently used in reference to a breach in brotherly love or behavior.

Do not hold (have not) the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This means: Do not believe in a doctrine.

The faith. Refers to the gospel. Cf: Jude 3; Acts 6:7; Gal 1:23; 3:23,25,26.

To have the gospel AND respect of persons is an inconsistency.

The Lord of glory. Δόξης. Glory = the word for glory in the O.T. is SHEKINAH and is used for the visible presence of God - Ex 24:17; 40:34; Num 14:10.

Jesus, being the glory (presence) of God, receives this designation - Jn 14:9.

All designations between the rich and the poor are less than nothing in the blaze of glory which shines in Jesus. In Jesus' glory the fine clothes of the rich man and the shabby clothes of the poor man would show no difference.

If God made a distinction between our clothes and His "clothes," where would we stand?

The word used to describe the rich man's clothes is the same word used for the clothes Herod put on Jesus in mockery - Lk 23:11.

With partiality (with respect of persons). Ἐν προσωπολημψίαις, "in receiving the faces."

It is impossible to keep from recognizing differences in people and it is not wrong to notice those differences, the wrong is to respect that difference. Cf: Gal 2:6.

Partiality was never right in this manner - Deut 1:17.

Not only should you not give partiality to the rich BUT you must not give partiality to the poor either - Lev 19:15.

God's attitude is shown by Jesus in Mk 12:14. He did not show partiality to any group.

This does not mean you cannot have "best friends." If so, why did Jesus always take Peter, James and John?

Cf: Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; Acts 10:34; 1 Pet 1:17; Gal 2:6.

Paul charges preachers to do what he said without partiality - 1 Tim 5:21.

We have been commanded to judge, but Jn 7:24 clarifies *how* and *what* to judge.

The most well known verse by sinners and those who want to sin (and not be corrected) is Mt 7:1.

We tend to judge motives - How can we, mere human beings, do this?

B. PRACTICED BY SOME. 2:2-4

2. For if there should come (came) into your assembly [synagogue]. The fact this occurs in the very meeting place illustrates that:

- a. No place is safe from temptation.
- b. It was a practice condoned by Christians - a very dangerous and prevalent occurrence.

Two possibilities as to what assembly [synagogue] means here:

- a. The church meeting in the Jewish synagogues indicates a very early date for the writing of this epistle. Cf: Acts 26:11; 22:19.
- b. The Jewish Christians continued to call their assemblies after their Jewish name.

This verse is not stating anything about whether any given place is right or wrong as a meeting place.

Many Christians decide what is right or wrong by what other Christians do or say rather than by Biblical means (i.e.: Divorce and remarriage, etc.).

A man with gold rings (a gold ring), in fine apparel...a poor man in filthy clothes [vile raiment].

It is implied that both of these are strangers to the assembly since they have both been judged by their appearances.

When someone had rings on every finger, at that time, he was thought to be rich. Some people would even rent rings in order to appear rich.

Poor. Πτωχὸς, used in Mt 19:21 as “beggar.”

Filthy (vile). ῥυπαρὸν means filthy, dirty, old and shabby, not just out of style.

At this time there was a special problem that could arise — the poor man could be a slave AND the rich man his owner. Also the poor man could be one of the leaders of the congregation.

The gap between the slave (who was nothing more than a “living tool”) and his master was so great it could cause problems in the feeling of either the rich or the poor.

3. And you pay attention to...You sit here...To the poor...At my footstool. (And ye have respect to...Sit thou there...To the poor... Under my footstool).

Illustration: An usher greeting the rich man and giving him a special seat, but the same usher hardly reacts to the entrance of the poor man and finally tells him he may sit on the floor next to his seat.

Cf: Lk 11:43; 20:46; Mk 12:39.

4. Have you not shown partiality among yourselves? (Are ye not then partial [divided] in yourselves [in your own mind])?

The problem was that the congregation was saying they loved everyone but they did not show it.

The idea is: In making distinctions between the rich and the poor, they expressed a doubt concerning the faith which they professed. For the faith they had professed abolished such distinctions.

They professed one thing (Equality) BUT practiced another (Distinctions).

Judges with (of) evil thoughts. Better: "Evil thinking judges."

Judging from outward appearances is condemned as evil. (1 Sam 16:7)

Jesus also emphasized this idea strongly in Mt 7:1.

God is the only qualified judge — even when we see evidence of evil deeds, human judgments are not always correct because we cannot know the heart.

Their judgment was based on the principle that the costliness of a man's clothing showed he was a desirable associate.

Also, we are prone to judge people by their past, not their future (Wiersbe).

C. RICHES OF POVERTY & POVERTY OF RICHES..... 2:5-7

5. Has not God chosen the poor of this (as to the) world?

This does not make the poor as a class destined to become rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, nor does it exclude the rich.

The poverty and the choosing usually go together and God knew that in the world those who would fulfill His purposes would largely fall among this group - 1 Cor 1:26.

The rich may also qualify as James has indicated in 1:10.

Both the rich and the poor shall come to judgment - 2 Pet 3:9.

There is nothing wrong with making money - Lk 12:21.

The danger is — love of money - 1 Tim 6:10. Cf: Mt 9:23; 11:15; Lk 4:18; 6:20.

Their favoritism was both inconsistent with God's attitude toward the poor and with the rich themselves toward God's people.

The point is this: Of the two, the poor are much more likely to become Christians; yet the Christians themselves were looking upon worldly appearances and they favored the rich man (Possibly looking for favors?) and were mistreating the same type of people as they themselves were.

Heirs of the kingdom.

Loving God and being heirs means keeping His commandments - Jn 14:15,23, 24, etc.

If you love God, stop showing partiality!

From this point on James turns to the way the rich generally treat Christians.

6. Do not the rich oppress you...Drag you into courts (before the judgment seats)?

Even if they do, we are still to love our enemies, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" - Rom 12;14.

Oppress. Καταδυναστεύουσιν includes the idea of complete exploitation or domination.

And drag (draw) you. Καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν, "and they themselves." It is emphatic, indicating you are showing sinful favoritism toward the very ones who made it difficult for you to become a Christian.

It is possible that James refers to the Sadducees who were rich and controlled the Sanhedrin.

7. Do they not blaspheme? Lit: "To speak evil of." It does not have to include cursing, swearing, etc.

That noble (worthy) [honorable] name. This is what they were blaspheming.

The name meant is “Jesus.” The Jews would not ordinarily blaspheme the name “Christ” (Messiah) which was a sacred title to them, unless they ridiculed the idea of Jesus’ being the Christ - 1 Cor 12:3.

By which you are called. Τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, “the one called, on you.”

The idea is of a woman who marries and her name is changed to her husband’s — his name was given to her.

Cf: Acts 15:17 (quote of Amos 9:12).

The only new name is “Christian” - Isa 62:2; Cf Acts 11:26.

D. THE ROYAL LAW..... 2:8-11

8. If you really fulfilled the royal law. An intensive form — “really fulfilled.”

This seems to be summed up in loving one’s neighbor - Lev 19:18.

Why is this called the “Royal Law?”

- a. Because of its transcending importance among the laws of the Old Testament.
- b. Because it is from the King.
- c. Because it is the law which rules as sovereign over all laws, the Law of Love.

This law is in both Testaments.

You do well. James has no objection to fulfilling the law of love and says that one is doing a good thing when he does.

9. But if you show partiality (but if ye have respect to persons).

This is a first class conditional sentence showing that the condition has been fulfilled — “since” you show partiality.

You commit sin. Ἐργάζεσθε. “You work sin.”

The Royal Law they claimed justified their actions is actually their condemner. The law of love demands equal treatment of the rich and the poor.

If the Old Testament is appealed to, the same chapter that speaks of love speaks of equality - Lev 19:15-18.

Therefore, nothing but sin can be made of their actions against the poor.

As transgressors. Ὡς παραβάται, “to go beyond”, therefore one who goes beyond the line of sin.

10. For whoever shall keep the whole law.

The basic idea here is that keeping of the whole law is useless as a matter of justification unless it is perfectly kept.

Stumble (offend) in one point, he is guilty of all.

This means if one sins he becomes guilty of violating the law as a whole, i.e.: becomes a lawbreaker.

The Jews many times regarded the Law as a series of detached laws.

To keep one of them was to gain credit and

To break one of them was to incur debt.

So, by adding up the credits and subtracting the debts they could feel that they had earned salvation.

Even though we as Christians have done many good things and have resisted many temptations, there may still be some sin in our lives by which everything is spoiled and we are lost!

Paul states the same thing in Gal 3:19, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

Law, once broken, can never declare one innocent. James is saying those who appeal to the law to justify their partiality are condemned as transgressors because they are guilty of breaking another precept of the law in the same action.

James is not saying the Law of Moses was binding on the Christians, he is answering those who appeal to the law of love to justify their sin. This is clear from verse 12.

ONLY Christ's blood justifies our sins!

11. For he who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder (kill).

James may have chosen these commands because they offend most against the law of love; but, in any case they are typical.

One cannot pick out the part of the law that pleases him to keep and let the others go.

Therefore, by their appeal to the law for judgment, and not keeping the whole law, those showing partiality condemned themselves as sinners.

Breaking one commandment puts the offender in the class of transgressors. It also shows that he is indifferent to law, and so the will of God expressed in all the commandments, and it is but accident or fear or the absence of temptation that prevents him from breaking the other commandments (Erdman).

E. THE LAW OF LIBERTY AND OF MERCY..... 2:12,13

12. So speak and so do.

This means to do what you say. If you say you love your brother, love your poor brother also.

We are to live consistently with our speech in view of the way we are judged. Cf: "double minded" in 1:8.

As those who will be judged by the law of liberty. We will not be judged by the Old Testament.

The law of liberty judges us.

But be sure, there is going to be a judgment day!

You do not help a widow in order to receive forgiveness of sins.

Remembering the free yoke which we have assumed and out of gratitude to Christ, we must act toward the poor in the way the law of love tells us we should.

This work is freely assumed and is no longer a burden of law keeping.

We need to also realize we will be judged and our actions (especially the mercy we extend) will be taken into account.

13. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.

To a certain degree our judgment will be determined by the mercy we extend - 2 Sam 22:25-27.

What if someone is treating you wrongly? Do you have mercy?

Compare: Mt 18:23-35.

Judgment demands reaping what we have sown:

- a. No mercy was shown to the man with the vile clothing.
- b. That demands no mercy be shown to that soul.
- c. And that soul has no righteousness of its own.

Mercy triumphs (rejoiceth) [glorieth] over judgment.

If the materially poor man is rejected, then the spiritually poor Christian is rejected.

Other areas of this problem include:

- a. Social standing,
- b. Occupation,
- c. Nationality and
- d. Color (ethnic).

This phrase means that mercy boasts itself to superior judgment:

- a. Mercy relieves the Christian of the fear of judgment.
- b. Those who have shown mercy under the law of liberty may face judgment with confidence!

The Christian who has loved the poor and has shown mercy toward them (all other things being equal):

- a. Will be justified in the final judgment and
- b. Will receive the blessings of Christ.

Just as "love casts out fear" - 1 Jn 4:18, so does mercy.

However, we must not twist this truth into a lie. It does not mean that we earn mercy by showing mercy because it is impossible to earn mercy. If it is earned it is not mercy! Nor does it mean that we should “be soft on sin” and never judge it in the lives of others. A man says, “I don’t condemn anybody so God won’t condemn me,” how wrong he is (Wiersbe).

Compare: Mt 5:7; 6:14,15; 7:1,2; 18:23-35; 25:23,31-46; Lk 6:36-38; 2 Tim 1:18; 1 Jn 3:17; Jude 21.

Note: Anyone who is not a New Testament Christian, even though he shows mercy:

- a. Has no hope of mercy triumphing over judgment.
- b. Why? Because he has no access to the mercy of God - Eph 1:3; 2 Thess 1:6-12.

James has just dealt with the sin of partiality in the church.

He has shown that it is a sin clearly inconsistent with the Christian’s profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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SPECIAL STUDY FAITH AND WORKS

I. CAN WE BE SAVED BY OUR OWN WORKS?

- A. Eph 2:8,9 - “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast.”
- B. 2 Tim 1:8,9 - “Saved...not according to our works but according to His own purpose.”
- C. Rom 11:6 - “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace, otherwise work is no longer work.”

II. In Rom 4:1-25, Paul is correcting a false belief that man could be saved by his own “perfect works.” If a man could do a “perfect work” (one’s life being that work — completely void of sin), then there would be no need for God’s grace.

Paul argues that God would then be indebted to that person due to their perfect life (4:4). Abraham’s righteousness was “by faith,” not his own “perfect work” or

God would have owed Abraham a debt and no grace would have been necessary.

But we see that grace AND faith were needed to justify him.

III. We have seen that we are justified by faith as a result of God's grace (unmerited favor).

BUT, is it necessary to "obey God in order to receive this grace?"

- A. 1 Sam 15:22 - "Then Samuel said: Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."
- B. Eccl 12:13 - "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."
- C. Jn 14:15 - "If you love Me, keep my commandments."
- D. Rom 6:17,18 - "But God be thanked that though you were the servants of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, ye became slaves of righteousness."

It is, therefore, necessary to obey God in order to receive His grace, and to become servants of righteousness!

IV. WHY ARE WE GOD'S SERVANTS; WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

- A. Eph 2:10 - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, [What kind of works; our own?...No] which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
- B. Notice that these are not our own works, but the works that God Himself prepared for us to do.
- C. Compare: Eph 2:8,9; 2 Tim 1:8,9; Rom 11:6; 4:4,5.

V. WHAT ARE THESE WORKS WHICH THESE VERSES REFER TO?

- A. 1 Thess 1:3 - "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love..."
- B. Heb 6:10 - "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love."

1. God desires all to do the same thing - v. 11.
 2. Be not slothful - v. 12.
- C. Gal 5:6 - "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."
 - D. Rom 16:26 - "But now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith."

We can see by these passages that faith is supposed to do something.

VI. CAN WE RECEIVE THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN?

- A. 2 Cor 6:1 - "We then as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."
- B. In 1 Cor 15:10 Paul said he had not received the grace of God in vain — "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."
- C. It should be noted here that the grace of God caused Paul to labor (work), and if he would not have worked, the grace would have been in vain!
- D. Through faith, we are justified by works:
 1. Done in obedience to God's commandments,
 2. Which are a result of His grace.

VII. OTHER EXAMPLES OF FAITH WHICH LED TO WORKS WHICH LED TO PERFECT FAITH.

- A. Noah was led by faith to build an ark - Heb 11:7.
 1. He and his family would not have been saved by faith alone.
 2. Without works they, as well as their faith, would have been dead.
- B. The bronze serpent - Num 21:4-9.
 1. Israel's belief in what God said led them to obey and to look upon the serpent.

2. They could have believed all day long, but without obeying and looking upon the serpent, they were without hope.
- C. The wall of Jericho - Josh 6:1-21.
1. God's promise was not put into action until some works were done.
 2. The people had to walk around the city for seven days until God would work His works.
 3. Until that last command was obeyed, God would not cause the walls to fall.
- D. Naaman the leper - 2 Kgs 5:1-19.
1. A work of faith led Naaman to obey the prophet by doing something.
 2. He evidently believed he would be healed or he would not have sought the prophet in the first place — but that was not enough!
 3. He scoffed at a simple command to go and dip in the Jordan river BUT, until that command was obeyed the man continued to be a leper!
 4. It is amazing how people today scoff at a simple command like baptism in the same way.
 5. Work as a result of God's commands through faith. Nothing more and nothing less is acceptable to God.

CONCLUSION: WE ARE NOT SAVED BY WORKS (OUR OWN), BUT WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH THAT LEADS TO WORKS WHICH ARE A RESULT OF GOD'S WILL.

- A. Faith in itself is dead.
1. We must do the will of God, not just be hearers only - Mt 7: 21-23; 25:35-40.
 2. God has shown time and time again that He will not carry out a promise until conditions are met.
 3. That condition is obedience to His word which, when obeyed, are works which He has prepared for us to walk in.

- B. Let us not accept the grace of God in vain by NOT doing the works which He commanded.
 - 1. In Rev 2:10, John writes, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."
 - 2. This was not a dead faith but was one of action and works, and became their work of faith and labor of love.

THROUGH FAITH WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY WORKS DONE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, THROUGH WHICH HIS GRACE IS GIVEN!

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IV. THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND WORKS. 2:14-26

Theme: We should not lose sight of the relationship of this section to the earlier parts of this letter. James has insisted that true religion must show itself in proper response.

It is not merely the *hearer* who is saved by the word, but the *doer*.

Religious works or acts of service which DO NOT find accomplishment in the works of love and moral living are vain - 1:22-25.

Faith toward Christ must not be held with respect of persons or the Christian becomes a sinner - 2:1-8.

James now shows that faith, as the foundation attitude of the gospel, must find expression in works of obedience if it is to be a saving or justifying faith.

If it does not it is a dead faith, and the man who thinks such faith will save him is vain.

There must be more than faith; works must help faith for it to achieve its purpose of justification.

But, one will not understand James 2:14-26 unless it is remembered that with James, no less than with Paul, faith is the necessary foundation or ground of salvation.

There are those in the church who believe they will be saved by works. This false doctrine is an overreaction to the "faith only" false doctrine.

A. PROFESSION AND PRACTICE. 2:14-17

- 14. What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith?

Note again the use of the term “my brethren.”

The problem here is not a lack of faith. The emphasis is not on just the fact that he “says” he has faith.

This means, “What good is it to the man?” Cf: Jesus, “What is a man profited?” - Mt 16:26.

It is essential to James’ argument that one may be *assumed* to be a believer without being a worker.

A faith which is not active may be unworthy of the name and of no value, but that does not mean that it is insincere.

But does not have works.

By “works” James means any obedience to the law of Christ as a Christian, but generally the term refers to “good deeds” or conduct. I.e.: the fruit of the Christian life - Mt 5:16; Jn 3:20.

If the word “obedience” had been used here rather than “works” there would not be a great problem. James is speaking of works of obedience, not works of merit.

Mt 7:21-23 is a good section to show works of merit versus works of obedience. Without works of obedience these are still lost.

Mt 23:3 is a warning against telling someone to do something and then not doing it yourself.

Rom 2:6 is not talking about receiving forgiveness of sins just because you have observed “so many” Lord’s Suppers or sung “so many” songs in your Christian life.

Titus 1:16 refers to conduct, consisting of many deeds over a period of time.

Rom 3:23; 4:2 show God’s condemnation to those who try to be justified by law-keeping. Our works come out of the kind of faith we have.

Phil 2:12 - Just as you have always obeyed — work out your own salvation.

Eph 2:9,10 - Not of works [of merit] (v.9), but works [of obedience] - v. 10.

The book of Romans — this book is pointed to by most “faith only” people, but it begins and ends with obedience of faith - 1:5; 16:26.

Jn 6:29 - belief is called a work by Jesus. This is the same type of work as repentance and baptism are. Works of obedience, not works of merit.

Jesus, Paul and James all state that obedience to the law of Christ is necessary to make a Christian's faith perfect and saving.

Can [that] faith save him? This means the kind of faith just mentioned — faith only.

The Greek question is asked in such a way that it shows a negative answer is expected; "Faith alone cannot save him, can it?"

Compare: 1:18; 2 Thess 5:23; 2 Pet 1:5.

15. If a brother or sister is naked. "Naked" does not mean bare or nude, but without sufficient clothes.

Compare: Mt 24:36ff; Jn 21:7; Acts 19:16; 1 Sam 19:24; Amos 2:16.

This is especially emphatic because it is a brother or sister. We are to do good to all, but *especially* to those who are Christians.

It is a real shame when a Christian brother or sister goes without sufficient food or clothing - Gal 6:10.

Could you give your best suit or dress to one in need?

Destitute [in lack] of daily food. We do not know if this is a real circumstance or a supposition about what could happen.

Perhaps the famine foretold by Agabus was still in existence - Acts 11:28ff.

One of the common practices of the Gentiles in the Roman Empire was a welfare of "daily bread."

16. And one of you says to them...warmed and filled.

There are many who say and do not, just as there are many who look into the perfect law of liberty and do not obey it - v. 17.

But you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

This was called "mouth mercy" in the first century.

When the leaders of the Jerusalem church agreed Paul should go to the Gentiles, they told him not to forget the poor - Gal 2:10.

In Mk 5:34 we have a different situation because we do not have the same power.

The danger pointed out here is one of having a good intention but not doing anything about it.

How many times have you planned to visit someone who was sick, or possibly take them food, then did not follow through or even forgot?

“Good wishes is an empty phrase unless the speaker does good deeds” - Plautus. This same application is made here by James.

17. Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead [in itself].

Sometimes we become excited about helping our brethren but later become unconcerned about carrying out those works of obedience as commanded by God. We seem to feel God will understand and overlook the sin.

People with dead faith substitute words for deeds. They know the correct vocabulary for prayers and quote the right passages from the Bible. They think their words are as good as works, but they are wrong (Wiersbe).

We can claim for ourselves all the faith we want to, but if there are no works, it is useless, i.e.: It is the same as having no faith at all. However, the moment it acts, it is no longer without works and is no longer dead.

Dead (being alone) [in itself]. Lit: “Absolutely dead.”

B. IT IS BOTH, NOT ONE OR THE OTHER. 2:18,19

18. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.”

The idea is that one person may excel in one thing and another excel in something else. BUT this does not mean that both may not be acceptable to God.

Show me your faith without [apart from] your works.

This is an impossible thing to do.

The challenge is to demonstrate or prove the existence of faith without works. How can that be done?

Any “faith only” believers, such as the Baptist denomination, have much difficulty with this passage.

Remember: This includes the Christian, who is addressed here.

And I will show you my faith by my works.

It is good to have organized benevolent works. BUT what good are they if they are not doing good?

“We cannot keep giving away these clothes, the clothes room is getting empty.”

Faith is demonstrated only through works!

One who boasts about his faith but never does any good works must be doubted.

Cf: Rom 2:6; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 5:10.

19. You believe that there is one God [God is one].

James is referring to Deut 6:4.

This is called the SHEMA which means “name” and is still repeated by the Orthodox Jew daily.

James has selected the greatest fundamental doctrine of all religion — the Existence of One Supreme Being!

James shows that even if one believed this:

- a. Without works of obedience and
- b. As held by demons,
- c. It could not save you!

You do well.

James does not belittle faith, he encourages it.

His idea is that one who has real faith will let it do for him what it should; i.e: cause him to do God’s will. IF NOT, he is no better off than the demons.

Even the demons believe - and tremble [shudder].

The demons are quite orthodox in their beliefs and probably more exact in their knowledge than most mortals, but while conscious of their deserved doom and their rebellion against God, their knowledge only adds to their distress; they shudder (Erdman).

The faith of the SHEMA is on the same level with the demons' faith IF intellectual assent is all there is to your Christianity.

Things Demons Do:

- a. Pray (beseech) - Mk 5:10,
- b. Have knowledge about God and Jesus - Mt 8:29,
- c. Have faith - Jas 2:19 and
- d. Confess - Lk 4:34.

Things Demons Do Not Do:

- a. Show signs of repentance or
- b. Seek to do the will of God (which is the point here!).

C. PROOF OF OUR FAITH..... 2:20-26

20. But do you want to know, O foolish (vain) man?

"Foolish" describes one who is spiritually empty, corresponding to the emptiness of his faith (Toole).

Know. Will you be willing to learn something?

Foolish (vain). Because he was not willing to learn!

Have you ever said to someone, "If you would just listen, you would learn something!"? This is the same phrase.

This expression calls upon the hearer to be willing to recognize and acknowledge the truth.

The one who would argue against James' (Holy Spirit's) logic in this fashion is foolish.

Faith without [apart from] works is dead [barren]?

Dead [barren] comes originally from a word which means unemployed, idle, inactive, ineffective, amounts to nothing - Mt 20:3,6; Titus 1:12.

Therefore it meant to be lazy and useless.

It is useless to have faith unless it expresses itself in obedience.

Satan is the great deceiver; one of his devices is imitation. If he can convince a person that counterfeit (dead) faith is true faith he has that person in his power (Wiersbe).

The idea of faith here is that it is only the result of wanting salvation.

It must be remembered that this is written to Christians.

The rest of this section explains this verse.

21. Was not Abraham our father. The use of the οὐκ expects a yes answer.

The fact that Abraham is used shows that even the father of the faithful had to obey.

It is possible this point is raised because the Jews believed being a descendant of Abraham or an orthodox believer was sufficient for salvation.

Justified. "To be acquitted or pronounced and treated as righteous or innocent."

James is talking about faith saving a man - v. 14.

This does not mean that one who is already just or acquitted is now proved or declared righteous, as some contend!

THIS is the action of God in declaring him righteous!

By works. This refers to obedience caused by faith.

Works are the ground or reason for which Abraham was declared righteous.

It was not Abraham's whole life BUT especially his offering that James has in mind.

When he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

Offered is a participle used in the adverbial of causal sense.

Therefore, his offering of Isaac was the CAUSE of his justification.

It was not that Abraham *did* this work BUT that *he did it* as an obedience to faith.

The only kind of work that brings justification is one done in obedience to a command of God.

Abraham recognized it was his responsibility to obey God and at the same time to trust Him to keep His promises (Toole).

In Gen 22:9ff where this account is told, there is nothing said about justification!

The offering was followed by a blessing being pronounced on Abraham that his seed would be multiplied and all nations blessed through him, “because you have obeyed my voice” - v. 18.

Compare with “because you have done this thing” - v. 16.

Paul’s use of the Old Testament passage implies justification also.

This promise was also repeated in Gen 26:5 — “Because you have done this thing.”

James could clearly see from the O.T. record that acts of obedience had led Abraham to another declaration of righteousness before God.

Thus the act (“works”) is shown to be the basis of Abraham’s justification.

This does NOT mean that his works alone saved him.

James mentions only what has been left out by some in explaining man’s justification.

The two (Faith and Works) worked together, as he goes on to show.

The difference between the section on Abraham’s justification in Rom 4:2-5 and this one is to be explained by the difference in their meanings of the word “works.”

PAUL is thinking of works of the Law of Moses as the basis of justification.

Also notice Gal 2:16; 3:11; 5:4; Rom 3:28 where Paul adds “the Law” to his denial that one is justified by works.

He insists that Abraham’s justification was before the Law of Moses and apart from it, just as he insisted it was before circumcision - Rom 4:10ff.

JAMES is thinking here of works of faith or obedience.

And Paul would not have denied this in the sense that James means it, for he did not, BECAUSE they were both inspired by the same Holy Spirit!

Consider Titus 3:5,7 where Paul combines being “justified by His grace” with being saved by baptism as “the washing of the new birth.”

Also consider in the O.T. where Naaman had to complete a work of obedience in order to be cleansed - 2 Kgs 5.

THUS Paul and James agree that a work of obedience growing out of one’s faith in God and Christ is the basis of justification.

22. Do you see that faith was working together (wrought) with his works?

Working together with [wrought with] means to cooperate with or to help - Rom 8:28.

K.J.V. - “Wrought iron” is iron which has been worked with.

And by works faith was made perfect.

Abraham’s faith was not perfected or completed, so that it did for him what God intended for faith to do. NOT until after it had been helped along with works.

Justification is what faith is to bring about, BUT it will not do it without works to complete it.

Without works, Abraham’s faith was imperfect; not complete, not mature, nor reaching its desired ends.

Without works our faith is also imperfect!

Works are necessary for acceptable faith!

23. And the Scripture was fulfilled.

Although Gen 15:6 is not a prediction as such, it gives facts which point to later actions in which they receive their full accomplishment.

This is a double fulfillment prophecy. Other examples include:

- a. Jer 31:15 cf. Mt 2:17,18,
- b. Isa 7:14 cf Mt 1:21-23 and
- c. 2 Sam 7:12-14 cf Acts 2:30.

Fulfilled does not mean confirmed.

Abraham believed God and it was accounted (imputed) [reckoned] to him for righteousness. “For” = εἰς = unto, which is directional.

God accepted Abraham’s obedient faith instead of righteousness (which he did not have in the absolute, being a sinner).

This is the same thing as saying he was justified, declared righteous or received forgiveness of sins.

James’ point is that this “accounted for righteousness” belief was completed (fulfilled), at that point in time, by the offering of Isaac.

Other passages where a promise is “fulfilled:”

1 Kgs 2:27,

Lk 1:20,

Acts 1:16 and

Jn 18:9,32.

And he was called the friend of God.

His becoming the friend of God was a result of the expression of his faith in offering Isaac.

Abraham was justified by his deed of faith and as a consequence he was also referred to as God’s friend.

We speak of “being made friends again with God” and mean that we are “reconciled to God.”

Abraham is not called the friend of God until much later in scripture - Isa 41:8; 2 Chron 20:7.

24. You see then that a man is justified by works.

James feels his argument, that works justify, is clear and forceful. Not works alone, but necessary for justification.

If Abraham was not justified by works which made his faith complete then James has wasted our time!

And not by faith only.

This is the only place in the Bible where the phrase "faith only" is used AND it is *condemned* as a means of justification! Therefore, one who hopes to be saved by the "word of truth" must show his faith by his works.

Negative Syllogism:

Major Premise - A faith that can save (A) is neither barren nor dead (B) [v.20].

Minor Premise - But faith without works (C) is both barren and dead (B) [vv. 24,26].

Conclusion - Therefore a faith that can save (A) is not a faith without works (C).

If $A = B$ and $C = B$ then $A = C$.

25. Likewise was not Rahab...justified by works?

Three reasons Rahab is used:

- a. She is outside the family of Abraham,
- b. She is not known as a saint and
- c. She is not a male.

Compare: Jn 2:9ff; Heb 11:31; Mt 1:5.

When she received the messengers and had sent them out another way.

Received. Ὑποδεξαμένη. Lit: "Welcoming."

Sent them out. Ἐκβαλοῦσα. Lit: “Thrust them forth.” It implies haste and fear.

Both Hebrews and James point out it was Rahab’s faith and obedience (works) that resulted in her justification.

Faith and works cooperated with, and helped, each other.

26. For as the body without [apart from] the spirit is dead.

A well known fact and quite appropriate to illustrate the argument’s conclusion.

So [even so]. I.e.: Just like the example.

Faith without [apart from] works is dead also.

Faith not expressed in obedient works is useless and definitely not able to justify or save. Let all men take heed to this teaching!

In response to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”, the answer has always been to “Believe AND Obey!”

Let the Christian (to whom this section is primarily intended) remember that obedience to the word is necessary:

- a. In worship,
- b. In service and
- c. Morality in order to perfect his faith and result in justification!

Faith is trust and devotion and love and obedience (Erdman).

V. ADMONITION TO TEACHERS..... 3:1-18

Theme: Chapter 3 treats two subjects directly related to each other:

- A. The bridling of the tongue (another way of saying “speech”) and
- B. The analysis of true wisdom.

Both of these subjects refer to the teacher:

- A. The first relates to his responsibility and control of his speech - 3:1-12.

B. The second to the teacher's wisdom - 3:13-18.

The two are treated as substantially identical which is significant.

Wisdom and speech are connected in Prov 31:26, "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness."

Self-control of the tongue and meekness of wisdom are further indications of pure religion.

In other words, they are a part of the works of a Christian by which justification is given.

A. PERIL OF BEING A TEACHER. 3:1,2

1. Let not many of you become teachers (be not many masters).

The Greek construction is imperative, "Stop becoming many of you teachers."

This indicates this was already an established problem.

Many who want to become teachers do not realize the responsibility involved.

Teachers are ranked highly along with the prophets in the church at Antioch which had sent Paul and Barnabas on the first Missionary Journey - Acts 13:1.

Paul lists teachers second only to the apostles and prophets in 1 Cor 12:28, Cf: Eph 4:11.

James is not discouraging Christians from becoming teachers. Instead he is calling attention to its responsibilities.

Teaching is encouraged by Bible writers - Titus 2:3,4; Heb 5:12ff.

Knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment (greater condemnation).

We not only have to give account for ourselves, but for what we cause others to believe and do.

Brethren were too lightheartedly becoming teachers without considering with sufficient seriousness the tremendous responsibility involved.

The recognition of the Christian's personal imperfection should induce him to great caution in seeking to become a teacher, especially when any sin committed by him could likely do much damage to the church (Toole).

Judgment (condemnation). Κρίμα, the result of a judicial decision, a sentence of punishment.

The teacher's condemnation is greater than that of others:

- a. Because he has, or professes to have, clear and full knowledge of his duty and
- b. He is that much more bound to obey it.

There are two dangers every teacher must avoid:

- a. He must be teaching the Truth and NOT his own opinions.
- b. He must not contradict his teaching by his lifestyle. We should never say, "Do not do as I do, but do as I say."

Receive. Λημψόμεθα, future, middle, indicative of λαμβάνω.

James uses the first person plural because he himself is a teacher in the church and knows he must some day give account to the Divine Judge for his teaching.

We become teachers by our own choice and, therefore, if we fail we are under greater condemnation!

Do we take teaching too lightly? Especially when we grab someone just before class and ask, "Will you teach class this morning?"

2. For we all stumble in many things (for in many things we offend all).

Lit: "We all stumble with respect to many things." Cf: Rom 3:23; 1 Jn 1:8.

The point is: Since this is true, it is clear that we should avoid (except for the noblest motives) taking up teaching which brings the greatest responsibility and the greatest temptation to sin!

If anyone does not stumble (offend not) in word.

Word. Λόγῳ refers to the gospel, to the doctrine. Cf: 1:18,21, 22,23.

Since we stumble in all things, the Word (Scripture) is a place to watch closely. Cf: Psalms 39:1.

He is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

Perfect. Τέλειος, that which is complete, mature (not sinless).

On the use of “perfect,” Cf: 1 Cor 2:6; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:14,15; Col 4:12; Heb 5:14.

If a man could be found who had perfectly bridled his tongue (the hardest part to control), he would also be a perfect man in other areas which are not as difficult.

This emphasis is on a *mature* Christian.

B. PROBLEM OF THE TONGUE. 3:3-6.

3. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us; and we turn (about) their whole body.

This is one of two comparisons that shows you are in charge of your tongue.

James uses two figures which can also be found in combination in some of the old Greek writers.

The first figure is suggested by “bridle” in the preceding verse.

The bridle, though small, exerts its curbing influence over the whole body of the strong horse. It then pursues a straight course and not an erratic one, a course that is determined by its rider.

4. Look also at ships...they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

The “so great” (Cf: Heb 2:3) ship is contrasted with the “very small” rudder.

The man who has command of the rudder, which in ancient ships was a kind of oar or paddle working in a row-cock or port-hole, can influence the movement of the big ship regardless of what wind might blow on the ship.

It is not the winds, however strong they may be, but the impulse of the man at the helm who determines the ship's course.

The point is: We cannot stop the wind (desire) but we *can* control the ship (tongue).

It is up to us to realize that small things (bridles, rudders, tongues) determine the destiny of what is under discussion (horses, ships, people). Cf: Mt 12:36,37.

5. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.

Boasts. Linear action

Like the bramble in Jothan's fable which asked the mighty trees to take refuge in its shade, so the tongue might say to the larger members of the body, "I can determine the course of all of you. Let all take note of my power."

The tongue has power to influence man's whole course and destiny.

"A little heresy can bring down a great church. A little gossip can bring down a great man."

See how great a forest (matter) [much wood] a little fire kindles!

Many Old Testament passages use the same figure of fire destroying - Isa 9:18; 10:16-18; Zech 12:6; Psa 83:14.

Even Euripedes, a Greek poet, compared the careless revealing of a secret to a spark catching hold of a forest.

A careless word can consume a whole church or family. Cf: Gal 5:15.

For every word in Hitler's book, "Mein Kampf," 125 lives were lost in World War II (Wiersbe).

Forest (matter) [wood]. "Υλην, much wood, as in a forest.

6. And the tongue is a fire...that it defiles the whole body.

The tongue is a universe of evil in itself. It voices every evil feeling and every kind of sinful act (if uncontrolled).

You cannot say, "I am really a pure person, but my tongue is not pure." Control the tongue and the rest of the body is under control!

And sets on fire the course [wheel] of nature.

The course [wheel]. Τὸν τροχὸν, that which is set in motion at birth and runs through life; therefore, everything in life seems affected by the tongue.

We are a part of the wheel of existence; we do not live isolated lives but affect others by what we do and say.

Hence, the tongue of one person sets in motion a flame (i.e. gossip, lying, profanity) which then spreads to others like a house in a city which catches fire and, by spreading, burns down the whole town.

Rumors cannot be stopped! Therefore, before you speak, remember that once you have spoken a word it has gone out of your control.

Also, you will be called by God to answer for those words!

And it is set on fire by (of) hell. Γέεννης. (Gehenna.)

Such a fire as this just described would have its origin in hell (i.e. from Satan).

Note: James says earthly wisdom is demonic - v. 15.

Jesus traces evil speech to the heart (Mt 15:19) and James tells us the evil heart is influenced by hell (Satan).

How? - 1 Tim 4:1.

Cf: Prov 16:27.

Three kinds of minds:

- a. Great Minds talk about ideas,
- b. Mediocre minds talk about things and
- c. Little minds talk about people.

C. PROBLEM OF TAMING THE TONGUE..... 3:7,8

7. For every kind of beast and of bird...is tamed.

Tamed is different from “controlled.”

The “for” points out the fact that because the tongue (out of all creatures) cannot be tamed by man proves its perverseness.

It is more vicious than any of the wild creatures!

8. But no man can tame the tongue.

If it is tamed it must be done with Divine help.

It may also mean it *can not* be tamed, but it can be controlled.

It is an unruly [restless] evil, full of deadly poison.

Unruly [restless]. Ἐκατάστατον, as a wild and restless evil, it is like a caged beast that is never still but paces back and forth.

Deadly poison. Θανατηφόρου, “death bearing.”

This word is used for snake venom or poison from a rusty nail.

It is like that caged animal which wants its freedom, but when it gains it, it causes nothing but harm.

D. INCONSISTENT USE OF THE TONGUE..... 3:9-12

James has just pointed out the tongue’s wickedness. Now he gives just one instance of the improper use of it.

9. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men.

How are we going to bless God? Hebrews 7:7 says the greater blesses the lesser.

Bless. Εὐλογοῦμεν means we say good things about God!

Curse. Καταρῶμεθα means “down prayer”, as in damning someone.

To curse someone is to put them under an anathema or to invoke evil on him.

Who have been made in the similitude [likeness] of God.

This points up an inconsistency:

- a. Man bears the image or likeness of God.
- b. To harm man is, in a sense, the same as harming God.
- c. Cf: Prov 14:31; Mt 25:34-40; 1 Jn 4:20.

Have been made. Γεγονότας, a perfect, active, participle.

Perfect tense — looks at the completed state of man being in the image of God.
Active voice — linear action.

Compare: present tense of “is” in 1 Cor 11:7.

10. Out of the same mouth proceed [cometh forth] blessing and cursing.

Peter is a good example of this - Mt 26:33; 26:69-75.

No curse (of our own) can be pronounced by a Christian upon a fellow man without reflecting the curse upon God whose image that man bears.

Only the curses which God Himself has pronounced (upon men whom He has had to curse) may a Christian repeat. I.e. 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:9.

Otherwise we usurp God's place as judge. Cf: Num 22:12.

When the inconsistent use of the tongue in blessing God and cursing men becomes a consistent pattern that Christian is no longer faithful to Christ, his words of praise to God are false and hypocritical (Toole).

These things ought not to be so. Phrase only here in N.T.

Denotes something that is utterly incongruous, something that is out of harmony with the nature of things.

11,12. Does a spring (fountain)...salt water and fresh.

Listen to the voice of nature if you have become deaf to the word of God. The world around you, in its beautiful harmony of operations, many times rebukes the inconsistencies of human conduct.

When praises to God and curses on men proceed from the same mouth, the praises are tainted and, therefore, worthless.

The idea is of preparing for worship, then having family problems which result in curses before you arrive at worship and then trying to worship is incongruous.

James is not pleading for cowardly silence BUT for wise use of our speech.

E. THOSE WHO SHOULD NOT TEACH. 3:13,14

Theme: This section is a continuation of the subject begun in v. 1. After mentioning the teacher in v.1, James discusses the more specific subject of the tongue's influence and evil.

Now he goes back to the subject of the teacher.

13. Who is wise and understanding among you?

Wise (man)...understanding (knowledge). The phrase "wise (man)" was often applied to a teacher.

“Understanding” (only here in N.T.) indicates one who is an expert on any subject.

Wise may describe the possession of wisdom as such and

Understanding may relate to the practical details of life.

Cf: Rom 1:14,22; 1 Cor 1:19,26ff; 3:20; Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21 and especially Mt 23:34.

The point is: Since it is usually true a teacher has a reputation of more skill and knowledge than others, he should show by his conduct that it is, in fact, true.

Cf: 2:12.

Let him show by good conduct (conversation).

This is the challenge: If you are really wise, show it by your good life, then all will know you are wise.

This is a call for deeds, not just words.

“What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.”

His works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

Lit: “A wise meekness.” That is, doing what wisdom says.

In 1:21 the hearer of the Word is exhorted to receive it with meekness, NOW the teacher of the Word is exhorted to manifest this same quality of mind. Cf: 2 Tim 2:24,25; 1 Pet 3:15.

This meekness will demonstrate wisdom AND will accomplish more than someone who tries to shout down or perhaps even curse those who oppose the teacher. Cf: 3:9.

Meekness. (Not arrogance) is the proper attitude of wisdom!

This is one more qualification of a teacher.

If the teacher’s deeds are the right kind, they will be characterized by meekness and that meekness will show that wisdom is present.

A lack of meekness proves a lack of wisdom!

God's wisdom leads to peace. It is a peace based on holiness, not on compromise! (Wiersbe).

14. But if you have bitter envy [jealousy].

This is a negative qualification of a teacher.

James assumes these qualities are the opposite of meekness.

Bitter. Can carry the idea of "cruel." Here and v. 11 only.

Envy [jealousy]. Ζήλον, from "zealot."

It means to begrudge others their successes.

Is my heart really glad when others have success?

James is probably referring to the jealousy between teachers in the local congregations (his wise men):

- a. In their vying for positions and
- b. Their seeking honors and praises from their hearers.

First class conditional: "Since" they are already this way.

Self-seeking (strife) [faction] in your hearts.

"Selfish ambition" or "rivalry." Possibly one is forcing his own views to be pre-eminent.

This is unethical political status seeking.

"He that does not toot his horn does not get it tooted" is the attitude that is being warned against.

Do not boast (glory) and lie against the truth.

If you are boastful, arrogant and prideful, the life you live is the very opposite of that of a godly teacher.

The pretense of wisdom is a boast — wearing the name of "wise man" or "teacher."

- a. If he does not manifest the wisdom in his life he should not wear the title.
- b. But if he does wear that title, it becomes a lie against the truth.

This even applies to the spirit of one fighting false doctrine.

What is your concern after talking to a non-Christian?

- a. Sad because his soul is lost or
- b. "I sure set him straight!"?

James shows us four characteristics of wrong teaching:

- a. It is FANATICAL — not based on sound reasoning.
- b. It is BITTER — it regards its opponents as enemies rather than friends to be helped.
- c. It is SELFISHLY AMBITIOUS — they are more interested in showing off knowledge than showing truth.
- d. It is ARROGANT — pride in knowledge rather than humility in ignorance.

F. WRONG KIND OF WISDOM. 3:15,16

This wisdom does not descend from above.

That teacher is being a hypocrite because that which produces jealousy and faction is not wisdom at all, ESPECIALLY not the kind which would come as an answer to prayer - 1:5.

But is earthly, sensual, demonic (devilish).

The one who is earthly will give in to the desires of the flesh and surrender to Satan.

This is the pattern of apostasy! - Rom 8:7.

Earthly. Ἐπίγειος. Because its horizons do not extend beyond this world and because it is inspired entirely by motives which are popular among those "Who set their mind on earthly things" - Phil 3:19.

Sensual. Ψυχική. The sensual nature with its subjection to appetites and passions.

Merely human as opposed to spiritual. Cf: 1 Cor 15:43,46; 2:14.

Demonic (devilish). Δαιμονιώδης, the hostile spirits of evil.

It is demonic because it is full of pride and selfish ambition. Cf: 1 Tim 3:6.

Demonic because it results in disorder:

- a. Instead of bringing people together, it drives them apart.
- b. Instead of producing peace, it produces strife.

16. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there.

This is proof the wisdom behind these attitudes is earthly.

The fruit of this evil world is confusion and vileness — especially in the church.

This would be the result of teachers characterized by their previous worldly wisdom.

Cf: 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 6:5; 12:20.

Self-seeking (strife) [faction]. “Restless, unruly,” Cf: v.8.

Confusion. Ἀκαταστασία, “disorder, tumult, trouble, instability.”

Sometimes the word had a political reference and had the meaning “anarchy.”

Here the word refers to those teachers, with their false wisdom, who trouble the church by demanding their own rights and exercising a party spirit.

Evil [vile]. Φαῦλον transliterates as “foul.”

It means “good for nothing, worthless.” No true gain could come from it.

G. TRUE WISDOM. 3:17,18

17. Wisdom that is from above is first pure.

Not numerically but essentially — the rest of these are a result of “pure.”

James now returns to the positive.

One guided by pure wisdom (because it is from above) would desire to be free of any impure motive such as:

Lack of meekness,

Jealousy,

Self ambition, etc.

James now lists the characteristics of the godly teacher:

Peaceable,

Gentle,

Willing to yield,

Full of mercy and good fruits,

Without partiality and

Without hypocrisy.

Then peaceable. “Not given to conflict, harmonious, opposed to confusion.” Cf: 1 Cor 7:15; 14:33.

We must be pure before we can be peacemakers.

There is an unholy peace with the world which makes no distinction between the clean and the unclean.

When someone is in error, you are NOT the problem NOR the cause of the problem when you must and do tell them they are wrong - Cf: Rom 12:18.

Gentle. “Reasonableness, graciousness, absence of bad manners.”

One who does not insist on his own rights, even when he could; yielding.

Reasonable in judging others.

The word signifies a humble patience or steadfastness which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without hatred and malice, trusting in God in spite of it all.

Because of wisdom, even when you deserve something, you will yield.

Willing to yield. Easily persuaded, the opposite of disobedient.

Also the opposite of dogmatic.

The teacher himself must be teachable, open to reason.

Beware when you have taken a position and have closed your mind.

We are often wrong so we need to continue to study.

Even those things we are sure of.

This also means to not be stubborn — not refusing to do something just because it was suggested by another.

Full of mercy and good fruits.

Mercy includes having mercy for the man who is in trouble — even if the trouble is his own fault.

God has mercy for us in sin,

And any sin is our own fault.

A teacher's life must be filled with that which he teaches.

If one teaches Christianity, there should be evidence of it in his life.

Therefore, mercy (usually connected with helping the poor and sick) would be evident.

James went about doing good - Acts 10:38

Many are full of mercy, but do not show the fruit. They “hear and do not, say and do not.”

Mercy must result in good fruits or “practical help.”

We can never say we have fully pitied someone until we have helped him!

Without partiality [variance]. Ἀδιάρκῃτος, “undivided, unwavering, wholehearted.”

Not acting one way when it is advantageous then changing to another when circumstances make it favorable.

This wisdom knows its own mind, chooses a course of action and abides with it.

Without hypocrisy.

Not only does true wisdom say what it means, it means what it says. Its utterances are always straightforward, free from all pretense. Its actions toward all men are also straightforward and unpretending (Toole).

We should never teach half revealing and half concealing our mind.

Any subtle or reserve dealing is certain to create misunderstandings.

That is being insincere — teaching for reasons other than to spread God's word, such as one's own fame, etc.

We must teach "The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

This wisdom never pretends to be what it is not. It never acts a part in order to gain its own ends.

18. Now (And). This indicates an additional thought which is not part of the description of wisdom.

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace.

The Greek construction is one in which the produce is put for the seed sown.

TEV - "And righteousness is the harvest that is produced from seeds the peace-maker planted in peace."

A righteous life of good deeds or fruit is what is reaped by the one who sows in the right way.

Not in jealousy, faction, confusion, etc.

Do everything you can to make peace WITHOUT compromising truth!

Of them that make peace.

Righteousness is produced in the atmosphere of peace.

The undisciplined teachers who seek to advance the cause of truth with ranting and wild denunciations will not reap a harvest of righteousness.

A trail of disturbed churches and divided brethren given to agitation and confusion are bad signs.

No matter how “wise” and “understanding” one might be in reputation, if his life is not righteous, if the sowing is not in peace, he must be avoided as a teacher!

VI. WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH. 4:1-10

Theme: James now warns against strife and contention.

Wisdom from above (3:13ff) leads to peace and righteousness. BUT since there is strife and fighting among the readers, what is their source?

The source is in their lusts and desires which crave worldly satisfaction. Therefore, prayers go unanswered.

Our friendship with the world means we are enemies of God. BUT it is God’s Spirit who longs for the undivided loyalty of God’s children. AND it is He who give grace to achieve that purpose.

A call for repentance and humility is needed to bring the readers back into the favor of God.

A. SOURCE OF STRIFE. 4:1-7

1. Where do wars and fights come from among you?

Arndt and Gingrich say “fights” is always used in the plural and always of battles carried on without weapons. In other words, figurative battles. Cf: Same Greek word used in 2 Cor 7:5; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9.

Wars is also used frequently as a figurative word meaning quarreling, conflict and strife.

However, in this context, James may be referring to actual battles. IF some of the Jewish Christians had been Zealots it is possible they had not left all of their old lifestyle behind. It is difficult to decide.

The point is: Neither is acceptable.

Neither did they show results of wisdom from above.

Plato in PHAEDO — “Whence come wars, and fighting, and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? Wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake of and in the service of the body.”

Among you? Refers to those *in the church*!

Do they not come from your desires for pleasure (even of your lusts)?

This shows the “desire for pleasure” or “lust” as the source of these evils. Cf: 1:14.

These pleasures wage war against everything that stands in the way of their fulfillment.

Pleasure (lusts). Ἡδονῶν, hedonistic philosophy, like the “Playboy Philosophy” - Lk 8:14; Titus 3:3.

This does not mean things are evil in themselves!

Does our leisure hinder our Christian service?

Does our work hinder our Christian service?

That war in your members?

War. Στρατευομένων, a present, active, participle meaning “soldiering.”

James is probably using “members” to refer to the individual’s body — as in 3:2; Rom 7:23; 1 Pet 2:11.

2. You lust and do not have.

Lust. Ἐπιθυμεῖτε. This word does not have the idea of “good” or “bad” in it, only that it is a strong desire.

The context decides the meaning — here it is bad. Also in Acts 20: 33; Mt 5:28.

When men live merely to satisfy their desires they never realize their goal. The more one gets the more unsatisfied he will be.

“All is vanity and vexation of the spirit.”

Sensations lose their pleasantness when indulged in too frequently.

This is the “roller coaster” effect — the first time is great, but the fortieth time is “ho hum.”

You murder (kill). The idea is “SO, you murder (kill).”

Although it is not unheard of for professing Christians to have killed for selfish reasons, James is probably using it in the same way as Jesus did in Mt 5:21,22 or John in 1 Jn 3:15.

And covet (desire to have). Ζηλοῦτε, “jealous, burning with zeal or envy.” Cf: Acts 7:9; 17:5; 1 Cor 13:4; Gal 4:17.

This is not the word usually used for “covet.”

And cannot obtain.

If the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God (1:20), certainly jealousy, hatred and lust would not bring God’s blessings on any one.

You fight and war. The verbs are linear.

The thought is: “So you lust but do not have; you kill and covet and still do not succeed; so you go on fighting and warring.”

Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

They went about trying to get what they wanted without prayer, without taking God into their thoughts.

It almost implies that if they had asked, they would have received.

The question is, “Will you go about as before or will you come closer to God?”

3. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss.

In an evil manner, with strong emotions and motives — see next verse.

Compare: Prov 28:9; Psa 34:15,19; 145:18; Lk 18:14; 1 Jn 5:14.

That you may spend it on your pleasures.

Spend. Δαπανήσητε. “Waste, squander or consume.”

We are limited to the things which God wills us to have.

This is similar to the “Prodigal Son” (Lk 18) who “spent all.” It was not spent for anything good but spent to satisfy lusts.

4. You adulteresses.

The K.J.V. and N.K.J.V. add “adulterers” because this is speaking about spiritual, not physical adultery.

Cf: Mt 12:39; 16:4; Rev 2:22 for the idea of spiritual adultery.

One who is a friend of the world has broken his “marriage vows” to God. Cf: 2 Tim 3:4.

Do you not know that friendship with the world?

The N.A.S.B. also uses “with the world” — making friends with the concepts of the “world.” Not an individual, but the idea of worldliness.

We must be *in* the world, but not *of* the world!

We must live as dead to the world; not friends with it.

Cf: 1:27; 1 Jn 5:19; 1 Cor 1:20; Jn 17:25; 15:19; Gal 6:14; 1 Jn 2: 15; 1 Cor 15:33; etc.

Enmity with God. This is different from “enemy.” It means: “to be at war, antagonistic.” Cf: Mt 6:24.

The Bible knows no such idea as “One foot in the church and one foot in the world.” It is all or nothing with God! Cf: 1 Jn 2:15.

Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

This has to do with the desires of the heart. You can simply wish to be a friend of the world and that will be sufficient cause to result in it.

What are your actions at work, at school or at play? Do others know by your actions, dress and habits that you are a Christian?

Makes himself an enemy of God.

God does not withdraw from us - Rom 8:39. BUT we withdraw from Him and make ourselves His enemy by not desiring His company any longer.

We do this by showing we prefer the world. Cf: Mt 22:37.

Note: The opposite is true in v. 8. Cf: Jn 15:19.

One may either *use* the world OR *be used* by it:

- a. To use the world as the servant of God and man is to be a friend of God.
- b. To use the world as the controller and dictator of your life is to be the enemy of God.

You had better be prepared to be an *enemy* of the world if you are not going to be a *friend* of it!

5. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain.

“Scripture” is singular but can be understood as meaning the entire Bible.

It is used in this manner in: Jn 7:38,42; Acts 8:32; Rom 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Gal 4:30; 1 Tim 5:18.

Therefore the meaning is: “If a man can love God and the world together, then what the Scriptures teach as a whole is untrue.”

The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously. (The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy).

This sentence is impossible to interpret with certainty.

The problem arises because the word spirit (πνεῦμα) has the same form for the nominative (subject) case and the accusative (direct object) case.

It seems best to translate it as the N.K.J.V. has it, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.”

This passage shows that the third person of the Godhead abides in our hearts and is striving to acquire the same love for Him on our part as He does for us.

It is a most striking passage which tells of the love of the Holy Spirit for the sons of God.

The Spirit who dwells in us. Κατώκισεν, aorist, indicative, active — to cause to dwell, to take up one’s dwelling place.

This is the word that is in the Sinaiticus, Alexandrius and the Vaticanus. It makes it clear that the reference is not to the human spirit, but to the Holy Spirit who dwells in the believer.

Indwelling: Cf: Jn 14:17; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 6:19f; Eph 2:22; Acts 2: 38; Gal 3:2; Acts 5:32; Rom 8:6; Gal 4:6; 5:17; Eph 3:17; 1 Jn 3:24; Eph 1:13,14; 2 Cor 1:21f; 1 Jn 4:12f; Heb 6:4; 2 Cor 13:14; Rom 8:2-27; Eph 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14.

Also see: Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16; Ex 34:14; 20:5; Zech 8:2.

But He gives more grace. He gives more grace than He otherwise would have.

When we give ourselves over to the yearnings of God's Spirit and let Him have His way with us, He gives us a favor in the form of help and strength which He would not have otherwise.

This is in contrast to the ones mentioned before who were wanting things and could not have them.

God does not abandon the Christian in his temporary falling away BUT his grace is always available.

God's demand for individual obedience goes hand-in-hand with His supply of divine aid (grace) necessary for having that obedience. Cf: Rom 5:20,21; 1 Cor 10:13.

Therefore He says God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Resists. Ἀντιπάσσειται. Lit: "Sets himself in array against," as one draws up a host of soldiers for battle.

Proud. Ὑπερηφάνοις. Lit: "One who shows himself above other people."

This might be one of the most repeated teaching within the scriptures.



A PERSON WITH PRIDE SHUTS HIMSELF OFF FROM GOD BECAUSE:

1. HE DOES NOT KNOW HIS OWN NEED. He so admires himself that he does not recognize he has any needs.
2. HE LOVES HIS OWN INDEPENDENCE. He does not feel he owes anything to any man or to God.

3. HE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE HIS OWN SIN. He thinks only of his own goodness and does not recognize any sin in himself that requires salvation.

Therefore: He cannot receive help because he does not know he needs help, and therefore he cannot ask for help.



This passage is James' proof that the Holy Spirit gives greater grace, for it shows the direct promise of God to supply grace to the humble. Cf: Job 22:29.

Prov 3:34 - "Surely He (Jehovah) scorns the scornful; but he gives grace to the humble." James is here declaring the deity of the Holy Spirit by the use of this Old Testament passage.

Friendship with the world is pride because it results from the conceit of man who finds the center of life within himself and sees self gratification as the purpose of existence. Cf: 1 Pet 5:5.

7. Therefore submit to God.

This is one of the characteristics of humility.

Since God sets Himself against the proud, making sure they cannot win the battle, put yourself under God's rule!

If there is any area of the life kept back from God, there will always be battles. This explains why uncommitted Christians cannot live with themselves or with other people (Wiersbe).

Note: Jacob's prayer preceding the wrestling with the angel in Gen 32. The meaning of the prayer and the wrestling is the same — when you give up fighting God, you win!

Resist the devil.

This is not as easy to do as it is to say.

The devil is the ruler of this world; therefore resist the world - Eph 2:3; Jn 14:30.

To give comfort to the enemy is aligning oneself against God; therefore we cannot be friends with the devil and be true to God.

James' roaring lion is really a cowardly beast; when he is defeated by the resistance of faith, he will flee.

To see why and other similar promises see 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Pet 1:5; Mt 12:29; Jude 24f; 2 Pet 2:9; Heb 4:16.

The main way to accomplish this is to not let pride get in the way of being in subjection to God.

And he will flee from you.

THIS IS A PROMISE!

Remember the Devil is the ruler of the world Eph 2:3; Jn 14:30.

BUT, this shows Satan does not have an uncontrollable hold on us!

B. GODLY ATTRIBUTES NEEDED TO OVERCOME. 4:8-10

8. Draw near to God.

Aorist tense; therefore this is a once for all decision that affects all of your life.
Cf: Lk 9:26.

This was used in the Old Testament of the priestly service when they purified themselves to serve. Here it would seem to be an admonition to worship God.
Cf: Ex 19:22; Heb 4:16.

Cleanse your hands. This is also Aorist tense.

In the Old Testament this was a part of the ceremonial purification; therefore it indicates a call to repentance. Cf: Ex 30:20; Isa 1: 15,16.

This is external!

You sinners. James pulls no punches — this is to Christians!

We still need to realize we sin. This is meant to pierce the conscience. One will not repent until he realizes he is a sinner.

Purify your hearts you double minded. Cf: 1 Pet 1:22.

God knows if we wish to be friends of the world:

Since the “heart” is the originator of desires,

And we want to hold on to the world as well as to Christ,

We are double minded and need to purify our hearts. Cf: 1 Jn 1:22; Psa 24:3,4.

This is internal!

9. Lament and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Have sorrow over your sinful condition. It is better to do these things now than in eternity. Cf: Mt 5:4; 2 Cor 7:9,10; Lk 6:25, 26; Job 28:29.

10. Humble yourselves...lift you up [exalt you].

Here James primarily means a self determined act of submission to the will of God RATHER THAN to the character of humility. Cf: Lk 14:11; 1 Pet 5:6.

Pride is the greatest barrier to the salvation of many!

Some people have only enough religion to make them miserable. If we should renounce all that may be contrary to the will of God, if we should make Him the center of our affections, we should know in all its fulness the joy of His salvation (Erdman).

VII. JUDGING OUR BRETHREN..... 4:11,12

Theme: The following passage is to be connected with the previous one (4:1-10) on worldly strife.

James corrects a specific sin growing out of this strife — evil speech against brethren and judging them.

We cannot have a wrong attitude toward our brethren and be right toward God - 1 Jn 4:20f.

Rebuke of one another is not to be couched in harsh terms as though the one doing the rebuking were God himself.

11. Do not speak evil of one another. Speaking about brethren.

Lit: "talk another down."

Compare its use as an adjective in Rom 1:30; 14:4,10; Psa 101:5; Eph 4:25-32.

The Greek shows they are already doing this.

Some people accuse and slander others to remove suspicion from themselves, while some are self-righteous and accuse others as if they themselves never sinned.

This is another sin of the tongue. Cf: Rom 14:4,10.

This also ties in with v. 10 because much of this is done because of pride.

It builds the back-biter up in order to put the other down.

He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother.

We are not to condone or become blind to sin, BUT neither are we to slander and judge from appearances (2:9) or personal dislikes. Cf: 1 Cor 13:5; Jude 22,23.

The Greek indicates these were being done by the same persons.

Also compare Gal 6:1.

Speaks evil of the law and judges the law.

The law. There is no article in the Greek.

If any part of the law is meant as opposed to the whole, it is most likely the "Law of Love" - 2:8.

The idea is: If you do not observe the law, you must not have considered it to be worth anything.

There are two problems if you judge the law:

- a. You are not a doer of the law and
- b. You judge your neighbor.

But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

Anyone who sets aside a law (as though it should not be a law) becomes a critic of the law and its worthiness to be kept.

This would not be fulfilling 1:21.

This applies to speeding, trespassing, stealing, etc.

12. There is only one lawgiver [and judge].

To judge the law as they were was to usurp the place and authority of God.

Who is able to save and to destroy.

The power to fulfill promises and warnings found in the Bible belong to God only.

Therefore He is the only one who can decide what should be in the law. Cf: Deut 32:29; Lk 12:4,5.

Who are you to judge another?

We are not to judge by appearance. Cf: Jn 7:24.

What good is it to pronounce judgment on someone if you do not have the power to carry out that judgment?

Compare: Rom 2:1; 14:4,13; Mt 7:1,2,20,21; Lk 6:33,37.

NOTICE AGAIN:

This Law of Judging Does Not Forbid:

- a. Rebuking sin - 1 Tim 5:19,20,
- b. Correcting one another - 5:19,20 or
- c. Carefully restoring another - Gal 6:1; 1 Tim 5:1.

VIII. PRESUMPTUOUS SELF-SUFFICIENCY..... 4:13-17

Theme: With their involvement in the business world some seemed to be guilty of planning their activities without thinking of God and His ruling in their lives.

They were, in effect, boasting they could live independently of God.

A. PREVALENT ATTITUDE..... 4:13

13. Come now (Go to now).

This expression is calling the readers' attention to what is following.

It occurs here and 5:1 only in the N.T.

You who say...a city.

This pictures a group of Jewish traders sitting, as it were, in front of a map and pointing to the next city they intended to visit.

Spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.

There is nothing in this section to indicate James is condemning business or planning ahead.

The real point is brought out by the contrast that follows "If God wills."

They were boasting that they would be alive tomorrow and were making plans without taking God's will under consideration.

The thing, place and time planned are not wrong as such, but only the self-dependent, self-seeking, self-confident spirit that ignores the will of God. Cf: 1 Cor 10:12 (Toole).

B. MISTAKEN ATTITUDE..... 4:14

14. Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.

Compare with the Rich Fool - Lk 12:16-21.

We do not know if we will be alive tomorrow or not.

And if we are alive, will we have good health? Will we be able to carry out our plans? or any plans?

We who know so little about the future make quite a bold assumption to state that we will transact business, etc.

God has not put it within the power of man to command one moment of that which is in the future.

How foolish then, to plan without God! Cf: Prov 27:1.

For what is your life? It is...a vapor...a little time.

What. Lit: "Of what character?" They had forgotten they were no more than human creatures.

We have no certainty of life at all, whether we shall live or die; be healthy or ill; have prosperity or poverty. Cf: Hos 6:4.

And then vanishes away. James connects man's life with a higher power and will than his own.

He seeks to correct this false approach to human activities by reminding his readers:

- a. God's will is supreme and
- b. Their plans for the future must include, "If the Lord wills."

C. PROPER ATTITUDE. 4:15

15. If the Lord wills. Lit: "Shall have willed."

Or: "If the Lord has so determined it in His council."

It is more important that our attitudes always reflect this idea RATHER than just saying the words.

Do not just say it as an idle phrase!

When a believer is out of the will of God he becomes a troublemaker and not a peacemaker (Wiersbe).

Cf: Acts 17:28; 18:31; 21:14; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7; Heb 6:3.

D. REBUKE OF ATTITUDE..... 4:16,17

16. But now you boast in your arrogance. (But now ye rejoice [glory] in your boastings [vauntings]).

Arrogance (boastings) [vauntings]. Same Greek word as "pride of life" in 1 Jn 2:16.

This phrase indicates the real problem was they were actually making it a point to leave out God — almost defying Him.

This indicates insolent and empty assurance.

Their assurance was that they trusted in their own abilities and in the stability of their surroundings.

They measured success in life by how many times they got their own way and accomplished what they had planned (Wiersbe).

Boast. Καυχᾶσθε. This word originally referred to a traveling fake doctor, who:

- a. Offered cures that were not cures and
- b. Boasted of things he was not able to do.

The future is not within the hands of men to decide AND no man can claim to have the power to decide the future!

All such boasting (rejoicing) [glorying] is evil.

To boast of presumptuous self-sufficiency, with an attitude that omits God, is evil.

But, there is a way in which we may glory - Rom 5:2,3,11.

17. Therefore. This shows this verse is a conclusion to the preceding.

To him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

“I have shown you what is right to do and failure to do it on your part is, therefore, sin” - Moffatt.

This is the same as saying you know how to live correctly, but do not.

The danger is: We agree to the truth about:

- a. The brevity of life and
- b. The uncertainty of the future.

BUT we go on practicing, as before, with our far reaching plans and without any reference to the will of God.

Such an attitude is the very essence of sin!

Sin not only consists in doing evil, BUT in failing to do the good we know to do.

The greatest danger threatening our spiritual welfare is sins of omission – failing to do what we know to be good (Toole).

If we do not act according to the fact we are entirely dependent on God, we sin - Acts 17:28.

When God has made His will known, it is our responsibility to act accordingly.
Cf: Jn 15:22; Lk 12:47.

A person could be sitting at home relaxing, not actively engaged in sin, BUT sinning because he is not doing what he knows is right to do.

Compare this with a person who sees a broken railroad track and does not notify anyone. When a passenger train came, it derailed and many were killed. WHO would say that you were innocent?

How many souls die and go to hell while we sit back and take our leisure?

Beware of procrastination! By putting off a thing we ought to do from day to day we come to lessen its importance and soon forget it altogether (Toole).

IX. CONCERNING RICH OPPRESSORS..... 5:1-6

Theme: Those addressed in this section are not Christians. They are such as the rich men who were visiting the congregation (2:2) and who dragged them before judges and blasphemed the name called upon them (2:6). The probable purpose which James had in mind was to put such unjust people in the proper perspective before the church.

Those who suffer as Christians from the hands of such people are not to envy the rich and are to allow God to avenge his people (Rom 12:14-21). They are to see these people for what they are in God's sight: wretched people fattening themselves for a day of slaughter. It is possible James, with his good reputation among the Jews, hoped to reach some of them with this message.

Luxury has a way of ruining character. It is a form of self-indulgence. If you match character with wealth, you can produce much good; but if you match self-indulgence with wealth, the result is sin (Wiersbe).

A. ADMONITION TO THE RICH..... 5:1

1. Come now (Go to now), you rich (men) [Come now, ye rich]. James is not condemning all rich people but rather those who fall into the classification he describes.

Note, however, that Bible writers, as a rule, almost always class the rich with the evil and the poor with the good. This is because general observation would point to this being a truth. Cf: Lk 6:24.

Compare Isa 14:31; 13:1-6 where audiences are addressed, but not directly considered as the readers of the text.

Weep and howl. “Weep” is used in the LXX as the expression of violent grief. Cf: Joel 1:5,13; Isa. 13:6; 14:31; 15:3; 16:7; Jer 4:8.

If the rich understood their coming fate, they would literally shriek over it. See Acts 24:25 where the word “terrified” literally means “for the hair to stand on end.”

For your miseries that (shall come) [are coming] upon you. Because of the final judgment.

Possibly the destruction of the Jewish economy in which their prestige, money and perhaps their lives would be taken away.

Because of the suffering in this life; suffering resulting from their sins.

Are coming. Not future, coming right now.

This plea (5:1-6) contains two messages:

- a. A warning of certain judgment for the ungodly rich and
- b. A grim comfort in the hardship of poverty for the Christians.

B. CONDITIONS OF WEALTH. 5:2,3

2. Your riches are corrupted.

Corrupted. Σέσηπεν, perfect, indicative, active. Perfect tense indicates the condition “is rotten!”

Wealth, when not used to good purpose, becomes worthless.

Meditate on Eph 4:28.

Your garments. In eastern countries, and even among the Romans, acquiring expensive cloth was a common means of holding wealth. Garments such as “purple and fine linen.” A pound of wool dyed with purple sold for more than \$100.

3. Your gold and silver are corroded (is cankered) [are rusted].

Actually gold and silver do not rust, but the word may also mean “tarnished.”

And their corrosion will be a witness against you (and the rust of them shall be a witness [testimony] against you).

Corrosion (rust). Κατίωται, perfect, indicative, passive. “Corroded (rusted) through to the bottom.”

It serves as proof of their sin.

And will eat your flesh like fire (and shall eat your flesh as it were fire). A terrible image for the disastrous results of treating money as the reliance and chief aim of life.

It is possible the “treasure laid up” /is the fire!

If so, the corrosion (rust) shall “eat your flesh because you have treasured up fire!”

And that “fire” would be the fire of “hell.”

Therefore, the rich oppressor’s lot is to be pitied, NOT envied!

“There is an awful warning in this to the church today. So many in the churches in our day have been blessed with much of this world’s goods. What is going to be done with it? We cannot give a token to the Lord (even a liberal share) and feel that the rest is ours to live upon in luxury and ease. We must give account to God for all of it (Lk 16:9-12). There are many things that a Christian may use his money: for his family (1 Tim 5:4), for payment of taxes and good deeds (Rom 13:7,8; Titus 3:1,14). One need not give all he has to the Lord. But this should not lead us to think that we are not responsible for all of it. We are stewards of it all. Will the rust of our unused blessings eat our flesh as fire in that day too? This is a serious question for members of prosperous churches” - J. W. Roberts.

You have heaped up [laid up your] treasure. Compare with Mt 6:19 — It is not necessarily wrong to accumulate wealth. But God’s word certainly teaches that it imposes heavy responsibilities and dangers upon those who do.

To amass wealth through covetousness or greed is idolatry - Col 3:5.

With the proper exercise of stewardship money can be used to further the kingdom of God. And many Christians with means do this. Yet many die and leave their estates unused and let them go to the state in taxes or to relatives who are not Christians or are not faithful and will not use them to God’s glory. Cf: 1 Tim 6:6,9.

In (For) the last days. See verse 1. It is also possible that the last days refers to the Messianic age. Cf: Rom 2:5.

C. SELFISHNESS AND ITS ENDS..... 5:4-6

4. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields (Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down [mowed] your fields).

For a land owner to hold back the hire from the ones who were directly responsible for his great harvest is almost inconceivable. Cf: Deut 24:15.

Which you kept back by fraud, cry out (which is of you held back by fraud, crieth). Cf: Gen 4:10; Ex 2:23.

The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus has: "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away his neighbor's living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire is a bloodshedder." The word "defraudeth" in this text is the same one that James has just used.

Cry Out (Crieth). Κράζει, present tense, shows continual crying out. It is a figurative use for the demand that injustice be avenged.

The cries...have reached (are [have] entered into) the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Sabaoth: "Hosts" or "Armies." Angels whom God might send forth to carry out His will.

Have Reached (are entered). Εἰσελήλυθαν, perfect tense, showing that the cries come to the ears of the Lord and remain so that He does not forget and that they are not in vain.

Our almighty God has an ear for the cries of the oppressed and He makes their cause His own, so that they have a very strong defender.

The Lord of Sabaoth. This phrase is used only here and Rom 9:29 in the N.T., but is used 282 times in the O.T. and is sometimes translated "Lord Almighty." This phrase became one of the highest titles for the power and majesty of Jehovah God. Cf: Isa 1:6; 6:3.

There is a bit of irony here: the rich saved their wealth in order to help themselves, but their hoarded riches will only testify against them (Wiersbe).

All who are tempted to cheat a fellow man should remember who works justice.

5. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury (Ye have lived in pleasure [delicately] on the earth).

In pleasure [delicately]. Denotes soft luxury. This word is not used in this form anywhere else in the New Testament. Another form is found in Lk 16:19.

In a survey taken in 1876 across the U.S. the American family had 16 items they needed to exist and 84 wants. The same survey in 1976 showed the American family had 92 items they needed to exist and 484 wants.

It is possible to have a luxurious life temporarily (on earth) by dishonesty. Cf: Amos 6:1-6.

And luxury (and been wanton) [taken in your pleasure]. In the New Testament the word for “luxury (wanton) [pleasure]” is used only here and 1 Tim 5:6 of the widow who lives in pleasure and thus “is dead while she lives.”

It means to live in lewdness and lasciviousness.

Ye have fattened (nourished) your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Compare: Jer 25:34; Isa 34:2,61; Ezek 21:15.

The rich have fattened themselves up for the fatal day. It is as though animals had supplied their own food which eventually prepared them for the slaughter.

Josephus (*Wars* 5,10,2; 13,4) and Plummer (*The Early days of Christianity*, p. 344ff) can be read to see the way the rich were killed at the destruction of Jerusalem.

This reference here by James probably refers to the day of judgment rather than to the destruction of Jerusalem.

6. You have condemned, you have murdered (and killed) the just [righteous one]. This could mean Jesus (Acts 3:14; 7:12; 22:14; 1 Jn 2:1) or any just man!

He does not resist you. This leads James into his next exhortation.

James here describes the helplessness of the victims of the ruthless, ungodly rich (Toole).

Also the book of 1 Peter tells Christians, using Christ as their example, how to act in a time of persecution. Note especially 1 Pet 2:21ff.

Cf: Mt 5:39; Rom 12:19.

X. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD MISTREATMENT..... 5:7-12

A. BE PATIENT, THE LORD IS COMING..... 5:7,8

7. Therefore be patient, brethren. Patient: Μακροθυμήσατε. This has to do with our normal view of patience. It means to “hold the mind in check.”

This same word is used to describe God in 2 Pet 3:9 as “longsuffering.” Our sins do not provoke Him to destroy us at the moment we sin.

It also describes the attitude which can endure delay, bear suffering and never give in.

The opposite meaning of this word in the Greek is “wrath.”

Until (unto) the coming of the Lord.

Coming. Παρουσίας. Lit: “Presence of the Lord.” In the New Testament this word when used in connection with Christ, usually refers to His second coming.

See how the farmer (behold the husbandman) waits for the precious fruit of the earth.

A farmer does not expect his harvest on the very day he plants the seed.

Waiting patiently for it (and hath long patience for it). James is repeating the word “longsuffering” - v. 7.

Just because a farmer may have some disappointments over his crops (weeds, birds, etc.), he does not impatiently plow up everything.

Until it (he) receives the early and latter rain. Christians must also wait until the proper time.

8. You also be patient.

Let the example of the farmer show you that if one can be patient in material things, one can also be patient in spiritual matters.

Establish your hearts.

Establish. Στηρίζατε, “to strengthen, make stable.”

Compare 1 Thess 3:13.

Prepare yourselves to endure difficult times, even though they are not convenient, with a fixed faith.

One day we will reap if we do not give up!

For the coming of the Lord is at hand (draweth nigh).

Is at hand (draweth nigh). ἤγγικεν, “has drawn near.”

If the later date is accepted (approximately 62 A.D.) for the writing of this book, the final event which Jesus said must transpire before Christians could look for His return was not far away (the destruction of Jerusalem). After that event Christians were told to expect and watch for His coming at any time.

We are still to live in anticipation without knowing the date. Jesus taught this in Mt 24:37-39.

B. BE STRONG BECAUSE OF THE PROMISE..... 5:9

9. Do not grumble against one another (Grudge [murmur] not one against another), brethren, lest you be condemned [not judged]: Behold, the Judge is standing at the door (standeth before the door).

The illustration is like a father returning home and entering the house quickly to find the children forgetful of their duties and beginning to complain and quarrel among themselves.

James is aware of the fact that God’s judgment will take strict account of the Christian’s behavior as well as that of their persecutors.

C. PATIENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRIUMPHANT. 5:10,11

10. Take the prophets...as an example of suffering and patience (take... the prophets...for an example of suffering affliction and of patience).

They were to remember how the prophets had also suffered wrongs but persevered in their midst without complaint.

Compare: Heb 11:33ff; 2 Chron 36:16; 23:37; 1 Thess 2:15; Mt 5:12; 23:29ff; Acts 7:52.

11. We count them blessed (happy) who (which) endure.

Compare: 1:12; Dan 12:12.

It is always easy for us to look at others who endure and say how blessed they are, but it seems to be different when it is our time to endure!

You have heard of the perseverance (patience) of Job.

This “perseverance” goes back to the patience of ὑπομείναντας.

There may be a faith that never complains or questions BUT the greater faith is the one which is tortured by questions, such as Job’s, and still believes.

The book of Job points out that God has a purpose in the chastisement of His children - Heb 12:5ff.

Job also teaches us that God has higher purposes in suffering than the punishing of sins (Wiersbe).

Assuming we have a knowledge of Job we can see that it is pleasing to God for us to be faithful in trials. James encourages us to do so.

And seen the end intended by the Lord (and have seen the end of the Lord).

End. Τέλος, “goal, purpose, outcome, result, conclusion.”

He uses trials to produce steadfastness to make us better Christians. Cf: 1:2-4.

You cannot persevere unless there is a trial in your life. There can be no victories without battles; there can be no peaks without valleys. If you want the blessing, you must be prepared to carry the burden and fight the battle (Wiersbe).

That the Lord is very compassionate (pitiful) [full of pity] and merciful (of tender mercy) [merciful].

James wants to reassure his readers that, just as God doubly blessed Job after he proved himself faithful, He will do no less to them in a spiritual manner, if they bear their troubles with the patience that Job exhibited. Cf: 2 Cor 11:23-33; Heb 4:16; 1 Pet 2:20-23.

D. SWEARING FORBIDDEN. 5:12

12. But above all (things). I.e.: “The most important thing to be aware of under these circumstances is: do not swear.”

This section is not forbidding profanity. That was already discussed in 3:9-12 — “profane silence.”

Do not swear (swear not). Compare Mt 5:34ff.

Either by heaven or by earth (neither by heaven, neither by earth). The Jews avoided the use of God's name and argued that oaths of this kind were not binding.

But Jesus taught that *all* oaths are binding (*except* for some provided in the Law - Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21).

Or with (neither by) any other oath. "Any other oath of the same kind."

James used ἄλλος meaning "another of the same kind" rather than ἕτερος meaning "another of a different kind."

For more information on this see J. W. Robert's commentary on James, pp. 199-204

Jesus took oaths - Mt 26:63ff; Mk 14:61,62.

Paul used between 200-300 oaths in the New Testament. Cf: 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Cor 1:23; Rom 1:9; Phil 1:8; 2 Tim 4:1ff.

By Jewish law if you stood by someone who took an oath you were bound to remind him of it. And a woman had to have her husband's approval to make an oath.

For more information see J. W. McGarvey, *New Testament Commentary on Matthew and Mark* — comment on Mt 5:34ff.

But let your "yes" (yea) be "yes" (yea) and your "no" (nay) be "no" (nay) lest you fall into judgment.

To say more than "yes" or "no" by the use of lesser oaths, when they were not considered oaths, was to bring the user into the act of profanity.

It was profanity because they were avoiding the name of God and using the lesser oaths so that they would not be bound to keep them.

Therefore, in ordinary speech, one should simply give his word and that becomes his bond.

If one should engage in this flippant, vain and needless swearing his "idle words" will bring him into judgment. Cf: Mt 12:36.

Honest and truthful people need no more than a simple “yes” or “no” to convey the truth to others (Toole).

The best guarantee of any statement is not an oath, BUT the good character of the man who makes it!

As Christians, no one should ever think of demanding an oath from us BECAUSE they would be certain that we always tell the truth!

The New Testament view is that every word is spoken in God’s presence and should therefore be true.

XI. THE CHRISTIAN IN ILLNESS AND SIN..... 5:13-20

A. PRAYER AND SINGING..... 5:13

13. Is anyone (any) among you suffering (afflicted)?

Suffering (afflicted) - may refer to things other than illness. This same word is also translated as “bonds” in 2 Tim 2:9 and is used of the hardships of the evangelistic life in 2 Tim 2:3; 4:5.

James also uses this word in 5:10 concerning the prophets.

This verse serves as a transition between the previously mentioned suffering and the more specific one beginning in verse 14.

Let him pray. Imperative. Lit.: “Let him keep on praying.”

“The prayer of faith” – the faith is not in the means, but in God who works through the means (Erdman).

The “prayer of faith” is a prayer offered when you know the will of God (Wiersbe).

Praying in faith that God’s will be done will enable us to stand up under and overcome all difficulties.

It will also secure for us God’s help. This is especially preferred over impulsive outbursts of oaths - v. 12.

Also consider the following on prayer: 1:5; 5:7,16; Psa 46:1; 1 Pet 3:12; Psa 62:8; 50:15; Mt 7:9-11.

Is anyone cheerful (Is any merry)? Let him sing psalms [praise].

This is an imperative (command)! When we are cheerful, do we sing praises OR is this withheld for “worship time?” OR do we go to God only in times of suffering?

It is not unusual for one to go to God during his time of need, BUT it is the tendency of the weak to neglect things of a religious nature when all things are going well.

Beware – if a song is not biblical it is not acceptable to God (Wiersbe).

For additional discussion see TRANSLATION OF PSALLO and PSALLO, ITS MEANING.

B. ILLNESS AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER. 5:14-18

14. Is anyone among you sick?

This refers to the one who is without physical strength. This IS NOT to be applied spiritually. Cf: Jn 5:3 for this same word.

ALSO compare this verse with the additions in verse 15, “and if he has (have) committed sins.”

Let him call for elders of the church. Some Catholic Church translations translate this as “call for the priest.”

There may have been elders endowed with the gift of healing, but there is no indication that all of them possessed it or that it was given to any of them because they were elders. Thus if James had had miraculous healing in mind, his injunction to any one who was sick would have been, “Let him call for someone in the church who has the gift of healing” (Toole).

Other New Testament passages on elders: Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5ff.

And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Anointing with oil is secondary to the praying! “Let them pray” is the main verb, while “anointing” is a participle making it the secondary act. The efficacy of prayer and dependence on God and His grace must always underlie any and all acts calculated to help us in our infirmities and needs (Toole).

Anointing - this is not the usual word used but is ἀλείψαντες meaning “to rub in.” The word is used basically for the outward anointing of the body. It was also used in the sense of applying lotion for a sick horse.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN: In the early church there is reference to anointing the sick. Irenaeus in 185 claimed this was a heresy. Before the end of the 8th century a change began to appear in the western Church (centered in Rome) where the medicinal use of oil began to merge into an anointing of those who were thought to be on the verge of death — Extreme Unction. It was not used as a means of recovery, but used with the idea of Remission of Sins. And it was being used in connection with the giving of the VIATICUM (the last sacrament as provision for the WAY, for the last journey of the soul).

In the 16th century, at the Council of Trent, this so-called sacrament received authoritative definition in the Roman Church. That Council declared that this man-made idea is “implied by Mark and commended and promulgated by James...” Consider this comment by Farrar, “Neither for Extreme Unction, nor for sacramental confession nor sacerdotal absolution, nor for fanatical extravagance does this passage afford the slightest sanction.”

The so-called sacrament of the Catholic Church (extreme unction) is administered with the view to the sick person dying, whereas James’ calling for oil and praying is with the view to the sick person living (Toole).

THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE MEANINGS THIS PASSAGE CAN HAVE:

1. That it endorses using the best available medical means for the sick (as oil was in the 1st century. Cf: Lk 10:34; Isa 1:6; Jer 8:22; 46:11; Josephus, *Wars* 1,33,5; *Antiquities* 17,6,5; Pliny, *Natural History* 31:47). This is approved in the Bible along with prayer asking for God’s providential help; especially by those who would be righteous - v. 16.

For a defense of this position see Ross, *James and John*, New International Commentary Series; and Lenski, *Interpretation of James*.

2. That it was miraculous healing in the 1st century. Oil was used in the 1st century in some cases where miracles were worked - Mk 6:13. Prayer was a part of the preparation both of the miracle worker and the onlookers - Mt 17:21; Jn 11: 41ff.

The reason the elders were called is probably because elders would be a most likely group to have received miraculous gifts. If so, this has no direct bearing nor direct teaching for the church today. Since miraculous healing did take place in New Testament time and since healing would be more certain to offer aid to the sick, and since it is the prayer of faith, not the anointing, that results in healing - J. W. Roberts, J. W. Mc Garvey and others take this view.

The anointing with oil was secondary, it was the *prayer of faith* that was the main thing. Just as Jesus used mud on a man's eyes, it was not the mud that returned his sight, but the man's faith in Jesus.

SPECIAL NOTE: It is obvious from the practice and teaching of the Scripture that such miraculous gifts did not outlast the apostolic age of the church. Notice the following:

- a. The main reason for miraculous gifts was to confirm the Word. Cf: Mk 16:20; Heb 2:3,4; Acts 14:3; Jn 20:30,31. But this does not pertain now because the Word is fully given and confirmed.
- b. The scriptures teach that the gifts were to cease. Cf: 1 Cor 13:8-13.
- c. Gifts could be received only by the laying on of an apostle's hands. Cf: Acts 8:14-17. When the last apostle died there was no one else who could pass the gifts on.
- d. Church history confirms this conclusion because efforts to revive such gifts in the post-apostolic church were considered heresies. Cf: Monantist.
- e. "Modern practice" confirms it because the "healings" performed today are never the kind that remove doubt. The miracles of the apostolic age did remove doubt, such as sight given to the blind or raising the dead.

15. And the prayer of faith - on the part of those doing the praying. God requires that when we pray, we do so believing that He hears, that He can and will answer His children's petitions according to His will.

SPECIAL NOTE: No faith was required on the receiver's part. Cf: Lk 8:49-56; Jn 9:1-38; Acts 3:1-10.

Will (shall) save the [him that is] sick. "Save" here means "heal." Forgiveness of sins is mentioned later.

Under 1st century circumstances the healings had to confirm the Word and was NOT just for the sake of healing someone. Cf: Paul was not healed (2 Cor 12:7) nor Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20).

Those who would claim that the gifts of healing, etc., are an integral part of the atonement of Christ and a part of the gospel for all, must refuse to consider such passages!

“The conclusion that God’s power can only be manifested miraculously, as in the signs that were present in the early church, is false. But it is just as false to conclude that God is out of the picture, that He is either unwilling or unable to manifest His power through the physical laws He has created, that such laws are not subject to His control. Such a conclusion would rule out any need of prayer and deny the providence of God” (Toole).

And the Lord will (shall) raise him up. The raising is from the sickbed, which is the effect of the cure just mentioned.

And if he has committed sins. 3rd class conditional — very probable.

This construction implies that this person may also be a backslider or has sins which he has not corrected.

Many Jews had the belief that the only ones that are sick are so because they were sinners - Jn 9:1,2.

This is not teaching that sin is the direct cause of his illness because the Lord taught this was not true. Cf: Lk 13:1ff; Jn 9:1-3.

Sickness often makes men who are sinful more conscious of their spiritual condition. Thus, those in sin who call for the elders should be helped to realize that to confess their sins (next verse) and remove them is a condition of their being healed - v. 16c.

He will be forgiven (they shall be forgiven him). This forgiveness is conditional as all forgiveness is. The condition is the subject of the next clause.

SEE SPECIAL STUDY: *ELDERS ANOINTING WITH OIL*, W. Wilcox.

16. Confess your trespasses to one another (Confess therefore your sins [faults] one to another).

Therefore is omitted in the New King James.

The “therefore” is important — it connects this thought with the previous one. The sense is: “For this reason confess your sins.”

Confession presumes repentance (Acts 8:32). The principle of confession is broader than this specific circumstance (1 Jn 1:9) and is in continuous action — i.e. continue to confess.

NOTE: James does not just say to confess that you *are* a sinner BUT to confess *your sins*!

To one another. This does not apply to a priestly set of workers. And IF it did apply to the elders it would still not be approval for the Roman Catholic idea of “Confessionals.”

Luther: “A strange confessor! His name is ‘One Another.’”

And pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Healed. 1st aorist, passive, subjunctive. The original Greek shows that it is God who is doing the healing.

This refers specifically to this context. In these cases the sin stands between him and his being healed. *If* he is willing to confess his sins, *then* the elders may do as they were called to do.

The tense of these imperatives is durative implying the praying and the healing were going on all the time. This is used of the soul in Mt 13:15; 1 Pet 2:24; Heb 12:13.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man (The effectual fervent prayer [supplication] if a righteous man). This type of prayer is an earnest entreaty for something for which one longs.

Avails much [in its working]. “Able to do much.”

The petition of a righteous man avails when it is doing its work, which is petitioning, pleading and begging.

The action of prayer must be earnestly and persistently engaged in. God wants us to express our desires and thoughts. Cf: Lk 11:5-8; 18:1-8; Mt 15:21-28.

17,18. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours (Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are). Also (N.A.S.B.) “like passions.”

The Jews in the Intertestamental period developed an exaggerated opinion of Elijah, making him a mysterious heavenly figure. By thinking that Elijah was some extraordinary figure, they thought his prayer might be different from ours. If he was like us, and if God answered his prayers, why not ours?

And he prayed earnestly [fervently]. Lit: “He prayed with prayer.” This is an intensive way, in the Greek, of telling us how he prayed.

Many people do not pray in their prayers. They just lazily say religious words and their hearts are not in their prayers (Wiersbe).

That it would not rain; and it did not rain (that it might not rain, and it rained not)...and he prayed again and the heaven gave rain.

These events were miraculous. But they were obtained through natural prayer.

The same God who heard and answered Elijah's fervent prayer (after the seventh time) will do the same for us today (in a non-miraculous manner).

Cf: 1 Kgs 17:11-18:45. NOTE: God had promised to withhold rain if they were evil and to give rain if they repented.

C. CONVERTING ERRING BRETHREN..... 5:19,20

19. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth (Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth).

The truth: Cf: Jn 3:21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

TRUTH is something that must be *done*!

- a. It is not only the object of the search of the mind; it is always the truth issuing in action.
- b. It is not only something to be studied; but something to be done.
- c. It is not only something to which a man must submit his mind, but something to which he must submit his whole life!

One cannot wander (err) from the truth unless he has been in it.

The death from which he is saved must be spiritual. IF NOT when one is saved he will physically live forever.

To "wander" ("err") is to stray, not to reject.

This is proof that one can fall away, fall from grace. Cf: Gal 5:4.

And someone turns him back (and one convert him).

Turns back (convert). Ἐπιστρέψῃ, "to turn around, to turn, to convert."

Some have put themselves beyond turning back (Heb 6:4ff; 10:26ff), but others have not so seared their consciences.

20. Let him know,...will (shall) save a soul from death.

Eternal life is the life in mind here.

This does not appear to be significant in many of our lives today, for if it were we would think more about its greatness and do more about it.

And cover (shall hide) a multitude of sins.

The sins meant here are those of the one converted, for his sins are covered by the blood of Christ.

This is indeed a labor worthy of a Christian!

Calvin: "We must take heed lest souls perish through (our) pure sloth(fulness) whose salvation God puts in a manner in our hands. Not that we can bestow salvation on them, but that God by our ministry delivers and saves those who otherwise seem to be near destruction."

The highest honor God can give is bestowed upon anyone who leads another to God; for when we do that we have actually shared in the work of Jesus Christ, the Savior of men!

FINIS

A P P E N D I C E S

JAMES, THE BROTHER OF THE LORD
by Jerry Moffitt

Outline Of This Essay

- I. A brief chronology.¹
- II. Who this James is not:
 - A. He is not an unknown James.
 - B. He is not James, the brother of Judas (not Iscariot).
 - C. He is not James the brother of John, a son of Zebedee.
- III. Various Theories:
 - A. Hieronymian theory (a cousin of Jesus).
 - B. Ephiphanian theory (a half-brother of Jesus by previous marriage).
 - C. Helvidian theory (a uterine brother of Jesus through Mary).
- IV. What we know about this James.
- V. Some interesting descriptions of this James.

A Selected Chronology

Event	Date
Conversion of Saul (Acts 9)	37 A.D.
Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18)	40 A.D.
James, son of Zebedee, beheaded (Acts 12)	44 A.D.
The meeting of the apostles in Jerusalem concerning the Gentile problem. James speaks (Acts 15). Paul confronts Peter (Gal. 2:11-14) a little later in the year.	50 A.D.
Paul writes to the Galatians	56 A.D.

Paul meets with James and the elders (Acts 21), then apprehended by the Jews.

59 A.D.

Introduction

The task before us in this essay is to identify who the James is who is mentioned in the book of Galatians. Paul gives an account of where he learned and did not learn his gospel. In that account he says, "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). Whoever this James is, he is certainly the same one of Galatians 2:12: "For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles...." So in this study we will try to determine who this James was, in what sense he was an apostle, and what bearing this might have on Paul's argument.

Who This James Was Not

First we must state that he is certainly not some unknown James. Paul uses the name here as one who is prominent and well known to the church. Since he is so well known, it is unthinkable that he could be hidden from scripture or from history. Where would he have been during the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15? No, surely he is someone recorded well in history and in scripture.

Next, it does not seem that he is the James who was the brother of Judas (not Iscariot). This is an "otherwise unknown James described in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13"² as "of James." The expression probably means that Judas is the son of this James, and would have reference to the apostle's father.

Finally, I do not believe the text speaks of James the brother of John, both of whom were the sons of Zebedee. Nicoll says, "James is here described as the brother of the Lord in order to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee, who was living at the time of Paul's first visit; but elsewhere as James: after the death of the other James, there could be no question who was meant."³ So it seems Paul calls him James the Lord's brother because, during the incident Paul writes about in Galatians 1:18,19, James the son of Zebedee was still alive. Lenski and Hendrickson, in their commentaries, agree that he is called the Lord's brother to distinguish him from James of Zebedee, one of the twelve.

So, we have joined the majority of scholars who have eliminated the alternatives mentioned above. Now let us look further.

Theories on the Brother of the Lord

The Hieronymian Theory

Hieronymos is Greek for Jerome, and this theory takes its name from him, for he seems to be the first who put it together. Barclay says it is important for “it is the fixed and settled belief of the Roman Catholic Church.”⁴ It is a difficult and complicated theory which rests on a series of assumptions. In the main, it argues that the brothers of Jesus were really his cousins. Let us note the steps on which the theory rests.

1. James the brother of the Lord is called an apostle (Gal. 1:19).
2. Jerome next assumes that the word *apostle* can only be used of the twelve, and since James the apostle, brother of John, was killed (Acts 12:2), this James must be the other apostle, James the son of Alphaeus.
3. Now it gets a little difficult, so read carefully and patiently. If you work at it a little, you can get it straight. Mark 6:3 says of Jesus, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of *James*, and *Joses*, and *Judas*, and *Simon*?” Now notice Mark 15:40. At the crucifixion of Christ these women were there:

And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome.

Here Jerome says James the less is the same as James the brother of Jesus, for both have a mother called Mary and a brother called Joses. And notice, too, that he is called in the various lists of the apostles, James the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Acts 1:13). So James the brother of the Lord, James the less, and James the son of Alphaeus, Jerome assumes, are all really the same person, for there was only one other James (besides the slain brother of John) in the apostles.

4. Now the final step is no less complicated, and Jerome bases it on John 19:25. Notice it:

But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

But look at it again. How many women were there? Should it be read like this:

- a. Jesus' mother.
- b. Jesus' mother's sister.
- c. Mary the wife of Clopas.
- d. Mary Magdalene.

Or should it be read like this:

- a. Jesus' mother.
- b. Jesus' mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas.
- c. Mary Magdalene.

Jerome insists that the second way is correct, that three women are there, and that Jesus' mother's sister and Mary the wife of Clopas are the same. If it is true that there were only three women present, and if you eliminate the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, the lists (Mk. 15:40; Matt. 27:56; and John 19: 25) say the following about this third Mary:

- a. She is the mother of James and Joses, Mk. 15:40.
- b. She is the mother of James the less and Joses, Matt. 27:56.
- c. She is the sister of Jesus' mother, Jn. 19:25.
- d. And she is the wife of Clopas, Jn. 19:25.

So James would be the son of Mary (that Mary who was a sister to the mother of the Lord). He would be the son of her husband, Clopas, and hence a cousin to Jesus.

Objections to the View

The objections are weighty against the view, and they are not easily set aside in a plausible way. Let us look at them.

1. It is without precedent that Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary the mother of James could be sisters (Jn. 19:25). Who ever heard of parents naming children by the same name - Mary! To counter this McClintock and Strong says they were sisters in the sense that they were sisters-in-law."⁵ Joseph and Clopas, then, would be brothers. Clopas died without issue and Joseph took her to wife and had children before he married Mary the mother of the Lord. Of course, this departs from the cousin idea to the no-relation theory. But this has no scriptural support, nor are sisters-in-law really sisters. And there is the weighty objection that John 7:5 says that the brethren of Jesus did not believe on him. How could James be an apostle and not believe on the Lord? McClintock and Strong argue that perhaps some of them did not believe.⁶ But the text says "his brethren," not "some of his brethren."

2. The James Jerome argues for is said to be the son of Alphaeus (Mk. 3: 18). But Jerome says James the son of Alphaeus is the same James who had a mother married to Clopas. It would seem that Jerome's James has two fathers - Alphaeus and Clopas.

McClintock and Strong and others say the names are the same, and derived from the same root, *Clopas* the Hebrew and *Alphaeus* from the Greek. But it recognizes that some think the identity of the names is uncertain. Woods says, "If it is conceded that the names Clopas and Alphaeus derive from the same source, these are distinct appellations and there is no reason to assume that in this, or in any other instance, they refer to the same individual."⁷

3. It is without lexical support that *brother* (of the Lord) could stand for cousin. Barclay says, "If James was the cousin of Jesus, it is extremely unlikely - perhaps impossible - that he would be called the *adelphos*, the brother of Jesus."⁸ Woods adds, "Moreover, there is a word for cousin (*anepsios*) occurring in the Greek text of Col. 4:10."⁹
4. The word *apostle* just means "one sent forth."¹⁰ Jerome is wrong when he assumes that it cannot have a wider use than that of twelve. It is used of Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14), Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), and other unnamed brethren (2 Cor. 8:23). These were evidently apostles of the churches (Phil. 2:5; 1 Thess. 2:6). Barclay says, "It is quite impossible to limit the word apostle to the Twelve; and, if that be so, it is no longer necessary to look for James the Lord's brother among the Twelve, and the whole argument of Jerome collapses."¹¹
5. In Acts 1:13 James the son of Alphaeus is listed with the twelve apostles, and is contrasted with Jesus' "brethren." Notice:

¹³And when they were come in, they went up into the upper chamber, where they were abiding; both Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, *James, the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon the zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, *and with his brethren*.

But it is argued, why is there only one James mentioned after the death of James the brother of John? McClintock and Strong admit this other fact, however: (this) "may easily be accounted for on the ground that probably only one, 'the brother of the Lord,' remained at Jerusalem; and, under such circumstances the silence of the historian respecting the son of Alphaeus is not more strange than respecting several of the other apostles, whose names never occur after the catalogue in 1:13."¹² So James the brother of the Lord remained in

Jerusalem while James the son of Alphaeus, the apostle, was on an extended missionary tour.

6. The idea that four women, and not three, in John 19:25 has never been removed, nor have I found any arguments which attempt to remove it. Notice John 19:25:

But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother (1), and his mother's sister(2), Mary the wife of Clopas (3), and Mary Magdalene (4).

This would make Mary's sister and Mary the wife of Clopas two distinct people. The weighty argument in favor of four women is that if Mary's sister is really the Mary who is the wife of Clopas, that makes two sisters with the same name.

7. The theory is novel in the sense that it was never heard until 383 A.D. when Jerome came up with it. Barclay says, "And it is quite certain that it would never have been produced for any other reason than to conserve and bolster the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary."¹³

The Epiphanian Theory

This theory is the work of Epiphanius who advocated it around 370 A.D. It is said to be the most prevalent theory of the early church. Schaff says, "it has a strong traditional support in the apocryphal Gospels and in the Eastern Church."¹⁴ This theory argues that the brothers of the Lord were children of Joseph by a previous marriage, and were really, therefore, half-brothers. The substance of the theory appears in an apocryphal book named the *Book of James*, often called the *Protevangelium*, which was probably written in the middle of the second century. The book is very fanciful and has many miracles attending the wedlock of Joseph and Mary, but it depicts Joseph with sons. Later, in old age, he takes Mary to wife. Let us look at the evidences for the theory:

1. The question is asked, Would Jesus have committed His mother to the care of John, if she had other sons besides Himself (Jn. 19:26,27)? Barclay says, "The answer to that so far as we know, Jesus' family were quite out of sympathy with Him, and it would hardly have been possible to commit his mother to their care."¹⁵ I am not satisfied with that, for they seem to believe in Jesus in a short while (Acts 1;13,14), and even step-sons take care of a mother. It may be, however, that the brethren may have had work of the Lord to do far afield. Too, James the brother of the Lord would live an almost ascetic life, and would not be able to care for Mary. Too, John may have been more stable, and of a perfect temperament to give her care.

2. It is argued that the behavior of his brethren do not act as younger brethren to an older brother. They want him to go home and question him (Mark 3:21, 31-35 and John 7:1-5). Yet, cannot younger brethren, under the prompting of their mother, act that way? Especially if they were worried about him?
3. "Well," some continue, "Joseph must have been older and died before Jesus' mission, because he disappears from the scriptural account." But think under how many circumstances this might have occurred and Joseph still have fathered the brethren of Jesus by Mary after Jesus was born.
4. Someone else might wonder why early Christian tradition would be so heavily in favor of the view. But anyone familiar with Christian tradition knows how unreliable it is, how much it errs, and how quickly it goes astray. Too, much Christian tradition argue that they were real brother of Jesus through Mary. But let us look at objections to the Epiphanian Theory.
 - a. There is absolutely no direct evidence for the view in scripture. It can only be supported by the indirect, and I might say, flimsy evidence above.
 - b. Barclay says, "But basically this theory springs from the same origin as the Hieronymian theory. Its aim, and the reason for its existence, is to conserve the perpetual virginity of Mary."¹⁶ So the view is subject to the criticism of an ascetic bias, and *should be* suspect on those grounds. Schaff says, it is "the first step towards the dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary."¹⁷
 - c. Woods presents another objection: "On this assumption, these 'brethren' were not related to Christ *at all*! Jesus was not related to Joseph by ties of the flesh; *they* (on this hypothesis) would bear no kinship to Mary, mother of Christ; so they would sustain no kinship with him whatsoever."¹⁸ This is obviously true, and the scripture, therefore, could not really call him the "brother of the Lord" (Gal. 1: 19). See also Matthew 13:55,56.
 - d. Schaff adds, "To these objections may be added, with Farrar, that if the brethren had been elder sons of Joseph, Jesus would not have been regarded as legal heir of the throne of David (Matt. 1:16; Lk. 1:27; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16)."¹⁹ The force of this argument is that the oldest son had the right to ascend to the throne.

So, though the theory is very ancient, it has severe problems. The traditional view has been, it seems, influenced by asceticism and fanciful gnostic gospels.

The Helvidian Theory

Helvidius advanced the view that the brothers of the Lord were born of Mary and Joseph, and were thus, to use a technical term, uterine brothers of Jesus. Jerome strongly attacked this view and opposed Helvidius. Let us look at the support for this view:

1. It does not have the serious problems which adhere to the other views. You do not have the problem of two sisters, both named Mary. You do not have to deal with James giving two fathers - Clopas and Alphaeus. There is not the problem that *brother* really means cousin or that *apostle* can only mean one of the twelve. Nor is this view suspect as trying to teach the perpetual virginity of Mary. Nor do you have the problem that the brethren of Jesus were really not his brothers at all.
2. The birth accounts of Jesus imply that Mary had other children after Jesus was born. Notice the following scriptures:

²⁴And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife;

²⁵*and knew her not till* she had brought forth a son: and he called his name Jesus. (Matt. 1:24,25).

⁷And she brought forth *her firstborn son*; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger....” (Luke 2:7).

Here we see Joseph knew her not (a euphemism for the marriage act) until she gave birth to Jesus. That implies that he “knew” her later. And Luke calls Jesus her first-born, which implies there was at least a second-born son later on.

3. Roberts says, “Further it is argued that this is the natural conclusion from the description of these children as the brothers and sisters of Jesus.”²⁰ Notice:

⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter’s son? It not his mother called, Mary? *and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas?*

⁵⁶and his sister, are they not all with us? (Matt. 13: 55,56).

Notice the natural way contemporaries viewed the brothers and sisters of Jesus as real brothers and sisters, James included.

4. Tertullian and Eusebius had the view that Jesus had real brothers and sisters, showing that some early Christians held the view. Tertullian thought it showed the sanctity of marriage.
5. Schaff says, "this is exegetically the most natural view and favored by the meaning of *adelphos* (especially when used as a standing designation), the constant companionship of these brethren with Mary (Jn. 2:12; Matt. 12:46; 13:55), and by the obvious meaning of Matt. 1:25."²¹ Yes, these brethren always seemed close to Mary, as if they were really children of hers.

About James The Lord's Brother

So we have the view that James the brother of the Lord is a real brother of Jesus, a son of Mary and Joseph. But what do we know of him?

Biblical Information

Joseph was a righteous man (Matt. 1:19), so we can assume James was raised in strict obedience to the law, that he had the constant example of Jesus his elder brother, and that he was raised in Nazareth. All children had good Jewish names, and James was named after Jacob of the Old Testament. He would have been acquainted with Gentile customs, for he was raised in Galilee of the Gentiles (Matt. 4:15).

He did not believe in Jesus at first (Mk. 3:21), and sought to make him quit his madness (Matt. 12:47; Luke 8:19; Jn. 7:5). After the resurrection of Christ he experienced a personal interview with Jesus (1 Cor. 15:7), and that seemed to have forever made him a strong believer. He is soon found abiding, along with his mother, with the apostles (Acts 1:13,14).

After the death of James the son of Zebedee, and with the probable absence of James the apostle (the son of Alphaeus), he slowly grew in importance in the church at Jerusalem, and in the brotherhood at large. Three years after Paul was converted, he visited with James at Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18,19). Fourteen years later Paul describes him as one of the pillars of the church (Gal. 2:1-9).

He took part in the meeting at Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal.2: 9), and sided with Paul, along with Peter, against the Judaizers (Acts 15:13-21). He is seen exercising the influence of a leader. And again, when Paul visits Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor saints (Acts 21), James is seen in the leadership, making recommendations to Paul.

Uninspired History

This is found in Josephus and Hegesippus. James is described as a very pious man. His knees were enlarged and calloused from being on them constantly in prayers to God for his people. He is said to have lived and acted as a Nazarite. Eusebius says;

But he was holy from his mother's womb. He did not drink wine or strong drink; he did not eat flesh; no razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil; and he did not use the baths... It was permitted to him alone to enter the Holy Place, for he did not wear wool clothing, but linen... He was called the "Just" and the "oblias" (which is in the Greek the "bulwark" of the people).²²

He seems to be highly respected by the Jews as well as by the Christians. He was, according to this history, thrown from the pinnacle of the temple when he loudly confessed Jesus. Still alive, he was stoned, and while praying for God to forgive his murderers, a laundryman hit him on the head with the club he used to beat the clothes. Thus James died, but I believe that he still speaks on earth in the book of James, which he wrote.

He was an apostle (Gal. 1:19) in the general sense of the word as we have described it in this paper. And being such a great influence, we can see how Paul gives great credence to his own unique apostleship, by showing he did not get his teaching from this James (Gal. 1:18-2:10).

ENDNOTES

1. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 Vols, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910), 1:220,221.
2. *The New Bible Dictionary*, S. V. "James," by R. V. G. Tasker.
3. W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 4:156.
4. William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters of James and Peter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 17.
5. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 1981, ed., S.V. "James," by John McClintok and James Strong.
6. Ibid.
7. Guy N. Woods, *James*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1982), p. 12.
8. Barclay, *James and Peter*, p. 13.
9. Woods, *James*, p. 13.
10. W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), 1:63.
11. Barclay, *James and Peter*, p. 19.
12. McClintock and Strong, "James," p. 755.
13. Barclay, *James and Peter*, p. 20.
14. Schaff, *History*, p. 273.
15. Barclay, *James and Peter*, p. 21.
16. Ibid., p. 22.
17. Schaff, *History*, p. 273.
18. Woods, *James*, p. 13.
19. Schaff, *History*, p. 274.

20. J. W. Roberts, *A Commentary on the General Epistle of James*, (Austin: R. B. Sweet Co., Inc., 1963), p. 9.
21. Schaff, *History*, pp. 272,273.
22. Roberts, *James*, pp. 229-233.

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- Barclay, William. *The Daily Study Bible Series. The Letters of James and Peter*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958.
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A DISAPPOINTMENT

Hugo McCord

Contrary to other recognized lexicons, the scholarly Arndt-Gingrich revision of Bauer's work added a phrase in regard to the word *psallo* in Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19, namely, "to the accompaniment of a harp." This being the first time that a scholarly lexicon had asserted that *psallo* in its New Testament usage included harp playing, J. W. Roberts talked with Dr. Gingrich in St. Louis. Dr. Gingrich attempted no defense, admitting that the phrase "to the accompaniment of a harp" was merely his private opinion.

After the passing of Dr. Arndt, Dr. Frederick W. Danker, a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, was asked, under the direction of Dr. Gingrich, to revise the A.G. Lexicon. Under date of September 28, 1962, Dr. Danker was written as follows:

"On the word *psallo*, since Thayer, Green, Abbott-Smith, etc., limit the New Testament meaning to sing praises, I would appreciate the reasoning that brought Doctors Arndt and Gingrich to insert 'to the accompaniment of a harp' in relationship to Rom. 15:9; Eph. 5:19; and 1 Cor. 14:15. Further, why is the phrase excluded in relationship to James 5:13?"

Professor Danker, under date of October 2, 1962, replied:

"It was so kind of you to take the time to make your inquiry regarding the word *psallo*. I see by comparison with Bauer's first edition that the editors of A.G. have incorporated the obvious Old Testament meaning into the metaphorical usage of the New Testament. Bauer did not make this mistake, and we will be sure to correct it in the revision. I doubt whether the archaeologists can establish the use of the harp in early Christian services.

"We shall be thankful for any further corrections or improvements you may be able to suggest for our lexicon."

Apparently Professor Danker omitted the phrase "to the accompaniment of a harp" when he sent his revision to the University of Chicago Press for publishing, and he thought it would not appear. But the new edition still has the phrase.

Bruce R. Curd, having read the Gospel Advocate article of November 1, 1962, entitled "Arndt-Gingrich to Be Corrected," on writing to Dr. Danker, received a reply from him that the new edition of A.G. without the phrase was now available at the University of Chicago Press. On Brother Curd's ordering the new revision, and finding it unchanged, his letter to the University of Chicago Press brought the following reply:

“Professor Gingrich feels that the comment makes valuable contributory information and he prefers to leave this expression in. Accordingly, in the reprints of the edition the expression still does appear and it is planned that page 899 will continue in this fashion.”

The writer of this article, under date of May 23, 1964, wrote Dr. Danker as follows:

“On the New Testament meaning of psallo, your letter of October 2, 1962, assured me that the revision of the Arndt-Gingrich lexicon would not incorporate ‘the obvious Old Testament meaning into the metaphorical usage of the New Testament.’ I was encouraged by your letter, for such correction would not only bring A.G. into harmony with Bauer, but also with other recognized lexicons. I am disappointed to learn that the revised A.G. has not been corrected. However unimportant this particular matter may be, I know that your standard of scholarship is accuracy. I should appreciate an explanation.”

Under date of July 6, the writer of this article again wrote Professor Danker:

“I have received no reply to my letter to you under date of May 23. If you perchance did not receive it, kindly advise and I shall rewrite it.”

In a letter mailed July 8, Professor Danker replied:

“Sorry about the delay. I have put your concern into the hopper of my research and you should see the results in the scholarly channels. In a few days I leave for a year of study in Europe.”

Gospel Advocate - August 20, 1964

At Abilene Christian College Lectures (1962) in an auditorium panel session before several hundred people, a Christian Church preacher used Arndt-Gingrich for his support. J. W. Roberts, a doctor in Greek, explained that he had talked personally at St. Louis with Dr. Gingrich inquiring why the Arndt-Gingrich lexicon had injected the harp into the New Testament. Dr. Gingrich attempted no defense, admitting that the Arndt-Gingrich insertion was merely his private opinion.

Gospel Advocate - November 1, 1962

ELDERS ANOINTING WITH OIL

James 5:14,15

by Warren Wilcox

This passage has been the center of much discussion throughout church history. It is safe to say that the Roman Catholic teaching concerning this passage is completely false since their concept is based on anointing one who is dying for preparation of judgment. The passage under consideration objectively has in view the recovery of a sick person. Therefore, further comments will be concerning other views of this passage, not the Catholic heresy.

There are still two major positions taken on the meaning of the verses. One is that the overall teaching is basically concerned with getting Christians to pray for other Christians who are sick and helping them get the best medical attention available in the age in which they live. The second position is that the passage dealt with miraculous healing which was current in the first century church. Evidence for both these positions has been given by scholars. For many of the arguments, the language and historical circumstances seem to fit both sides. It may not be possible to come to a certain conclusion with the information we have at present. However, either of these two interpretations fit other clear Biblical teaching and therefore, will not do violence to sound doctrine.

Our procedure will include looking at each phrase separately, then drawing some conclusions from our study.

IS ANY AMONG YOU SICK - James is giving instructions to those who are sick physically, not just spiritually. The context is about those who are physically suffering (see verses 10 & 13). The Greek word used for *sick* (*asthenei*) normally refers to the physical (as in Matt. 10:8; Lk. 7:10; Jn. 4:46; 11:3; Acts 9:37; Phil. 2:26,27; *et. al.*) The word in vs. 15 for *sick* is generally thought of as physically ailing (*kamnonta*). Further, it would not make good sense to say, "the prayer of faith shall forgive his sins and if he has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him (rephrasing vs. 15a & 15b), which is the logical interpretation if *sick* in vs. 14 refers to spiritual illness. Finally, to demand this verse refer to spiritual sickness would be to ignore the 3rd class conditional construction - "if" he has committed sins. This would show that he had not necessarily sinned in such a way to deserve his illness but was sick anyway. Therefore, his illness was not necessarily a 'spiritual' one since it was not known for sure if he had sinned (i.e. in such a way to be considered "sick" by James).

In addition to the fact that James is talking about physical illness, we also know he is referring to one who has been sick either a long time or very seriously. The word used in vs. 14 means "without strength." So one was not to call for the elders at the first sign of the sniffles. The word used in vs. 15 has a similar meaning as is noted in its translation in Hebrews 12:3 (weary) and Rev. 2:3 (fainted).

It is a valid Christian concern to take special care for those Christians who are sick (see matt. 25:26 & 3 John 2). And it needs to be added here that Christians do get sick contrary to that which is taught by Christian Scientists. Further, when he does get sick, it is not necessarily because of personal sin. Adam's responsibility plays a part in illness and death in this world affecting every innocent children with disease, etc. The book of Job certainly clarifies this area of study and is emphasized by Jesus in John 9 when He says, "Neither this man nor his parents...."

LET HIM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH - Why should the sick man have to call for the elders? Their prayers would certainly be more heartfelt if there by his bed rather than in a meeting. He also would be more comforted by their presence rather than just knowing they're praying for him at "church." Jesus showed this kind of proximity in waiting for the stone to be removed from Lazarus' tomb before He began to pray (John 11:41). Also elders need to show their concern for those under their over-sight, whatever their troubles were - physical or spiritual. Elders need to be able to do more for a congregation than just "meet."

But the greater question about this statement is why call for the elders as opposed to a physician or someone with powers to heal the sick? If this passage refers to miraculous healing (and in this study, the evidence seems heavier on that side), then why didn't James just state for them to seek someone with the gift of healing? This seems to be the main obstacle to an otherwise clear interpretation. But it is possible that the reason elders are called for is (1) they are known "righteous" men. Their prayer, for sure, would avail much. (2) It is most likely that as a general rule (and the letter seems to be giving a general rule rather than a specific instance of illness) the elders would be the most likely ones in a congregation to have been given gifts. (cf: Paul's concern for appointing elders in Acts 14:23). Two things are admitted in this consideration: (a) Not all congregations would have elders; therefore, this general rule would obviously not be effective in such cases; (b) This statement is not an absolute, i.e. not everyone who got sick could find at least one elder with healing gifts, not every eldership had at least one elder in it who could heal, and not everyone who called for elders who could heal would be made well since that would tend to insure "immortality" for them if they could always find those elders.

We know "it is appointed unto man once to die," and this rule would be in effect even during the age of miracles to some degree. But we also know that when the age of miracles closed that this would not be an event that would pass on to others. Therefore it would not apply to the church today. It has been suggested that one need of the early church was for Christians to live longer to get the gospel to the whole world in a short period of time (which they did - Col. 1:23). This may answer the objection, "Why would miracles be done for Christians instead of just for sign to unbelievers?" It will be discussed further under other points.

AND LET THEM PRAY OVER HIM - The only dispute concerning this phrase is about the necessity of interpreting "over" him as literal or as meaning "about" him. The

difference seems insignificant since, at least in the rest of the N.T. prayer position can be varied. The best ideas seem to agree that it means “about” him, i.e. in his behalf.

ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL - It is very clear that in the text itself this action does NOT do the healing. This is why it seems best to select the “miraculous” interpretation. It is the prayer of faith (discussed below) that causes the healing. If he had in mind the use of oil as medicine, why did James not tell us what kind of oil? Further, is the Holy Spirit inspiring a writer to say that OIL make people well of whatever illness they have? How could that make cancer, heart problems, etc. any better? True, it was used by the good Samaritan for wounds, but sickness is quite different.

It was not unusual to mention the use of oil, however. It was used for food (Rev. 6:6), cosmetics - hair oil (Mt. 6:17), embalming (Lk. 23:56), medicine (Lk. 10:34 as well as historical records by many including Celsus and Herod the Great (in Josephus), socially (Lk. 7:46), commodity (Lk. 16:6), and fuel for light (Mt. 25:3). It was used in religious ways by consecration of officials and sacred things and in offerings. And the word here for *anointing* is *aleiphantes* not *chrío* (secular vs sacred usage). However, many commentators point out one cannot truly differentiate between the secular and sacred usage of these words when non-Biblical sources are also considered.

There are two good explanations of the use of oil in connection with (miraculous) healing which seem to best fit the passage: (1) Relief - the anointing was done before the praying (note the tense - “having anointed”) and it would certainly bring about a physical relief of dry skin, bed-sore skin, etc. even as is done today in our hospitals. This would not be for the healing of the sickness but rather a preparation for getting ready to go out into public (of course the miracle would also take care of any “skin problems.”) It would also be used for such things as (2) an aid to the one upon whom the miracle was to be worked even as Jesus used spit (Mk. 7:33; 8:23), and clay and spit (Jn. 9:6) and the pool (Jn. 9:7). Why such things were used is not explained and we would do well not to become dogmatic with our conjectures about them.

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD - This best fits into the miraculous interpretation since this seems to be the normal expression connected with performing of many miracles (see Acts 4:10; 16:18; 19:13; Mt. 18:5; Mk. 9:39; Lk. 9:49; 10:17; Jn. 14:13; and especially Acts 3:6 - “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!”). It also includes the concept of doing things by the authority of Jesus (contrast the demons coming out and the man jumping on the exorcists who did not have the right to use the name of Jesus in Acts 19:13-16). Finally this phrase would include the idea that this act was done in accordance with the will of Jesus (the Lord).

Those who would interpret this section in connection with using the best medicine and prayer would interpret this phrase as a normal use of Jesus’ name in prayer. That does not seem to be the best understanding of this context.

AND THE PRAYER OF (THE - GK.) FAITH SHALL SAVE (heal) HIM THAT IS SICK - Although the sick man had faith or he would never have called for the elders, this phrase best fits the idea that the ones praying are the ones whose faith brought about the healing. Certainly the Scriptures teach there are times when the one healed did not have faith. See such passages as John 9:36 and Acts 3:3-5 in which the one healed did not even know who Jesus was or what was about to happen, respectively.

It also seems best to consider the phrase "the faith" (and the word *the* is in the Greek) as the kind of faith discussed in 1 Cor. 12:9 & 10, that is, a gift of faith, the kind that was given to some in the first century to perform miracles.

If this is the correct view this phrase becomes the key to the interpretation. It is the prayer of one who has miraculous faith that is responsible for the healing, not the oil *at all* - not even as medicine.

AND THE LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP - Of course the prayer would be ineffective if the Lord did not perform the actual healing. This is always the case; man has no power to perform miracles; nor is this talking about some psychosomatic healing - it is the work of the Lord. New Testament men of faith recognized this - Acts 3:12,16, etc. See especially Acts 9:34.

Even though not stated here, it must be understood that all acts (miraculous or otherwise) must be according to the will of the Lord. This Scripture, like Matthew 21:22 ("all things that you ask in My Name...") and John 14:14 ("If you ask anything in My Name..") and John 16:33 ("If you ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My Name") must be understood as being modified by the will of the Lord (even Jesus recognized this - Mt. 26:39) (see also 1 Jn. 5:14,15). Not all people were healed, even in the age of miracles since Paul (2 Cor. 12:8), Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25, 30), and Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23) did not receive miraculous healing. Further, the apostles, even though they had been healing, on one occasion were unable to do so (i.e. cast out a demon and heal) (Matt. 17:14-21). Therefore, the healing was "left up to the Lord."

PROBLEMS

Even though it seems best to interpret this passage as stated above, there are a few "loose ends," the main one being, "Why call for the elders rather than stating that the sick one ought to call for one with miraculous powers." Again, see the section dealing with this phrase at least to partially answer this idea, and then consider the following: If the book of James is the earliest book of the N.T. (and there is good evidence to suggest it is) written about 44 - 47 A.D. the church would be very Jewish in nature. The church would have elders, but so would the Jewish synagogue. But the Jewish elders would have no power to heal their charges. If Christians were healed by their elders this would confirm the fact that Christianity was now the "God-approved" religion, not Judaism. The news would spread fast in any community and aid in the spread of the

Gospel. This would also answer the question raised by this interpretation about why would miracles be used to help Christians since the primary purpose was to confirm the word. Further on this point note that in the raising of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42) that (1) she was a Christian (disciple) (vs. 36) and when she was raised he gave her to the *saints* and widows (vs. 41). (2) The effect of this miracle was that many believed (vs. 42) even though the miracle was done to A CHRISTIAN.

There are more problems with the “medicine and prayer” interpretation.

- (1) Why did the Holy Spirit give oil as the cure for every ill (heart trouble, liver disease etc.?) (2) Even in this interpretation, why call for the elders instead of just telling the church? (3) Why not call for a Christian doctor like Luke? (4) If it means to rub oil on someone, were elders to do that to women? (5) Why is it not mentioned more in the N.T. and early church history? (As a matter of fact, from a detailed study of quotes of church writers of the 2nd through the 5th Centuries, it may be concluded that since the anointing with simple oil had ceased to be effective in healing the sick, some endeavored to add fresh virtue to the oil by special consecration, or by combining it with relics of the saints, while others supposed it to retain purely spiritual efficacy.” (J. B. Mayor, *Epistle of James*, p. 166.) (6) Why is it not done as stated in the N.T. today (i.e. calling for the elders *to come to him*, etc.) and (7) it neglects or minimizes the statement, “the prayer of faith shall save him” by emphasizing the need for “the best medicine of the day.”

CONCLUSION:

While it seems best to interpret this entire passage in connection with the gifts of healing of the first century, there are still a few problems even with that view. But it seems to have the best support. However, there are two things that seem to be of great significance:

- (1) Either interpretation fits other known practices of the early Christians so we know we are not teaching an anti-Biblical doctrine.
- (2) Not every one in the N.T. times did as this passage states (i.e. call for the elders, have them pray over a sick one, anoint him with oil, etc.) even when it was possible (refer to the four cases presented earlier of Paul, Trophimus, Epaphroditus, and Timothy) for them to have contacted some elders (at least Paul could have). This assures us that not practicing this today is not a violation of Scripture and it also suggests that this procedure was more of a temporary nature than a permanent one.

It might be well to quote from brother J. W. Roberts here as we conclude:

It is impossible to say with certainty which of the uses of anointing James had in mind (i.e. medicinal or miraculous - ww). Certainly in the context of their own activity at the time the first readers of James knew which he meant. But that context is not known (completely - ww) to us today. We can only say which is more probable and what the application for us would be in either case.

(J. W. Roberts, *Commentary on James*, pp. 213f.)

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

James Adamson, *Epistle of James*, (N.I.C.); Albert Barnes, *Notes on the N.T.*; E. M. Kerr, *Bible Commentary* (vol. 6); Thomas Manton, *An Exposition of the Epistle of James* (AP&A); J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James*; Alfred Plummer, *General Epistle of St. James & St. Jude* (Expositor's Bible); E. H. Plumptre, *General Epistle of St. James* (Cambridge); J. W. Roberts, *Commentary on James*; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the N. T.*; R. V. G. Tasker, *General Epistle of James* (Tyndale); J. J. Turner, *Book of James*; Guy Woods, *James* (Gospel Advocate); S. Zodhiates, *The Behavior of Belief*.

PSALLO, ITS MEANING

J. W. ROBERTS

It is claimed by those who endorse mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God in the church that this practice is authorized by the meaning of the Greek word *psallo* or *psalmos*....

The truth is that neither *zamar* nor *psallo* meant “play on an instrument.” Both words primarily meant to prune (*zamar*), pluck, pick, etc. The Hebrew word is so used in Leviticus 25:3,4. The Greek word might mean the plucking of hair (a Pers. 1062), or bows (E. Ba. 784), or a carpenter’s string (AP 6. 103). The noun meant then whatever kind of twitching, etc., the text suggested.. Thus *psallo* did not mean “playing on an instrument,” nor did *psalmos* mean a playing; but the word *plus* the object might have that meaning. Leviticus 25:3 reads, “You shall prune your vineyard,” and the verb is *zamar*. It is claimed that both *psallo* and the Hebrew word *zamar*, which is translates, meant “I play on a stringed instrument,” and hence in such a passage as Romans 15:9 that meaning should be understood.

A check of the concordance of the Septuagint will show that always when the verb means “play” the object is present. This is true both of the Greek and the Hebrew word which it translates. A few examples may be consulted (e.g. Psalms 33:2; Psalms 71:22; 98:5; 144:9).... But notice that when the word is used in the absolute, with no objects, i.e. simply as an intransitive verb, the meaning is simply “sing,” e.g. 2 Samuel 22:58; Psalms 18:49. (These are the passages quoted in Romans 15:19); See also Judges 5:3; Psalms 9:11; 30:4; 47:7, etc.

All New Testament references are of this latter type; all are absolute uses without the instrument. All are consequently to be translated and interpreted merely “sing.” The possible exception is Ephesians 5:19, where “with the heart” may (as Conybeare and Howson claim) be a figurative use of the heart as an instrument instead of the harps and viols of the pagan or Jewish worship.

That this is all true is proved by the fact that the early Greek Church, which certainly knew the language, was in violent opposition to mechanical music in the worship. Compare, for example, Clement of Alexander, *Paedagogus* 2:4 and Origin Commentary *In Psalm* (Patrologia Graeca 23, 1171).

It was in view of this knowledge that the distinguished scholar, J. W. McGarvey, once said (*Biblical Criticism*, p. 116) that whoever claimed that *psallo* justified the use of instrumental music in the worship of the church was “one of those smatterers in Greek who can believe anything he wished to believe.”

There is no linguistic or philological basis for the use of instrumental music in the worship. Whenever an instrument is used, it must be used on the grounds of human desire and wisdom.

- 20th Century Christian, February, 1958

The few exceptions to SING and MAKE MELODY are too insignificant for us to seriously consider. The uniformity of the translation of PSALLO to SING, PRAISE, MAKE MELODY is overwhelming. Forty-seven translations of over 238 times by more than 260 scholars. Of the King James, English Revised, and American Standard versions we have 189 scholars working 22 years and they ALL with one voice give us SING, SING and MAKE MELODY WITH (in) our hearts. A recent translation, the Revised Standard Version of 1946, translates "*PSALLO*" the same way.

It is noteworthy just here that all of those translators belonged to religious bodies that used instrumental music in the worship. We should be impressed, therefore, that when their scholarship is at stake they all run true to form, and give us exactly what the word means in the New Testament today.

TRANSLATION OF PSALLO

VERSION	Rom 15:9	1 Cor 14,15	Eph 5:19	Jas 5:13
American R.V.-1901	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Tyndale (1534)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Cramner (1540)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Genevan (1560)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Rheim (1582)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Douay (1610)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
King James (1611)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
MacKnight (1795)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Rhomish (1833)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
German & Eng. (1853)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Anderson (1864)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Bible Union (1865)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Ellicott (1866)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Tischordorf (1868)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Conybeare & H. (1869)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Living Oracles (1873)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Eng. R.V. (1881)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Bible Union R. (1883)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Worrells (1904)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Modern R. B. (1907)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Newcome's N.T. (?)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Newberry Bible (?)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Polyglott Bible (?)	Sing	Sing	Make Melody	Sing
Greek Int. Eng. (?)	Praise	Praise	Praising	Praise
Greek Int. (?) Handy	Praise	Praise	Praising	Praise
Greek Int. (?) Barry	Praise	Praising	Praise	Praise
Goodspeed (1924)	Sing	Sing Praise	Sing	Sing
Weymouth (1902)	Sing Praise	Praise	Offer Praise	Sing Praise
Moffatt (1918)	Sing	Sing Praise	Praise	Sing Praise
Shorter Bible (Kent)	Omitted	Praise	Praising	Sing Praise
Montgomery (1924)	Sing	Praise	Make Music	Play Harp
Twenty Cen. (1902)	Sing	Sing	Make Music	Sing

TRANSLATION OF PSALLO CONTINUED

VERSION	Rom 15:9	1 Cor 14,15	Eph 5:19	Jas 5:13
Emphatic Dia. (1864)	Sing	Sing Praise	Make Music	Sing Praise
Rotherham (1872-8)	Sing	Sing	Make Music	Sing to Harp
Hayman (?)	Sing	Praise	Make Music	Sing
Ferrar Fenton (1905)	Sing	Sing	Dancing	Sing
Seriac Poshito (?)	Sing	Sing Praise	Sing	Sing & Praise
Doddridge (1821)	Sing Praise	Sing Praise	Sing & Chant	Sing Praise
Rotherham (1897)	Strike String	Strike String	Strike Strings	Strike Sting
Wycliffe (1380)	Sing	Sing	Sing Psalms	Sing Praise
Coptic (?)	Sing	Sing	Chanting	Sing Praise
Vulgate (?)	Sing	Psalm	Psalming	Psalm
Ballantine (1923)	Sing	Sing	Playing Harp	Sing to Harp
Luther's (?)	Sing	Sing	Playing	Sing
Coptic Verson (1905)	Sing	Sing	Playing	-----
Alford's (?)	Sing	Sing	Playing	Sing

The above table was prepared by Coleman Overby for the great Walker-Overby debate held in Murray, KY, October 1925. Later used by professor Boles in his debate with brother Clubb in 1927.

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